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Edited by
Louise du Toit, Ephraim Meir, Ed Noort and Wolfgang Palaver
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Louise du Toit
Stellenbosch University
South Africa

Ephraim Meir
Bar-Ilan University
Israel

Ed Noort
University of Groningen
The Netherlands

Wolfgang Palaver
University of Innsbruck
Austria

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Cover image courtesy of Ephraim Meir
A picture of the place in New Delhi where Gandhi was killed on 30 January 1948, as he was walking to a prayer meeting in the garden.

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About the Editors

Louise du Toit

Louise du Toit is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. She is interested in theories of violence, nonviolent resistance, feminist philosophy, African Philosophy, sexual difference, hermeneutics and phenomenology, as well as in environmental philosophy. She has recently published work on political forgiveness, male victims of sexual violence, decolonization in relation to sex and the environment, Gandhi's legacy, war rape and international rape law, women's voices in African Philosophy, interpersonal violence and white women. She is currently busy with a project on grieving for the Earth. In 2018 and 2021, respectively, she collaborated with Wolfgang Palaver, Ed Noort and Ephraim Meir in Princeton (CTI) and Stellenbosch (STIAS) on religion and (non)violence.

Ephraim Meir

Ephraim Meir is Professor emeritus of modern Jewish Philosophy at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel. His publications are in Jewish philosophy and dialogical theology. He is President of the International Rosenzweig Society. From 2009 to 2017, he was the Levinas guest Professor for Jewish Dialogue Studies and Interreligious Theology at the Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg. From August to December 2018, he was a research fellow in the workshop on religion and violence at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton. In 2021, he participated in the research group on Gandhi and nonviolence led by Wolfgang Palaver at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Ed Noort

Ed Noort is Professor emeritus of the Hebrew Bible at the Faculty of Religion, Culture and Society of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He is interested in the archaeology of the Southern Levant, historiography and reception history, the book of Joshua and violence, and theologies of the Hebrew Bible. He has published widely on these fields. He served as Foreign Secretary of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and as Vice President of the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities. He was Fellow-in-Residence at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton (2003, 2018) and at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (2021).

Wolfgang Palaver

Wolfgang Palaver is Professor of Catholic Social Thought at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Innsbruck, Austria. He is interested in violence and religion, peace ethics and ethics of democracy. He has published books and articles on violence and religion, Thomas Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, Simone Weil, René Girard, and Mahatma Gandhi. In fall 2018, he was a member of the research workshop on religion and violence at the Center of Theological Inquiry (CTI) at Princeton (USA). From January to June 2021, he conducted a research project on Gandhi's concept of nonviolence at The Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Introduction to the Special Issue "Nonviolence and Religion"

Louise Du Toit [1], Ephraim Meir [2], Ed Noort [3] and Wolfgang Palaver [4,*]

[1] Department of Philosophy, Stellenbosch University, Matieland 7602, South Africa
[2] Department of Jewish Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan 5290002, Israel
[3] Faculty of Religion, Culture and Society, University of Groningen, 9712 GK Groningen, The Netherlands
[4] Institute of Systematic Theology, University of Innsbruck, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria
[*] Correspondence: wolfgang.palaver@uibk.ac.at

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001, many scholarly debates have focused on the relationship between religion and violence. The four editors of this Special Issue participated for this reason in the Fall of 2018 in a research workshop on religion and violence at the Center of Theological Inquiry (CTI) in Princeton. During this semester, we frequently asked ourselves if it would not be necessary to broaden this perspective by focusing not only on how religion relates to violence but also by taking the religious potential for peace into account. We decided to study Mohandas K. Gandhi's development of nonviolent resistance during the 21 years that he spent in South Africa fighting racial discrimination against Indians. We aimed at a better understanding of Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha*—his term for active nonviolent resistance—and attempted to explore its potential as well as its limitations. Special attention was also given to the religious dimension of Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence. We studied his religious view, his interpretation and use of holy scriptures, and his long-ongoing practice of interreligious collaboration. By reading Gandhi's active nonviolence through the lens of Judith Butler's recent book *The Force of Nonviolence* (Butler 2020) we were able to engage with Gandhi's work in view of contemporary discussions about violence and nonviolence and could also reflect on how nonviolence relates to gender. The Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study hosted the four editors to collaborate in Spring 2021, with our own contributions to this Special Issue as the result.

From the start, however, this Special Issue has aimed beyond the Gandhi project to broaden the debate to include more aspects and proponents of faith-based nonviolence. In view of the unbalanced debate about religion since 9/11, we especially invited scholars to address nonviolence in relation to Islam.

The thirteen contributions that we received could be organized into two parts. The first part consists of articles that deal directly with Gandhi's concept of nonviolence and how it influenced later peace activists. Understanding Gandhi also requires looking at how he related to different religions. This Special Issue also broadens the usual focus on physical violence by addressing economic violence and environmental degradation in an article that connects Gandhi with sustainability. The second part comprises contributions that study the use of holy scriptures in relation to (non)violence, its problems, its boundaries, and its inspiration. Religious authoritative texts play a major role in the continuation and legitimation of connected belief systems. Their history of reception demonstrates actualization and contextualization of the time gap between their origins and actual use. Especially on the topics of violence, war, and peace, different interpretations have led to the legitimation of murderous actions and the justification of wars on the one hand and to the inspiration of peace processes and liberation on the other. A toxic combination of holy scriptures, political power, ethnocentric thinking, and religious exclusivism has often extinguished the potential for peacebuilding.

Gandhi's inspiration connects to some degree the two parts of this Special Issue. Several articles in the second part deal directly with his hermeneutic of authoritative texts and traditions. *Adnane Mokrani's* Islamic hermeneutic of nonviolence maintains that it was

a "Gandhian moment" that enabled such readings of the Qur'an in the 20th century. This expression references the title of a book by the Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbegloo where he addresses the "transformative power of nonviolent resistance in the hearts and minds of all those struggling for the opening of a democratic political space" (Jahanbegloo 2013, p. 3). Mokrani's example of a Muslim scholar whose work results from taking the Gandhian moment seriously is the Syrian theologian Jawdat Saʿīd (d. 2022). Rüdiger *Lohlker*'s contribution deals explicitly with the latter and mentions the fact that Saʿīd had a picture of Gandhi on the bookshelves of his study.

This Special Issue further commemorates the murder of Gandhi on 30 January 1948, seventy-five years ago. That is why the book-cover of the printed version of it shows a photo from the garden of the Birla House in New Delhi, where Gandhi was killed when he walked to the prayer meeting that was to be held there later in the afternoon.

1. Part 1: Nonviolence and the Legacy of Gandhi

Recent discussions about the potential for nonviolence in connection with Putin's war against Ukraine often dismiss Gandhi's approach as a utopian idealism that has nothing to contribute to such an immediate case of aggression. Such statements, however, result from a serious misunderstanding of Gandhi's view of nonviolence. Throughout his life, Gandhi fought against an understanding of nonviolence that remained passive and refused to resist evil. He maintained for this reason that pacifism is not an adequate translation of *satyagraha*, his special term for an active resistance that literally means truth-force or love force (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 74, p. 254). He also understood that the means for nonviolent resistance are not always available in every case and repeatedly claimed that violence, "when it is offered in self-defense or for the defense of the defenseless, it is an act of bravery, far better than cowardly submission" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 85, p. 483; cf. Chenoweth 2021, p. 78).

Wolfgang Palaver highlights in his contribution Gandhi's active understanding of nonviolence by using Martin Luther King's expression "militant nonviolence" to characterize this position. Palaver also mentions Gandhi's use of the term "almost nonviolence" to refer to violent reactions against an overwhelmingly powerful act of aggression, as was the case, for instance, when Poland defended itself militarily against Hitler's troops in 1939. Palaver uses René Girard's anthropology to explore Gandhi's concept of nonviolence. Both Girard and Gandhi recognize the escalating dynamic of violence and prefer, for this reason, nonviolent means wherever they are available. This comparison also shows that Gandhi emphasized more strongly the necessity to actively resist evil and thereby contributed to a better understanding of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.

Louise du Toit and *Jana Vosloo* similarly highlight the active dimension of nonviolence in their contribution. They discuss Gandhi's work in the light of Judith Butler's book *The Force of Nonviolence*. This allows them to claim that nonviolence need not be divorced from rage, indignation, or aggression and might even be "aggressively" pursued, as Albert Einstein also claimed when he described himself as a "militant pacifist". They compare Gandhi and Butler on a systematic philosophical level and explore four themes in which they complement and enrich each other: the ontological roots of the nonviolent imperative; their rejection of an instrumental view of violence; nonviolent resistance seen as communicative action; and nonviolence viewed as a way of life.

Ephraim Meir too highlights the active side of nonviolence by showing that Gandhi, as well as the Jewish theologian and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel, developed nonviolent liberation theologies. Gandhi became famous for his fight against the discrimination against Indians in South Africa and later for freeing India from British colonial rule. Heschel was a close associate of Martin Luther King's fight against racial injustice in the USA and against American warfare in Vietnam. Meir shows how these liberation theologies are rooted in their religious praxis and also highlights what separates and what joins these two spiritual activists.

Louise du Toit's article focuses on Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence and how it relates to gender. She particularly asks whether Gandhi's approach holds any value for women's struggles and for contemporary feminist politics. The author discusses this question in view of the recent empirical work conducted by Erica Chenoweth on the impact of women's participation on the outcomes of mass movements over the past century. By comparing Gandhi and Chenoweth, she draws out the value and limitations of Gandhi's thinking for contemporary women's struggles and feminist resistance. Although the direct focus is on the relation between women and nonviolent revolutionary campaigns and movements, indirectly, the unstable gendered dichotomies, male-female, masculine-feminine, and violence-nonviolence, are simultaneously drawn upon and problematized.

Reflecting on Gandhi's concept of nonviolence must not be restricted to physical or visible forms of violence. One must address structural violence as well as violence that sabotages and destroys the environment and more-than-human lives. *Wilhelm Guggenberger's* contribution widens the understanding of Gandhi's concept of nonviolence in this way by showing that it refers to a fundamental attitude in different areas of life, such as the economy and the use of technology. Seeing it in this way, sustainability, as it is currently being promoted by the United Nations in the *Agenda 2030* and Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha*, pursue identical goals. Gandhi, as well as elements of the Christian ethical tradition, can enrich political programs with a spiritual dimension, without which profound changes in human attitudes would not be possible.

Gandhi left a legacy of nonviolence that inspired different movements of nonviolent resistance all over the world. The most famous of these movements is Martin Luther King's civil rights movement against racial injustice in the United States. King was influenced by Gandhi and also by the Dutch-born American clergyman and political activist Abraham John Muste. Muste admired Gandhi's use of nonviolence in large-scale political actions and, in turn, inspired King to oppose the war of the USA against Vietnam. Muste was rightly called the "American Gandhi" (Danielson 2014). He moreover influenced conscientious objectors in Australia during the Vietnam War, as *Geoffrey A. Sandy* highlights in his article. He shows how Muste's understanding of nonviolent individual action, as he expressed it in his pamphlet *Of Holy Disobedience,* motivated young Christian men to become conscientious objectors (Muste 1952). Their holy disobedience contributed to ending Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and military conscription for it.

Exploring Gandhi's concept of nonviolence does not only mean investigating its potential but also addressing its limitations. By describing Gandhi's view on Judaism and Zionism and placing it in the framework of an interreligious theology that appreciates differences between cultures and religions with the aim of building bridges between them, *Ephraim Meir,* in his second contribution, shows that Gandhi's understanding of Judaism was limited because he mainly looked at Judaism through Christian lenses. He reduced Judaism to a religion without considering its peoplehood dimension. This reduction, together with his political endeavors in favor of the Hindu–Muslim unity and his advice of nonviolence to the Jews in the 1930s, determined his view on Zionism. Notwithstanding Gandhi's problematic views on Judaism and Zionism, his *satyagraha* nevertheless opens a wide-open window to nonviolent possibilities for transformation and reconciliation in Israel and Palestine. Meir's article discusses Martin Buber's famous letter to Gandhi and compares Gandhi's critique of Zionism with Buber's dialogical Zionism.

Zionism, however, is a very broad concept that comprises very different versions of it. *Michaela Quast-Neulinger* criticizes in her contribution the theo-political mission of Yoram Hazony's national conservatism. Hazony promotes a nationalist version of Zionism that he distinguishes explicitly and clearly from Buber's understanding of it, whom he even depicted as the enemy of the State of Israel. Gandhi, on the other hand, is mentioned by Hazony as an exemplary advocate of nationalism. This view of Gandhi neglects the fact that he had a quite similar view of nation and state as Buber. Both represent an open patriotism that roots in a religious relativization of nationalist ideologies (Palaver 2021). Hazony bases his national conservatism on his particular reading of the Hebrew Bible. As

Quast-Neulinger correctly states, however, this reading of the Bible is highly problematic. She calls it a "choose and pick" exegesis that leaves out all those texts that are seriously critical of immanent political rule. With this reflection on the importance of hermeneutics for all types of theopolitics, this article addresses the question that is at the center of the second part of this Special Issue.

2. Part 2: Hermeneutics of Scriptures

Some biblical texts served as a legitimation for crusades and colonialism, and others were a source for pacifism and liberation theologies. So-called "sword verses" in the Qur'an and the interpretation of *jihad* were used to justify violence, but a nonviolent and peaceful interpretation of the Qur'an has been defended, too. While Gandhi based his belief in *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* on the Bhagavad Gita, both Tilak and Gandhi's murderer Nathuram Godse justified violence and warfare for a righteous cause using the same text.

A survey of the histories of reception may exclude two extreme positions in a search for hermeneutical keys. The first view denies any value of religious scriptures for today on historical or moral grounds. Their supporters claim that scriptures too often serve as texts of terror. The second opposite view defends a literal interpretation of sacred texts prescribed by divine inspiration or revelation. Their supporters deny any time gap obstacle. The mainstream of research, however, interprets using a hierarchy of texts or a key concept that reigns over and bridges contradicting texts. An important insight is that Gandhi, as well as Jewish, Christian, and Islamic interpreters, notwithstanding different contexts and influences, meet the same obstacles and use the same methodological ways. Aspects of their approaches emerge in the five articles below.

Ed Noort's first article discusses Gandhi's use of scriptures. According to Gandhi, scriptures should not be read literally. Scriptures of all religions are equally true and equally imperfect, and therefore, the instruments of reason and *ahimsa* are needed in an everlasting search for truth. Gandhi found an important key in 2 Cor. 3:6 ("the letter kills, but the spirit gives life"). Noort provides the context of this "proverb-like" statement in Paul's letter and shows how Gandhi used the exegetical freedom symbolized by the life-giving spirit. Contextual and practical examples include Gandhi's choice for the first mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* as the *summa* of the Bhagavad Gita at the opening of the temples to all Hindus in Travancore. This key should bridge the deeply divided modalities of Hinduism. Another example demonstrates his need for a nonviolent reading of the Gita, either allegorically or with different levels of possible actualization, against the interpretation of the revolutionaries who read it to legitimate violence and armed resistance.

In his second article, *Ed Noort* discusses Gandhi's use of the figure of Daniel, who, after Jesus, was his most important biblical character. Next to Daniel, Plato's Socrates plays an important role in Gandhi's personal experience as a prisoner, and both are significant for their exemplary function as *satyagrahis*. Both followed virtue to the end and were prepared to die for it. The Gandhian Daniel represents nonviolent resistance against unjust laws as a weapon of the strong, not of the weak. His opposition was a deliberate choice, an example of Gandhi's intuitive exegesis. In the next step, Noort highlights the context of the Book of Daniel, the persecutions in the second century BCE, and the apocalyptic visions contained in the second half of the biblical book. These visions are resistance literature against the state propaganda of the Hellenistic rulers. They represent a nonviolent answer with radical visions of hope in contrast to the violent resistance of the Maccabees. The article concludes with *desiderata* in two directions. In the direction of Gandhi, it is suggested that, in line with Gandhi's own view of the right of expansion of later interpreters, the court stories and apocalyptic visions should be read together. Secondly, in the direction of biblical studies, it is proposed that more attention be paid to apocalyptic literature as resistance literature.

The following three articles deal with the Qur'an and its potential to inspire non-violence. *John J. Ranieri's* article opens with the view that the Qur'an sides with the marginalized and the oppressed and that Muslims must therefore be defenders of victims.

He rejects the abrogation theory, in which the later Medinan surahs overrule the Meccan ones, and offers an explanation of the different contexts of the periods. Ranieri recognizes that the Qur'an contains multiple voices, from patient endurance to forceful defense. For the much debated "sword" verses (Q 9:5.29), the author sides with Muhammad Asad that every verse must be interpreted in view of the Qur'an as a whole. Ranieri sees a possibility to underline the unity of the Qur'an in *taqwa* that Asad rendered as "God-consciousness". Deliberating whether force and violence should be used, Ranieri states that *taqwa* may be compared with Augustine's role of love in his famous phrase, "Love, and do as you will." *Taqwa* is a process that aims at an ongoing conversion of mind and heart. Ranieri's balanced view is an example of how awareness of diachronic problems can be used in combination with a central concept, *taqwa*, bridging conflicting texts and the time gap.

The strong point of *Rüdiger Lohlker's* article is that his protagonist Jawdat Saʿīd developed his ideas and hermeneutical views as a member of the nonviolent opposition in Syria during the Arab Spring. This combination of practice and thought should be understood as a hermeneutical engagement with the revelation of the Qur'an. Saʿīd's core text is the Qur'anic narrative of Cain (Qabil) murdering Abel (Habil) (Q 5:27–32). The Qur'an rewrote the biblical story (Gen. 4:1–16) in a way that emphasizes Habil's refusal to answer violence with violence. The universal meaning of this narrative is, according to the Qur'an: killing a person means killing all mankind, and saving the life of one person means saving the life of all mankind (Q 5:32) as already discussed in Mishna and Talmud (bSanhedrin 4:5). For Saʿīd this narrative and Q 2:256 ("there is no compulsion in religion") justify nonviolent resistance against tyrannical regimes. Saʿīd sides with the Sufis, who state that even the illiterate can ascend to a supreme level of sincerity and good will. Nonviolence is a possibility for every human being who is willing to act accordingly. Saʿīd's theoretical reflections and practice demonstrate how Muslims can engage with the Qur'anic revelation and nonviolent resistance.

Adnane Mokrani's article offers a broad range of hermeneutic guidelines to make an Islamic theology of nonviolence plausible. First, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical gap between the past of Muhammad's time and our present time. Secondly, it is also paradoxically important to trust in one central message of the Qur'an that transcends historical, political, and cultural boundaries. Mokrani states that the Qur'an has its limits because there is no explicit nonviolent model in the text. The Qur'an accepts defensive war under certain conditions. Contextualization is, in Mokrani's eyes, the key to distinguishing between principles, and historical forms. For him, the verses favoring peace and nonviolence belong to the group of principles and the verses on defensive warfare to the group of historical applications. This is not a crystal-clear solution because the search for hierarchy and its answers will always be a human attempt. Two principles as a starting point demonstrate his view. A mercy-centered theology must be the main principle together with the Qur'anic verse "There is no compulsion in religion" (Q 2:256). Non-compulsion is even more radical than nonviolence. To communicate this cornerstone, Mokrani makes a plea for a narrative theology exemplified by a symbolic reading of the Qabil-Habil (Cain and Abel) story (Q 5:27–32). Habil refuses to imitate the violent Qabil and creates a mimetic model of peace. Such an interpretation of the Qur'an is enabled by the "Gandhian moment"–the power of faith-based nonviolent practice and its results in our time.

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Article

Gandhi's Militant Nonviolence in the Light of Girard's Mimetic Anthropology

Wolfgang Palaver [1,2]

[1] Department of Systematic Theology, University of Innsbruck, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria; wolfgang.palaver@uibk.ac.at

[2] Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: Nuclear rivalry, as well as terrorism and the war against terror, exemplify the dangerous escalation of violence that is threatening our world. Gandhi's militant nonviolence offers a possible alternative that avoids a complacent indifference toward injustice as well as the imitation of violence that leads to its escalation. The French-American cultural anthropologist René Girard discovered mimetic rivalries as one of the main roots of human conflicts, and also highlighted the contagious nature of violence. This article shows that Gandhi shares these basic insights of Girard's anthropology, which increases the plausibility of his plea for nonviolence. Reading Gandhi with Girard also complements Girard's mimetic theory by offering an active practice of nonviolence as a response to violent threats, and by broadening the scope of its religious outreach. Gandhi's reading of the Sermon on Mount not only renounces violence and retaliation like Girard but also underlines the need to actively break with evil. Both Gandhi and Girard also address the religious preconditions of nonviolent action by underlining the need to prefer godly over worldly pursuits, and to overcome the fear of death by God's grace. This congruence shows that Girard's anthropology is valid beyond its usual affinity with Judaism and Christianity.

Keywords: nonviolence; M.K. Gandhi; R. Girard; mimetic rivalry; Sermon on the Mount; spiral of violence; detachment; religion; fear of death

1. Introduction

The publication of *The Healing Power of Peace and Nonviolence* by the Catholic moral theologian Bernhard Häring in 1986 was a "clarion call to Christians to embrace nonviolent action" (Berger et al. 2020, p. 114). The Catholic Church has reacted positively to this call, as the development of its peace ethics shows. So far, it has culminated in Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace on 1 January 2017, in which he mentioned—among other examples of successful practices of nonviolence—Mahatma Gandhi's liberation of India (Francis 2017, #4). Häring's book refers to Gandhi too, recommending his "militant nonviolence" as the "only meaningful and promising way" to fight "oppression and exploitation" (Häring 1986, p. 81). Häring frequently refers also to the work of the French-American anthropologist René Girard, whom he praises for seeing nonviolence as a "central aspect of redemption through Jesus Christ" (Häring 1986, p. 87).

Following Häring's appreciation of Gandhi's militant nonviolence and Girard's mimetic anthropology, this article connects these two approaches, and shows how this leads to a deeper understanding of nonviolence and its religious preconditions. Gandhi shares with Girard important insights into the nature of violence and why nonviolence has become a necessity for the survival of humanity. Reading Gandhi with the eyes of Girard strengthens the plausibility of Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha*. It also complements Girard's mimetic theory by offering an active practice of nonviolence as a response to threats of violence, and by broadening the scope of its religious outreach. Girard's strength is his anthropological analyses of the causes and the nature of human violence. He also examines extensively

how early religions dealt with violence. Like Gandhi, he too, underlines the importance of nonviolence for today. He has, however, less to say about positive and practical ways out of violence in our modern world. Whereas Girard emphasizes a rather passive renunciation of violence, Gandhi offers an active practice of nonviolence that addresses the challenges that Girard's anthropology illuminates. Militant nonviolence represents a third way between complacence that remains indifferent toward injustice and a dangerous imitation of violence that leads to its escalation.

Gandhi's work also complements Girard's anthropology in its religious scope. Shortly after Pope Benedict XVI was elected in 2005, Girard claimed a superiority of Christianity in his support of the Pope's battle against relativism (Girard and Gardels 2005, p. 46). The Indian essayist Pankaj Mishra responded by expressing his admiration for Girard's account of the Gospels as opposing the "cycle of violence", and showing that Gandhi's nonviolence was greatly inspired by the New Testament. With Gandhi he rejected, however, Girard's claims for a Christian superiority, and recommended instead to find—like Gandhi—traditions among the world religions that "chime with the truth of the Gospels" (Mishra 2005, p. 53). With the help of Gandhi, Girard's mimetic anthropology gains in its universal validity because many of his key insights are indeed expressed in other world religions, too.

This article discusses first Girard's and Gandhi's discovery of mimetic rivalry as a cause of violence. The second part deals with the contagious nature of violence and how easily it can escalate. Thirdly, a further step explains how nonviolence can break the cycle of violence, and how Gandhi complements Girard by offering an active understanding of nonviolence. The final part engages with the religious preconditions of nonviolent action by addressing the need to orient our desires in godly pursuits so that we can act in a spirit of detachment, and the need to overcome the fear of death by God's grace.

2. Mimetic Rivalry as the Root of Human Conflicts

Girard's basic insight into the roots of human violence is his discovery that many conflicts stem from mimetic rivalries that occur when a person imitates another's desire for an indivisible object. He therefore preferred competition to aggression as the key concept to understand human violence:

> We are *competitive* rather than aggressive. In addition to the appetites we share with animals, we have a more problematic yearning that lacks any instinctual object: *desire*. We literally do not know what to desire and, in order to find out, we watch the people we admire: we imitate their desires. [. . .] Unlike animal rivalries, these *imitative* or *mimetic* rivalries can become so intense and contagious that not only do they lead to murder but they also spread, mimetically, to entire communities. (Girard 2004, pp. 9–10)

Girard first discussed mimetic rivalries in personal relationships, often love relationships, as described in key novels in his book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (Girard 1966). In *Violence and the Sacred* he deepened his understanding by turning to sibling rivalries, which are a prevailing theme in ancient and traditional cultures (Girard 1977, pp. 59–67). Following Girard, Jonathan Sacks used recently sibling rivalry as a key to the understanding of religious violence in his careful reading of the Book of Genesis (Sacks 2015). Girard did not limit his reflections to the personal sphere, but also showed how mimetic rivalries contribute to dangerous dynamics in the political realm between states or other political actors, as Girard's last book *Battling to the End* illuminates. By emphasizing competition, Girard was able to reject, for instance, concepts like Huntington's "clash of civilizations" to explain terrorism in our contemporary world. Soon after 9/11, Girard recommended that we focus on globalized competition to explain terrorist attacks against the West, instead of seeing it as being caused by religious differences (Girard and Tincq 2002).[1]

In Gandhi's life and work, we see that he was very much aware of the conflictual potentials that easily follow entanglements of mimetic desire, although he would not put it in these words. Following Girard's unfolding of his understanding of mimetic rivalries,

we can start with Gandhi's marriage to Kasturba. Despite all his efforts to become a perfect husband, he suffered severely from jealousy, which burdened his marriage, as his autobiography tells (Majmudar 2005, pp. 59–60). Girard showed, in his book on Shakespeare, that envy and jealousy are "exactly the same thing", because both are an offspring of mimetic rivalries (Girard 1991, p. 10). Jean-Michel Oughourlian, an Armenian-French psychologist, studied the different forms of jealousy that threaten couples by following Girard's view of mimetic rivalry, and distinguished between jealousy of a third party and jealousy of the other partner (Oughourlian 2010, pp. 119–43). In Gandhi's case, we find a mixture of both forms of jealousy. Reading guides for a good marriage diligently convinced Gandhi of the importance of faithfulness, which he tried to achieve for himself and demanded rigorously from his wife, too:

> The thought made me a jealous husband. Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her, and if it had to be exacted, I should be watchfully tenacious of the right. I had absolutely no reason to suspect my wife's fidelity, but jealousy does not wait for reasons. I must needs be for ever on the look-out regarding her movements, and therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. This sowed the seeds of a bitter quarrel between us. The restraint was virtually a sort of imprisonment. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:14; cf. 25)

Gandhi's struggle with jealousy continued during his years of study in London, and stayed with him for some time in South Africa (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:77). It contributed to his vow of chastity, *brahmacharya*, which he took in 1906 to overcome "lustful attachment" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:165–71). Oughourlian is right to connect Gandhi's "withdrawing from any carnal possession [. . .] to completely liberate love from desire and no longer be dominated by it" with his awareness "that all sexual relations involve a dose of rivalry and aggression that is susceptible of degenerating into violence" (Oughourlian 2010, pp. 68–69). He, however, incorrectly claims that Gandhi and his wife promised to renounce carnal love at their wedding ceremony. Gandhi and Kasturba married at the age of thirteen, and this child marriage was partly responsible for Gandhi's early obsession with sexual love, which even caused him to sleep with his pregnant wife on the night of his father's death. The negligence of his dying father encumbered Gandhi throughout his life (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:28–30). It would, however, be wrong to understand Gandhi's negative view of sexuality in a purely puritanical sense. Erik Erikson shows that at its root was an "aversion against all male sadism—including such sexual sadism as he had probably felt from childhood on to be part of all exploitation of women by men". Gandhi's criticism of his father as being dominated by "carnal pleasures" when he married, at the age of forty-eight, an eighteen-year-old woman—Gandhi's mother—supports Erikson's thesis. According to Uma Majmudar, Gandhi viewed such "old man-young woman marriages [. . .] as an abominable social custom that formally sanctioned male violence over females" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:7; Majmudar 2005, p. 35). It is not by chance that his vow of chastity happened immediately after he served in an ambulance unit during the Bambatha Rebellion, where he witnessed the "outrages perpetrated on black bodies by white he-men" (Erikson 1993, p. 194). Gandhi recognized a close connection between male sexuality and violence (Parekh 1999, pp. 199, 220; Bose 2014, p. 171). After his vow, he described his relation to Kasturba as a relation of friendship in which one no longer regards "the other as the object of lust" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:222). Gandhi identified sexuality with a narrow but widespread male perspective which, according to Erikson, closes off all possibility that "a sexual relationship could be characterized by what we call 'mutuality'" (Erikson 1993, p. 236). Girard, too, was aware of how easily sexuality can trigger violence: "Sexuality leads to quarrels, jealous rages, mortal combats. It is a permanent source of disorder even within the most harmonious of communities." (Girard 1977, p. 35). Contrary to Gandhi, however, the French-American anthropologist recognizes more clearly mimetic rivalries as the source of violence and knows that, detached from them, sexuality can be enjoyed mutually: "I think that sexual pleasure is possible to the extent that the other is respected—and maybe there's no true satisfaction except in that case, when the shadowy

presence of rivals has been banished from the lovers' bed: that's probably also why it is experienced so rarely." (Girard 2014a, p. 12)

Gandhi was also aware of how strongly mimetic conflicts occur in our daily family lives. He grew up in a closely-linked Indian family in which such conflicts occurred frequently, as his secretary Pyarelal recounted:

> A single tactless remark, a slip or oversight, an uncouth habit, heedlessness or disregard of another's feelings may set people's nerves on edge and make life hell for the whole family. Competition in this narrow world is keen; even the youngsters feel the edge of it; little things assume big proportions; the slightest suggestion of unfairness or partiality gives rise to petty rivalries, jealousies, and intrigues. (Pyarelal 1965, p. 193)

Like Girard, also Gandhi observed sibling rivalry as a root of human conflicts when he remarked on how often fights break out between "two brothers living together" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:32). He too knew from his own experience that "little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives" are just part of human life (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:48).

Gandhi's awareness of the mimetic roots of human conflicts becomes most obvious in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*. In his overview of the history of South Africa, he describes the conflict between the Boers and the English in terms that come close to Girard's mimetic theory in the emphasis on how the proximity between rivals enhances the likelihood of conflicts:

> As the Dutch were in search of good lands for their own expansion, so were the English who also gradually arrived on the scene. The English and the Dutch were of course cousins. Their characters and ambitions were similar. Pots from the same pottery are often likely to clash against each other. So these two nations, while gradually advancing their respective interests and subduing the Negroes, came into collision. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:16)

Even more interesting from a mimetic point of view is Gandhi's description of the conflicts between Europeans and Indians that broke out in Natal, and his assertion that were also the main cause of Gandhi's plan to stay for one year in South Africa finally becoming twenty-one years. He refers to "competition" to explain the main reason for these conflicts (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:25–28). The other term that he frequently uses to address white discriminations against Indians is "trade jealousy". We find it already in his 1895 petition to Lord Ripon, the colonial secretary in London, and later in a letter to Tolstoy (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 1:207; 9:444; cf. Coovadia 2020, p. 64). In Transvaal, too, competition made European traders jealous of the Indian newcomers:

> Their great success excited the jealousy of European traders who commenced an anti-Indian campaign in the newspapers, and submitted petitions to the Volksraad or Parliament, praying that Indians should be expelled and their trade stopped. The Europeans in this newly opened-up country had a boundless hunger for riches. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:31)

It is this longing for wealth that makes the conflict almost inevitable. As Gandhi rightly remarked, the Europeans' aim "to amass the maximum of wealth in the minimum of time" did not allow for Indians to become "co-sharers" with them in South Africa (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:76). Gandhi is aware of the divisiveness of "acquisitive mimesis", i.e., the longing for indivisible goods (Girard 1987, p. 26). Where he reflects on ways to overcome the exploitation of the masses in the Western world, he expresses the need for a just distribution that could not be gained by multiplying "material wants" but by "their restriction consistently with comfort" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 28:148): "We shall cease to think of getting what we can, but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get." He also underlines the dangers of acquisitiveness in his interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* (4:21; 6:10): "Where there is possessiveness, there is violence", and this necessitates not only the "renunciation of possessions" but also the "desire for possessions too" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 32:115, 240; cf. Conrad 2006, p. 217).

Like the current attempts to cloak mimetic conflicts in the terms of a civilizational clash, we find a similar discussion during Gandhi's stay in South Africa. He refers to General Smuts, one of the South African leaders, who described the conflict between Europeans and Indians as a conflict between cultures. According to Gandhi's account of Smuts' position, the General saw neither "trade jealousy or race hatred" as the main problem, but rather deep cultural differences between the "Western civilization" and an "Oriental culture" endangering the Westerners in South Africa, such that they "must go to the wall" as if committing "suicide" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:77). In a letter to Gandhi, Smuts expressed his position in the following way:

> I may have no racial legislation, but how will you solve the difficulty about the fundamental difference between our cultures? Let alone the question of superiority, there is no doubt but that your civilization is different from ours. Ours must not be overwhelmed by yours. (Hancock 1962, p. 346)

Gandhi saw Smuts as a man of the "highest character among the Europeans", but he nevertheless criticized his position harshly as "hypocrisy" supported by "pseudo-philosophical" arguments seeking a justification to mask selfish enrichment and racism (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:76–77). "The only remaining factors are trade and colour." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:78). In an article in *Indian Opinion* from February 1905 on "Questions of Colour", Gandhi claims that only a racist view neglects the fact of rivalrous competition: "The origin of the whole matter is trade jealousy. It is this petty motive alone that animates the anti-Indian movement; and it is perfectly apparent to all who are not blinded by colour prejudice." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 4:355) By pointing to rivalry as the real cause of the conflicts between Europeans and Indians, Gandhi implicitly deconstructs racism as an offspring of acquisitive mimesis that easily results in scapegoating.[2] He comes close to Girard's insight that racism is best explained with the help of our modern use of the term scapegoat, which describes how groups often contain their internal rivalries by channelling them to the outside. Scapegoats multiply "wherever human groups seek to lock themselves into a given identity—communal, local, national, ideological, racial, religious, and so on" (Girard 2001, p. 160; cf. Reineke 1998, pp. 76–81). Girard discovered in ancient myths, medieval texts, and in the modern world many examples of groups and societies that turn to scapegoating if they are facing a crisis. He refers, for example, to medieval and modern anti-Semitism, and also to the fact of how often "ethnic and religious minorities tend to polarize the majorities against themselves [. . .]. In India the Moslems are persecuted, in Pakistan the Hindus" (Girard 1986, pp. 17–18; cf. 48).

Furthermore, Gandhi refers to the mimetic image of the "dog-in-the-manger" to describe the conflicts between Europeans and Indians in Natal and Transvaal. This ancient metaphor describes a dog enviously preventing the oxen or the horse from accessing the fodder for which the dog himself has no use. It illustrates an advanced stage of mimetic rivalry among humans in which the original object that triggered the conflict has been replaced by aggression against the rival. According to Girard, mimetic conflicts start with the rivalry over a concrete object that is often quickly forgotten as soon as the conflict escalates (Girard 2001, p. 22). Gandhi already used this image in 1895 when he visited the Trappist community in Mariann Hill and observed that the Europeans prevented the Indians from developing agriculture in Natal without using it for themselves:

> All over the Colony, the small farms are owned by Indians, whose keen competition gives offence to the white population. They are following a dog-in-the-manger and suicidal policy in so behaving. They would rather leave the vast agricultural resources in the country undeveloped, than have the Indians to develop them." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 1:223)

He criticized the dog-in-the-manger policy frequently during his time in South Africa and also later in his Indian fight against the British salt tax (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 4:26.117.52.349; 43:168). In 1939, he criticized the Kathiawar States in India for their dog-in-the-manger policy, which prevented them from overcoming the drought in an area where there would

be plenty of water if all aimed for the common good. This critique indirectly shows how often scarcity is not caused by nature, but rather artificially created by mimetic rivalry (Dumouchel 2013, pp. 3–96).

When Gandhi wrote about these conflicts in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*, he had already stayed in India. In 1925, the problems in South Africa increased again, and there were attempts to repatriate Indians. Gandhi criticized the "Class Areas Bill" at the Kanpur Congress in December 1925, and emphasized again trade jealousy as the main problem. This time he recommended a pamphlet by Frederick B. Fisher, an American Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church who had just visited South Africa to investigate the situation of Indians there. Against Smuts' expression of a "conflict of the two civilizations", Gandhi again highlights—along with Bishop Fisher—"jealousy" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:359–60). Frederick Fisher indeed underlined jealousy in his report, and described the fate of the Indians under attack from "white supremacy" as being similar to Jewish scapegoats in "old Russia" (Fisher 1926, pp. 149–50): "There is a strange jealousy on the part of the whites with reference to the prosperity of the browns." (Fisher 1926, p. 149). In Fisher's later book on Gandhi, he describes this trade jealousy impressively:

> What happens when a brown man can afford a Rolls Royce! Is that not a direct insult to those white people who still have to run Fords? There is something wrong somewhere, argued the whites. We must look into this matter. They did! To such purpose that the legislative adoption of a series of anti-Asiatic Acts aggravated the disparity between the whites and browns. Here was social, legal and commercial discrimination. (Fisher 1932, p. 39)

Mimetic rivalry easily results in violence, as the fate of the Indians in South Africa clearly illustrates.

We can also find evidence for Gandhi's awareness of mimetic dangers during his years in India. A striking example is his positive view of the traditional Vedic division of society into four classes (*varnas*), in which he recognized a bulwark against the dangers of envious comparisons. According to Gandhi, this tradition could help to prevent worldly ambitions for riches from displacing much more important religious pursuits. Gandhi's own formula—"Let us not want to be what everyone else cannot be" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 35:520)—illustrates his insight that following the profession prescribed according to one's *varna* could avoid "all unworthy competition" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 59:320; cf. Bondurant 1988, pp. 167–72; Conrad 1999, p. 406). Gandhi is, in this regard, close to modern interpreters of the fourfold order described in the *Bhagavadgītā* (4:13) who emphasize a functional order of "complementarity and cooperation, and not competition" without, however, overlooking like them the "underlying inequalities" (Rambachan 2019, p. 155). He did not identify the *varnas* with the caste system, and strongly insisted on the equality of all human beings: "Assumption of superiority by any person over any other is a sin against God and man. Thus caste, in so far as it connotes distinctions in status, is an evil." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 46:302) His understanding of "prejudice and racial hierarchy in South Africa" inspired his criticism of the discrimination against the untouchables in India (Coovadia 2020, p. 84): "Just as we are treating our brothers here, our kith and kin are being treated as pariahs and Bhangis in South Africa." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 32:510).[3]

Mimetic rivalries easily lead to discrimination, persecution, and violence. The necessary response to this question will be addressed in a later section. We must first reflect on the fact that imitation is not only at the root of human violence but also takes hold of violence itself by igniting a destructive cycle of violence.

3. The Contagious Nature of Violence and the Danger of Its Escalation

According to Girard, imitative desire easily causes violent conflicts. This, however, is only the beginning of the cycle of violence. As soon as violence starts to dominate human relations, it becomes more and more contagious. Frederick Hacker, a psychiatrist and expert on violence, formulated a thesis about the nature of violence that parallels Girard's insight: "Violence is as contagious as the plague." (Hacker 2017, p. 13; cf. Tournier 1978,

pp. 13–14, 91). Girard already described the contagious nature of violence in his earlier work:

> The *mimetic* attributes of violence are extraordinary—sometimes direct and positive, at other times indirect and negative. The more men strive to curb their violent impulses, the more these impulses seem to prosper. The very weapons used to combat violence are turned against their users. Violence is like a raging fire that feeds on the very objects intended to smother its flames. (Girard 1977, p. 31)

This contagious nature of violence easily results in an escalation to extremes: "The slightest outbreak of violence can bring about a catastrophic escalation." (Girard 1977, p. 20) Girard refers, for instance, to the "nuclear rivalry" that installs the atomic bomb as the world's supreme idol, ultimately leading towards death (Girard 1987, pp. 255, 414).

Girard describes the escalating dynamic of violence even more broadly in his book *Battling to the End*, which reflects on Carl von Clausewitz's theory of war to explain our world of global terrorism and wars against terror. The passage that immediately caught Girard's eye in the work of Clausewitz was the description of war as a mimetic relationship between two rivals that ultimately surges toward extremes: "War is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force. Each side, therefore, compels its opponent to follow suit; a reciprocal action is started which must lead, in theory, to extremes." (Clausewitz 1984, p. 77) Girard emphasizes this anthropological insight of Clausewitz over his much more often quoted remark that war is nothing but an instrument of politics. "If you start reading Clausewitz carefully, you can see it works exactly like a mimetic novel. It doesn't matter which side wins. Clausewitz does not teach you how to win, but he constantly shows you the mimetic nature of war." (Haven 2020, p. 107). A good example of the way in which a careful reading of Clausewitz reveals his deeper anthropological insights can be found in the chapter in which he explains war as a means of politics, where he does not overlook the fact that means easily influence and often also change ends. The "political aim" is, according to Clausewitz, not "a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it" (Clausewitz 1984, p. 87). This confirms Girard's mimetic reading, but also precedes Gandhi's reflection on the necessity that means must correspond with ends (Conrad 2006, p. 85). Girard's careful reading of Clausewitz shows that the underlying mimetic dynamic often does not allow politics to prevent a violent "escalation to extremes" (Girard 2010, pp. 53–57). It is this dangerous escalation that threatens, according to Girard, our modern world.

Gandhi shares Girard's insight into the contagious nature of violence. In his book about Indian self-rule from 1909, *Hind Swaraj*, he distanced himself from terrorist attacks against the British occupation, referencing Jesus' saying about "those that wield the sword shall perish by the sword" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:48 [Mt 26:52], cf. Chandhoke 2014, pp. 72–81). Gandhi feared that by violently fighting against the occupiers, India would just mirror the occupying power. The Boer War also provided him with an example of escalating violence when he observed that "each side was protesting against the other's activities and strengthening its own preparations" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:60). He even more clearly expressed the danger of escalating violence in 1947, close to the end of his life, when Hindus and Muslims fought against each other in India. A first quote resonates with Girard's reading of Clausewitz: "Once the evil spirit of violence is unleashed, by its inherent nature it cannot be checked or even kept within any prescribed limits." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 87:424). Another quote from 1947 problematizes self-defense that often cannot be distinguished from attack: "Self-defence is invoked for taking up the sword. But I have never known a man who has not passed from defence to attack. It is inherent in the idea of defence." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 88:145).

Before Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* on a ship going from England to South Africa, he stayed, in 1909, for some months in London, where he discovered in the *Gujarati* of Bombay a poem that helped him to illustrate the self-destructive and contagious nature of violence.

The first lines of the poem 'Blow for a Blow' show how violence begets violence, and moreover aims at self-destruction like the moth is attracted by the flame:

> The lamp not burning,
> On what will the moth throw itself and be burnt?
> Seeking to burn us,
> You burn yourself first. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 9:489)

The moth-and-flame metaphor illustrates the self-destructive nature of violence and highlights the mimetic dimension of it, because it is the fire that attracts the moth like violence begets violence. Gandhi understood very well that all violence, like fire, will ultimately destroy itself, and can only sustain itself if it is fed by counterviolence—in this manner, mutual violence escalates catastrophically. At the time that Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909, he also translated Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo* into Gujarati. In his introduction to this edition, he emphasizes the importance of it to the understanding of the way in which injustice can be resisted non-violently, and accuses those you do not follow the way of nonviolence of being "caught up in the toils of this huge sham of modern civilization, like moths flitting round a flame" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:2). He sees modern civilization as it was exemplified by the British Empire, as being governed by the law of brute force. In *Hind Swaraj* he does not directly mention the moth-and flame metaphor, but by mentioning all of the "victims" that are "destroyed in the fire of civilisation" with its "scorching flame", he indirectly refers to it (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:24). Like fire, a society ruled by force is self-destructive, and Gandhi tried to convince Indians to resist the contagious attraction of brute force if they do not want to be destroyed like moths in the flame.

The moth-and-flame metaphor has a long tradition in India. It is mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* (11:29), in the *Arthasastra* (7.15.14), and in traditional Indian sayings. One of these sayings compares the rash fight against an enemy with the moth aiming for its self-destruction: "He who through folly, sets out impetuous to face a foe without judging rightly/the other's power and his own, will perish like the moth that flies headlong into the fire." (Sarma 2006, p. 136) Violent revolutionaries sacrificing their lives in their fight against the colonial power behaved like moths aiming for the flame. Gandhi did not directly mention this metaphor when he referred to Madan Lal Dhingra, the student who assassinated a British official in London shortly before Gandhi arrived in 1909, but the words he used in *Hind Swaraj* chime with the metaphor: "Dhingra was a patriot, but his love was blind. He gave his body in a wrong way; its ultimate result can only be mischievous." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:42). According to Gandhi, this blind love was the result of an intoxication by bad ideas (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 9:302).[4] Others who followed the example of Dhingra used the moth-and-flame metaphor to recruit more revolutionaries. The most prominent of them was Bhagat Singh, who described in his 1928 series on sacrifices for liberty these "patriotic young men" who gave up their lives as "moths hovering around the flame of liberty" (Lal 2019). Singh himself committed several acts of violence in India, for which he was executed in 1931. He and his executed fellows were widely celebrated as martyrs who, like moths, sacrificed their lives for India's independence (Maclean 2014).

After the discovery of this poem, Gandhi frequently used the moth-and-flame metaphor to describe the self-destructive nature of violence (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 22:62; 30:372; 53:09–10). The most striking example occurs in Gandhi's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, which he wrote on 5 October 1945, just two weeks after they discussed the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. According to Gandhi, the atomic bomb is the summit of accelerated technological progress as it is expressed in humanity's reliance on machines and life in cities, against which he recommends the spinning wheel and village life as preconditions for a nation committed to truth and nonviolence:

> It does not frighten me at all that the world seems to be going in the opposite
> direction. For the matter of that, when the moth approaches its doom it whirls
> round faster and faster till it is burnt up. It is possible that India will not be able to

escape this moth-like circling. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 81:319–20; cf. Rothermund 1998, pp. 107–17)

Gandhi saw the atomic bomb as the peak of the Western reliance on brute force, and did not overlook its mimetic dimension when he claimed, in an interview on the day before he was assassinated, that the United States should give up nuclear weapons because "the war ended disastrously and the victors are vanquished by jealousy and lust for power" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 90:522). He not only shares with Girard the recognition of the dangers coming along with nuclear rivalry but also recognizes that the bomb "usurps the place of God" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 88:167).

4. Breaking with the Cycle of Violence: Progressively Substituting Force with Nonviolence

Girard's recognition of an apocalyptic escalation of violence made him understand the urgency to renounce violence and retaliation, as recommended by the Sermon on the Mount: "The definitive renunciation of violence [. . .] will become for us the condition *sine qua non* for the survival of humanity itself and for each one of us." (Girard 1987, p. 137; cf. pp. 97, 258; 1991, p. 282; 2014b, p. 20). Reflecting on Jesus' demand to overcome retaliation and renounce violence in Mt 5:38–40 and in Lk 6:33–35, Girard shows its plausibility from a mimetic perspective, even questioning self-defence, much like Judith Butler in her recent book on nonviolence:

> To leave violence behind, it is necessary to give up the idea of retribution; [. . .] we think it quite fair to respond to good dealings with good dealings, and to evil dealings with evil, but this is precisely what all the communities on the planet have always done, with familiar results. People imagine that to escape from violence it is sufficient to give up any kind of violent *initiative*, but since no one in fact thinks of himself as taking this initiative—since all violence has a mimetic character, and derives or can be thought to derive from a first violence that is always perceived as originating with the opponent—this act of renunciation is no more than a sham, and cannot bring about any kind of change at all. Violence is always perceived as being a legitimate reprisal or even self-defence. So what must be given up is the right to reprisals and even the right to what passes, in a number of cases, for legitimate defence. Since the violence is mimetic, and no one ever feels responsible for triggering it initially, only by an unconditional renunciation can we arrive at the desired result. (Girard 1987, p. 198; cf. Butler 2020, pp. 51–55)

Girard justly highlights the renunciation of counterviolence in the Sermon on the Mount. A masochistic quietism is not recommended by Jesus, but rather a retreat from imitating violence: "When Christ says 'if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matt. 5:39) he is not advocating a form of masochistic quietism, but the danger of bad reciprocity, of any escalation of bad mimesis" (Girard 2008, pp. 252–53). By reading Mt 5:39 in connection with Ps 37:8, the Jewish theologian Pinchas Lapide translates this verse in a way that highlights its rejection of mimetic counterviolence: "Do not compete in doing injustice." (Lapide 1986, p. 134). Although Girard rejected criticisms of the Sermon on the Mount "as a utopian sort of pacifism, manifestly naïve and even blameworthy because servile, doloristic, perhaps even masochistic", he did not become a pacifist himself (Girard 2014b, p. 19): "I should make it clear that I myself am not an unconditional pacifist, since I do not consider all forms of defense against violence to be illegitimate." (Girard 2014b, p. 131). In *Battling to the End*, he even claims—along with Carl Schmitt—that "pacifism fans the fires of warmongering" (Girard 2010, p. 65). For a concrete example, he refers to the fact that France did not react against Hitler's re-arming of the Rhineland in 1936 when it could have stopped Hitler's career immediately, and most likely for ever (Girard 2010, pp. 182–88). Girard, however, did not develop a peace ethics or a political ethics. He remained quite vague in this regard, and often referred to the religious conclusions that he drew from his anthropological insights. When he was asked in 2005 what he would

propose to politicians following his understanding of Clausewitz, he evaded the question: "It's a complicated question because my vision fundamentally is religious. I believe in non-violence, and I believe that the knowledge of violence can teach you to reject violence." (Haven 2020, p. 107) Despite Girard's rejection of quietist readings of the Sermon on the Mount, he was not able to move beyond a rather passive renunciation of violence. This becomes most obvious in his last book *Battling to the End*, which recommends Hölderlin's "mystical quietism" (Girard 2010, p. 123). Several authors who are familiar with mimetic theory have criticized Girard for his quietist leanings (Reineke 2012; Colborne 2013; Avery 2013, pp. 244–50). Furthermore, his interpretation of Mt 5:39 also remains quite passive, as the following passage shows, where Girard explains the rules of the Kingdom of God as the request to end the mimetic rivalry by giving "way completely to your rival" (Girard 2014a, p. 47; Cayley and Girard 2019, pp. 48, 50): "If you've been hit on the left cheek, offer up the right." This rather passive interpretation does not really grasp the gist of the Sermon on the Mount, as we immediately can recognize in Girard's mixing up of the right cheek that is mentioned by Jesus (Mt 5:39: "if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also") with the left one. At first sight, this does not seem to matter much, but we will soon see that it indicates his neglect of the active side of nonviolent resistance.

Girard's appreciation of the Sermon on the Mount brings him close to Gandhi, who he once remarked was influenced by Jainism and Christianity, and that "he opted for the kind of political action that is more compatible with the latter" (Girard 2008, p. 212). Gandhi, indeed, shares with Girard this focus on the New Testament, but goes further than the French American anthropologist in his ethical and political attempts to practice an active nonviolence. The Girardian psychologist Oughourlian rightly mentions Gandhi as a historical example of a politician who understood the mimetic dynamics and opted, for this reason, for nonviolent action close to the Sermon on the Mount (Oughourlian 2012, pp. 66–67).

Like Girard, Gandhi was a great admirer of the Sermon on the Mount. Christians in London introduced him to the New Testament, and to the work of Leo Tolstoy, which gave him "faith in non-violence" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 37:261–62). In his autobiography, he expresses his admiration of the Sermon on the Mount by underlining those verses that also caught Girard's attention, and by showing how it aligns with insights in other religious traditions:

> The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak too', delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal', etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:61)[5]

These verses from the Sermon on the Mount were important for Gandhi because, very similarly to Girard, he knew about the mimetic dynamic of violence and its dangerous escalation. In 1924, he noted that traditional wisdom was aware that the mirroring of violence must be stopped in order to overcome it:

> It has been my invariable experience that good evokes good, evil—evil; and that therefore, if the evil does not receive the corresponding response, it ceases to act, dies of want of nutrition. Evil can only live upon itself. Sages of old, knowing this law, instead of returning evil for evil, deliberately returned good for evil and killed it. Evil lives nevertheless, because many have not taken advantage of the discovery, though the law underlying it acts with scientific precision. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 24:55)

Like Girard, who claimed for his mimetic anthropology a scientific objectivity, Gandhi also talks about a natural law that must be understood in order to overcome violence. The most important ethical conclusion that Gandhi draws from his insight into mimetic dynamics was his insistence that the means to achieve peace must be nonviolent. Against

the wide-spread belief that ends justify means, Gandhi emphasizes that the means must correspond with the end. In *Hind Swaraj* he rejects "brute force" as the adequate means to end the British occupation of India, because one cannot achieve a lasting peace by sowing war: "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:43). He often repeated this insight in his writings. Another example can be found in 1924, when he rejected Bolshevism for its belief in "short-violent-cuts to success" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 25:424): "Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes."

Tolstoy's writings not only strengthened Gandhi's faith in nonviolence but also led him to an active interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. Tolstoy's emphasis on non-resistance did not mean to remain indifferent about evil: "Non-resistance to evil has nothing to do with tacit acceptance of the phenomena of evil. Tolstoy was never averse to fighting evil by every moral instrument at his command, and hurling his massive protests into the world." (Nigg 1962, p. 391). John Howard Yoder rightly noticed that "nonretaliation" should be preferred to "nonresistance" to describe Tolstoy's attempt to break the chain of evil (Yoder 2009, p. 55). Tolstoy talked frequently about the "doctrine of non-resistance to evil by violence" in his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, enhancing the usual translations of Mt 5:39 by adding the term "violence" (Tolstoy 2010, p. 5). Gandhi followed Tolstoy when he criticized European Christians for identifying Jesus with "passive resistance" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 90:129): "As I read the New Testament for the first time I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels and the meaning became clearer to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings." Gandhi's reading of the New Testament contributed to his concept of nonviolence, which was neither indifferent to evil nor avoided conflicts. In his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*, he underlines the active nonviolence that he recognized in Jesus Christ: "Jesus Christ indeed has been acclaimed as the prince of passive resisters but I submit in that case passive resistance must mean satyagraha and satyagraha alone." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:96). Gandhi's view of Jesus has become an inspiration for Christians to gain an active interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.

A careful reading of the verse that recommends the turning of the other cheek will recognize that Jesus talks about being slapped on the right cheek. This, however, is only possible if the offender uses the back of his right hand. Influenced by Gandhi, the biblical scholar Walter Wink explains how a back-handed slap is a humiliating blow by which masters insulted slaves, men insulted women, and Romans insulted Jews (Wink 1999, pp. 101–3; cf. Lapide 1986, pp. 121–27). To turn the other cheek means to insist on being recognized as an equal in the confrontation. It refuses to be humiliated without, however, retaliating. Jesus himself questioned the police who struck him on the face during his interrogation by the high priest: "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (Jn 18:23). Wink links Jesus' words about turning the other cheek with Gandhi's "first principle of nonviolent action" demanding "non-co-operation with everything humiliating" (Wink 1999, p. 102; Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 83:206). The Sermon on the Mount does not recommend a passive acquiescence but asks for an active engagement with evil without imitating it. In seminars in South Africa in 1986—during apartheid—Wink showed that Jesus offers a "third way" beyond "flight or fight" by opposing evil without mirroring it (Wink 1987, p. 23). Like Gandhi, Wink also claims that "Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil" (Wink 1987, p. 14). Wink calls Jesus' third way "militant nonviolence", and distinguishes it from "passivity" as well as "violent opposition" (Wink 1987, p. 13; cf. Wink 1999, p. 143). He therefore translates Mt 5:39 like Tolstoy, by underlining the renunciation of violence: "Do not violently resist evil." (Wink 1987, p. 22; cf. Wink 1992, pp. 184–89; Wink 1999, pp. 101, 22; Wink 2003, pp. 11, 27).

A key text for Gandhi's active understanding of nonviolence is Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo*. In the introduction to his Gujarati translation of it, he shows that Tolstoy's rejection of retaliation "does not mean [. . .] that those who suffer must seek no redress" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:1). According to Tolstoy, it is also essential not to submit to injustice. This becomes even more explicit in Gandhi's English introduction to this letter, in which he quotes the following sentence from it: "Do not resist evil, but also participate not in evil, in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:4; cf. Bartolf 1997, p. 26). Tolstoy's warning against taking part in evil influenced Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against the colonial rule of the British Empire, as his non-cooperation movement showed, which he launched in 1920 (Guha 2018, pp. 133–60). When Christians challenged him on the supposition that his non-cooperation campaign goes against Christ's saying that one has to "render unto Caesar, the things which are Caesar's" (Mt 22:21), Gandhi responded that Christ expressed with these words the "great law [. . .] of refusing to co-operate with evil" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 23:105; cf. 107, 43:31).

Vanessa Avery criticized Girard for overlooking the fact that the Sermon on the Mount demands an active nonviolence, and not primarily a self-sacrificial attitude. Following Wink, she refers to Rosa Parks, the black seamstress whose refusal to give up her seat in the bus led to the Montgomery bus boycott, the foundational event in the civil rights movement in the United States (Avery 2013, p. 249; King 2010, pp. 30–34). This movement was inspired by Gandhi and his understanding of Jesus, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed: "Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale" (King 2010, p. 84). King coined the term "militant nonviolence", which matches—as Erik Erikson very well understood—with Gandhi's understanding of *satyagraha* (King 1991, pp. 348, 483–84; Erikson 1993, p. 197; Colaiaco 1988). Judith Butler follows this militant understanding of nonviolence that "must be aggressively pursued", and which Albert Einstein called "militant pacifism" (Butler 2020, pp. 20, 27). Gandhi's active view also explains why he endorsed not only the negative withholding of violence but also the active pursuit of social justice: "No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 71:424; cf. Rambachan 2015, p. 105).

Gandhi did not advocate an absolute pacifism (Chandhoke 2014, pp. 92–94; Parel 2016, pp. 106–11; Jahanbegloo 2021, pp. 65–80). Closer to Girard than to Tolstoy, he was aware that the fetishization of nonviolence could result in counterproductive consequences (Steffen 2007, pp. 134–80). He remarked already in *Hind Swaraj* that preventing a child "forcibly [. . .] from rushing towards the fire" cannot be understood as an act of violence (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:46). Some years later, he discussed the example of a man running amok, and said that he might be killed to protect the community. According to Gandhi, it is the intention that decides if such an act is violent or nonviolent: "The fact is that ahimsa does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is ahimsa." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 31:544; cf. 24:379–80; 37:298, 310–13). In 1918, he defended in a letter to his friend C.F. Andrews his recruiting of Indian soldiers for the British Empire:

> Under exceptional circumstances, war may have to be resorted to as a necessary evil [. . .]. If the motive is right, it may be turned to the profit of mankind and that an ahimsaist may not stand aside and look on with indifference but must make his choice and actively co-operate or actively resist. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 14:477; cf. 37:269–71)[6]

Gandhi would concur with Girard's criticism of France's pacifistic reluctance to stop Hitler in 1936 because it was not nonviolence out of strength, as he understood his concept of *satyagraha*, but a cowardly attitude that is worse than violence (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 18:132).

Similarly, he criticized the Munich agreement with Hitler as a "peace without honour" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 67:404). Gandhi completely rejected the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, and claimed that "if there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 68:138). He himself, however, did not believe in war, and recommended in 1938 that the Czechs and the Jews should fight non-violently against Hitler (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 67:404–6; 68:137–39; cf. Guha 2018, pp. 54–60, 550–52).[7] This recommendation has been discussed since, and is indeed questionable (Meir 2021), especially with hindsight. After Hitler unleashed the war, Gandhi moved towards a more qualified understanding of nonviolence that also allowed violent resistance in specific circumstances to count as a form of resistance that is close to the ideal of nonviolence. After Hitler's troops invaded Poland in 1939, Gandhi recognized that, in this situation, only a violent self-defence was available for this country: "If Poland has that measure of uttermost bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted almost as non-violence." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 70:181). He defended his position regarding an "almost non-violence" in later discussions. In August 1940, he summarized his revised view in the following way:

> If a man fights with his sword single-handed against a horde of dacoits armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting almost non-violently. Haven't I said to our women that, if in defence of their honour they used their nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct non-violent? She does know the distinction between *himsa* and ahimsa. She acts spontaneously. Supposing a mouse in fighting a cat tried to resist the cat with his sharp teeth, would you call that mouse violent? In the same way, for the Poles to stand valiantly against the German hordes vastly superior in numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violence. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 72:387–88; cf. 433–34, 74:368, 75:38, 77:146)

This more balanced view of nonviolence allows Adam Roberts to associate Gandhi—like Martin Luther King—with a concept that he calls "progressive substitution". Force has, according to this concept, an important function in policing and defence as long as it cannot be substituted by nonviolent means: "In this view, civil resistance needs to be developed skilfully and strategically if it is to serve the functions previously served by armed force. The hope is that it will replace reliance on force progressively in a succession of issue-areas. The central idea is that only if there is a viable substitute can force be effectively renounced." (Roberts and Ash 2009, p. 8).

To provide evidence for Roberts' thesis we can refer, for instance, to Gandhi's support of the Khilafat movement in 1920, when he joined Indian Muslims in their political campaign to restore the Ottoman Caliphate. When he was asked if this alliance contradicted his commitment to nonviolence, he admitted that this movement would indeed defend Islam "by the sword" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 20:165). This, however, did not foreclose his support:

> A believer in non-violence is pledged not to resort to violence or physical force either directly or indirectly in defence of anything, but he is not precluded from helping men or institutions that are themselves not based on non-violence. If the reverse were the case, I would, for instance, be precluded from helping India to attain swaraj because the future Parliament of India under swaraj [. . .] will be having some military and police forces.

He was aware that an independent India would rely on nonviolence only to a certain degree. Gandhi's reflections on how a state should be organized prove Roberts' thesis, too. Contrary to Tolstoy's anarchism, Gandhi did not reject the state completely, but saw a certain need of it. In December 1921, he responded to the question of whether imprisoned *satyagrahis* should refuse to do any work in the prisons. He rejected that position because

he did not foresee a society without prisons and warned of "chaos and anarchy", claiming that a "civil resister is […] a friend of the State" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 22:19). This positive view of the state, however, should not overlook the fact that Gandhi was, in general, closer to anarchism than to a full endorsement of the modern concept of the state with its coercive means (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 13:214). According to Gandhi, a "non-violent State will be an ordered anarchy", asking—like Henry David Thoreau—for a state "which is governed the least" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 72:388–89; cf. 47:91; Marin and Blume 2019; Thoreau 2013, p. 145). This minimalist view of the state results in Gandhi's idea about the type of police force which is appropriate for a state that is committed to nonviolence. In a discussion with pacifists in February 1940, he remarked that a government "cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age". For this reason, he maintained that "even under a Government based primarily on non-violence a small police force will be necessary" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 71:226; cf. 72:388–89; Parel 2016, p. 110). A couple of months later he published his "idea of a police force" that is highly relevant for our world of today if we think of all the cases of police violence:

> The police of my conception will […] be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants, not masters, of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual co-operation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact the policemen will be reformers. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 72:403)

On the international level, Gandhi hoped to substitute armies with an "international police force", as he recommended it in a statement on the occasion of the San Francisco Conference preparing the Charta of the United Nations in 1945 (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 79:389–91).

5. Overcoming Mimetic Rivalry by Opening Up to God and Losing the Fear of Death

Judith Butler asks in her book on nonviolence for "an egalitarian imaginary that apprehends the interdependency of lives" (Butler 2020, p. 184; cf. Du Toit and Vosloo 2021). Gandhi represents such an alternative imaginary with his call for a universal fraternity that includes all living creatures. A religiously motivated "embrace all life" is at the centre of this universalism: "I want to realize brotherhood or identity not merely with the beings called human, but I want to realize identity with all life" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 40:109). Tolstoy influenced Gandhi's understanding of universal fraternity by recognizing as the first principle of the "Gospel teaching […] that all alike are sons of God and therefore brothers and equals" (Tolstoy 2010, p. 129). From Tolstoy's view of fraternity follows his rejection of violence (Conrad 1999, pp. 398–99). Even more important was Gandhi's belief in the Hindu doctrine of *advaita*, non-dualism, that "teaches that the human self […] is not different from the limitless *brahman* and is present identically in every being" (Rambachan 2015, p. 10; Chandhoke 2014, pp. 90–91). Gandhi expressed his belief in *advaita* in the following way: "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 25:390). The ethical principle of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) follows from the *advaita* teaching about the identity and unity of existence (Rambachan 2015, p. 104). A good example of Gandhi's ontological foundation of nonviolence can be found in the poem 'Blow for a Blow', the first lines of which were discussed above. The lines that follow express its *advaita* view:

> The union of soul and body,
> The same in you as in me;
> Unless you wound yourself,
> Us you cannot hurt.
> So soon as I owned myself your lover,
> You stood declared my beloved;

> A name I've bestowed on you,
> And will cease only when I perish.
> Such airs you give yourself today,
> Your eyes stern and proud;
> These your arrows
> Will turn back upon you, myself unharmed.
> You live, if I live; if I die,
> Tell yourself you die too;
> [. . .]
> Your being is wrapped up in mine
> Aiming a blow at me,
> You shall only hurt yourself." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 9:489–90)

This poem expresses the fundamental unity and identity of all beings, which turns all insults against someone else into self-harm.

Gandhi shared with Tolstoy and Martin Luther King a "cosmically based" rejection of violence, and was deeply convinced that the whole universe is governed by love (Yoder 2009, p. 62). He, however, did not underestimate how often violence occurs in our world. As we saw above, he was aware of how easily brothers can turn into hostile rivals, and he did not overlook that even "cannibalism" occurred among humans (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 63:321). Despite these harsh realities, he was nevertheless convinced that "love [. . .] is the law of life" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 63:321). In *Hind Swaraj*, he remarks that history tends to focus on conflicts, and often overlooks reconciliation and peace. Examples of fratricide are well known, and find their way into the news and into history books. However, what about brothers who have overcome their rivalries? "Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:48). This trust in the God-given law of love is also the basis for Gandhi's conviction that we must choose nonviolent means: "We are merely the instruments of the Almighty Will, and are therefore often ignorant of what helps us forward and what acts as an impediment. We must thus rest satisfied with a knowledge only of the means and, if these are pure, we can fearlessly leave the end to take care of itself." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 29:253).

Gandhi comes very close to Girard's religious reflections on ways out of violence. Both understand that human desire is at the root of violence, and is in need of our careful attention. Girard recognizes in Jesus a model for positive mimesis who does not lead his followers in mimetic rivalries because, like his heavenly father, he does not desire "greedily, egotistically" (Girard 2001, p. 14). Gandhi also refers to examples of positive mimesis that do not end up in deadly confrontations. His spiritual mentor Raychandbhai, who overcame all possessiveness and greed, and whom Gandhi tried to imitate in this respect, is one example. Besides the destructive mirroring of others, Gandhi also knew how positive attitudes can spread mimetically: "If I pull one way, my Moslem brother will pull another. If I put on a superior air, he will return the compliment." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:30).

In order to understand positive mimesis more deeply, we must explain its religious precondition. We can start with Girard's reading of the tenth commandment in the Hebrew Bible as outlawing mimetic rivalry (Girard 2001, pp. 7–9): "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex 20:17). In order to resist this acquisitive type of desire, the prohibition to covet the objects of those we imitate is, however, not enough. We need to orient our desire toward objects that do not immediately cause divisions among us and should therefore follow the first three commandments of the Decalogue in the Bible. This means to orient us as much as possible toward God without replacing God idolatrously with temporal goods. We can find this insight in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the New Testament (Deut 6:4–9; Mt 22:37–39). The Christian tradition therefore referred to God as the highest good for our deeper longings. If God is our *summum bonum*, we can imitate each other without automatically becoming enemies, because God

is not a good that is lessened if more people reach out for it. The longing for God can be shared and imitated without being driven into violent relationships. The Christian tradition was fully aware of this important path to overcome violence, as demonstrated if we investigate the writings of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas or Dante and their distinction between temporal and eternal goods. Influenced by Girard, Charles Taylor follows this tradition: "The only way fully to escape the draw towards violence lies somewhere in the turn to transcendence, that is, through the full-hearted love of some good beyond life." (Taylor 2007, p. 639).

Gandhi is an important example to prove that this insight is not only part of the Western or Christian tradition, but forms the core of all world religions. His love of religion was not so much focused on specific religions in their concrete institutional settings, but on the "religion which underlies all religions" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:24). Where he describes the main teaching of this religion underlying all religions, he comes very close to the Christian teachings about the *summum bonum*:

> Hinduism, Islamism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and all other religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set a limit to our worldly ambition, and that our religious ambition should be illimitable. Our activity should be directed into the latter channel. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:24)

Gandhi is aware that nonviolence requires "a living faith in God", and mentions it on top of the qualifications that he recommended that members of the Peace Brigade will need to deal with communal riots (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 67:126; cf. 66:405–7; Häring 1986, p. 127): "A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God."

We can deepen this insight into the relationship between human desire and religious longing by focusing on Gandhi's understanding of his Hindu tradition. Among his most important readings was the *Bhagavadgītā*, of which he used the last verses of the second chapter (*Bhagavadgītā* 2:55–72) for his daily meditations and as key for the whole text (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 49:485; cf. Chatterjee 1983, p. 113). These verses describe a man of steadfast wisdom (*sthitaprajna*) who is beyond all cravings and liberated from passion, fear, and anger (*Bhagavadgītā* 2:54–55). For Gandhi, his friend and mentor Raychandbhai, a Jain and a trader of pearls and diamonds, was a perfect model in this sense because his life did not revolve around these worldly goods, but he rather longed passionately "to see God face to face" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:75). The following verses underline Gandhi's understanding of the *Bhagavadgītā*[8]: "In a man brooding on objects of the senses, attachment to them springs up; attachment begets craving and craving begets wrath." (2:62); "The man who sheds all longing and moves without concern, free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine'—he attains peace." (2:71).

Fasting is one of the traditional means to curb desire. The following verses in the *Bhagavadgītā*, however, explain that renunciation as such is not able to curb our cravings. Only our opening up toward the highest good can provide real and lasting peace: "And when, like the tortoise drawing in its limbs from every side, this man draws in his senses from their objects, his understanding is secure." (2:58); "When a man starves his senses, the objects of those senses disappear from him, but not the yearning for them; the yearning too departs when he beholds the Supreme." (2:59: cf. 3:27–28).

In Gandhi's comment on these verses, he claims that self-mortification and fasting are of limited use. True liberation relies on God's grace. We must discover God in our own hearts in order to submit to him faithfully: "One who thus looks upon Me as His goal and surrenders his all to Me, keeping his senses in control, is a yogi stable in spirit." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 49:114). It is the task of human beings to become a vessel for God's grace: "And once the grace of God has descended upon him, all his sorrows are at an end. As snow melts in the sunshine, all pain vanishes when the grace of God shines upon him and he is said to be stable in spirit." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 49:116).

Close to his interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and pointing in the same direction, is Gandhi's most important mantra, which he took from the first verse of the *Isha Upanishad*,

and in which he recognized the core of Hinduism: "All this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God. Renounce it and enjoy it. Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 64:259; cf. 58–60, 89–90).

Gandhi meditated frequently on this mantra. In it, he discovered the religious basis for a "peace with all that lives" and a "universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 64:260, 90). From a biblical perspective, this mantra is somewhat analogous to the Decalogue. Its last phrase parallels the tenth commandment, and its beginning summarizes to some degree the first table of the Decalogue. The full surrender to God liberates us from being pushed to covet mimetically our neighbour's belongings.

Gandhi's emphasis on renunciation does not mean to abstain from active engagement in the world, but to act in a spirit that is free from worldly attachments. He does not withdraw like a "cave-dweller", but toils instead in the "service of my country and therethrough of humanity" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 23:349). Acting in the world, however, presupposes detachment: "A follower of the path of renunciation seeks to attain it not by refraining from all activity but by carrying it on in a perfect spirit of detachment and altruism as a pure trust." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 37:385–86). Detachment is especially important regarding possessions, but must guide all acting in the world. This attitude has a parallel in Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in which he calls Christians to relate to property in a spirit of "having as if we have not", and to deal with the world as if one has no dealings with it (1 Cor 7:30–31; Conrad 2006, p. 216).

Gandhi describes his detached acting in the world as "striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is *moksha*" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 23:349). Catholic social teaching describes a quite-similar attitude in its frequent calls to orient oneself toward God as the highest good—the *summum bonum*—and by repeatedly quoting a relevant verse from the Sermon on the Mount: "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Mt 6:33). Gandhi, too, loved this verse, which he discovered in Tolstoy's *The Kingdom is Within You*, and he referred to it frequently (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 64:119; Tolstoy 2010, pp. 103, 407; Emilsen 2001, pp. 56–62):

> I tell you that if you will understand, appreciate and act up to the spirit of this passage, you won't even need to know what place Jesus or any other teacher occupies in your heart. If you will do the proper scavenger's work, clean and purify your hearts and get them ready, you will find that all these mighty teachers will take their places without invitation from us. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 35:343)

In a letter to Mirabehn, Gandhi shows how both verse 2:59 from the *Bhagavadgītā* and Mt 6:33 direct us toward God as our highest good, who will deliver us from the fears which come along with mortality:

> Objects of senses are eradicated only by seeing God face to face, in other words by faith in God. To have complete faith in God is to see Him. [. . .] When we meet Him, we will dance in the joy of His Presence and there will be neither fear of snakes nor of the death of dear ones. For there is no death and no snake-bites in His Presence. (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 52:257–58)

Gandhi's emphasis on overcoming the fear of death leads us to investigate the deepest roots of mimetically incited violence. According to Girard, it is a fundamental "lack of being" that pushes human beings to imitate the desire of others, and often leads to rivalries (Girard 1977, p. 146). With the help of the cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker, we can complement Girard's mimetic theory by emphasizing death anxiety as the cause of this lack of being. According to Becker, human mortality causes an existential longing for self-esteem of cosmic significance, which people can only obtain from others. This human inadequacy easily ends up in competitive struggles for recognition and other types of mimetic rivalries. Becker explains with it the "ubiquitousness of envy", and mentions "sibling rivalry" to demonstrate this human predicament (Becker 1975, p. 12; Becker 1997, p. 4):

> Sibling rivalry is a critical problem that reflects the basic human condition: it is
> not that children are vicious, selfish, or domineering. It is that they so openly
> express man's tragic destiny: he must desperately justify himself as an object of
> primary value in the universe; he must stand out, be a hero, make the biggest
> possible contribution to world life, show that he *counts* more than anything or
> anyone else.

Becker's anthropological insight not only complements Girard's mimetic theory but addresses existential problems with which all world religions must deal.

For a better understanding of Gandhi's focus on overcoming the fear of death, we can turn to Anantanand Rambachan, a professor of religion, who discovered a fascinating "coincidence of terminology between Becker and the Upaniṣads" (Rambachan 2015, p. 30). *Advaita* understands that the usual worldly means to overcome death anxiety are futile:

> The fundamental human predicament, as understood in Advaita, is that of a self-
> conscious being experiencing a profound sense of inner lack and insignificance
> and discovering that culturally approved gains such as pleasure, wealth, fame,
> and power do not resolve this emptiness. (Rambachan 2015, p. 26)

According to *advaita*, what Becker called a longing for "cosmic significance" is "the intrinsic desire for *brahman* (the infinite), where alone there is freedom from suffering [. . .]. The infinite is, according to the Advaita tradition, what human beings really want, as opposed to the unending finite ends that we pursue." (Rambachan 2015, p. 30).

With the help of Rambachan's Hindu theology of liberation we can understand the religious background of Gandhi's emphasis on overcoming the fear of death by opening up to God. We can again recognize an analogy to the Christian distinction between temporal and eternal goods. Furthermore, it is not by chance that the song of Zechariah at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke states that humans who live in the "shadow of death" need the light of God's "tender mercy" to "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk 1:78–79). Gandhi, too, saw the overcoming of the fear of death as a prerequisite for the satyagrahis, the nonviolent soldiers. They have to be "free from fear, whether as to their possessions, false honour, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:53). All nonviolent action depends on detachment that ultimately only God's grace can give.

6. Conclusions

Studying the life and work of Gandhi with the help of Girard's mimetic anthropology shows first that the Indian satyagrahi, too, recognized many instances of mimetic rivalries causing violence. Like Girard, he was also able to deconstruct racist claims of cultural incompatibilities by referring to jealousy and envy as the real causes of conflicts. Girard and Gandhi also share an insight into the contagious nature of violence. Violence tends to escalate, and has led in our modern world to nuclear rivalries threatening the survival of humanity. Recognizing the dangers of violence, both Girard and Gandhi understand the importance of nonviolence for the avoidance of humanity's self-destruction. They share an appreciation of the nonretaliation that is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. They differ, however, in their interpretation of this seminal text in the New Testament. Girard stands for a more passive renunciation of violence, as his mixing up of the cheek that Jesus mentions illustrates. Gandhi recognized in Jesus an active satyagrahi in close affinity to his militant understanding of nonviolence as a third way between indifferent complacence and the retaliatory mirroring of violence. A final step shows similarities between Girard and Gandhi in their religious understandings of the ways in which to overcome destructive desires. Both recognize the dangers that follow the desire for indivisible goods. Girard's anthropology has a close affinity with the Christian teaching of God as the highest good, and the distinction between temporal and eternal goods. Gandhi's Hindu background shows analogous insights in his readings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Upanishads. The deepest roots for mimetic desire can be found in humanity's mortality, which leads human beings to seek their significance competitively. By opening up to God, humans can overcome their

fear of death and create peace by breaking out of mimetic entanglements. Studying Gandhi in the light of Girard's anthropology increases the plausibility of his understanding of nonviolent action. At the same time, mimetic theory is improved by a model of nonviolent practice. The discovery of many parallels in Gandhi's Hindu tradition also broadens the religious scope of Girard's approach.

Notes

1   Rivalries and even wars between religions are not uncommon in our world. According to Girard, however, they result from religious actors who substitute the adoration of the holy with worldly pursuits (Palaver 2013, pp. 93–95). Similarly, Gandhi also claims that fights between religions "are not part of religion although they have been practised in its name" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 10:24).

2   Highlighting Gandhi's deconstruction of racism does not mean that he was free of racial prejudices when he came to South Africa (Meer 1995, pp. 1027–41; Kolge 2016). He, however, overcame over the years his own prejudices. In this he was positively influenced by John Dube, the founding president of the African National Congress, who reciprocally appreciated Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against racial discrimination (Reddy 1995, pp. 27–32; Presbey 2016). Nelson Mandela was right when he claimed, in 1995, that the African struggle "is rooted [. . .] in the Indian struggle", referring to the influence that Gandhi and Dube had on each other (Mandela 1995, p. 563).

3   Recent criticisms of Gandhi's relation to the caste system often overlook the complexity of his argument. One can, however, claim that he was most likely rather naïve to believe that the discriminatory caste system could be changed without a strong liberating initiative by the Dalits like Dr. Ambedkar themselves (Dumont 1980, p. 223; Rambachan 2019, p. 155).

4   More in line with the Sufi tradition of the moth-and-flame metaphor, Gandhi could appreciate in the poem 'Fakirs We'—which he mentions in connection with the poem 'Blow for a Blow'—lines like these: "Fakirs we've made of ourselves/For the motherland's sake;/We've kindled the flame of love/To burn us for India's sake." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 9:491). What he appreciates in this poem is the "voluntary poverty" that should characterize every satyagrahi. This attitude differs from the revolutionaries whose sacrifices were more the result of their imitation of colonial violence. Like the revolutionaries, Gandhi too understood that nonviolence requires sacrifices. He distinguished, however, a "pure sacrifice" from the "thoughtless annihilation of the moth in the flame. [. . .] Without the requisite purity, sacrifice is no better than a desperate self-annihilation devoid of any merit. Sacrifice must [. . .] be willing and it should be made in faith and hope, without a trace of hatred or ill-will in the heart." (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 85:203). For a more detailed comparison between Gandhi's and Girard's understanding of sacrifice, see Palaver 2019.

5   Shamal Bhatt's stanza ends with "return with gladness good for evil done" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 39:34) and emphasizes, like the Sermon on the Mount or Rom 12:21, that evil should be overcome with good.

6   It is important to note that Gandhi addresses, here, an exceptional case. In his eyes, good intentions do not justify any means, but have to correspond to ends. If, however, violence cannot be avoided, it is important to refrain from any desire to kill or injure.

7   We have to distinguish between Gandhi's personal rejection of war and his political insight that as long as a great majority of the people do not follow his example, nonviolence cannot fully be realized. Gandhi hoped for the "adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible", at least for a "militarism of a modified character" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 76:215–16). This becomes most obvious in his letter to president Roosevelt in July 1942, in which he proposed that the Allies could keep their troops in a free India to prevent Japanese aggression: "My personal position is clear. I hate all war. If, therefore, I could persuade my countrymen, they would make a most effective and decisive contribution in favour of an honourable peace. But I know that all of us have not a living faith in non-violence" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 76:264; cf. 186–87, 207–8; Fischer 1953, pp. 425–26; Guha 2018, p. 659; Coovadia 2020, pp. 128–29).

8   I follow Gandhi's translation in his "Discourses on the 'Gita'" (Gandhi 1958–1994, p. 32:94–376).

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Article

When Bodies Speak Differently: Putting Judith Butler in Conversation with Mahatma Gandhi on Nonviolent Resistance

Louise Du Toit [1,2,*] **and Jana Vosloo** [1]

1   Department of Philosophy, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa; 18184995@sun.ac.za
2   Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa
*   Correspondence: louisedt@sun.ac.za

Abstract: This article puts political philosopher Judith Butler in conversation with Gandhi, on the topic of nonviolent resistance. More particularly, we compare them on a systematic philosophical level. Although we focus on Gandhi's more activist side, by delving into the ontological presuppositions that Butler and Gandhi share, we can do some justice to how his activism is firmly rooted in a faith-based understanding of the world. We discuss four themes in each of which they complement each other: namely, the ontological roots of the nonviolent imperative; their rejection of an instrumental view of violence; nonviolent resistance seen as communicative action; and nonviolence viewed as a way of life. This discussion shows that while they have very different starting points and vocabularies, and while some tensions remain, there is much scope for cooperation, solidarity and alliance between religious and nonreligious practitioners of nonviolent resistance.

Keywords: nonviolent resistance; Butler; Gandhi; performativity; relational ontology

Dedicated to the memory of Christof Heyns (10.01.1959–28.03.2021)

1. Introduction

With their[1] 2020 book, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*, feminist political philosopher Judith Butler joins a long tradition of nonviolent resistance that includes proponents such as Leo Tolstoy, Albert Einstein, Henry David Thoreau, Te Whiti o Rongomai III, Martin Luther King Junior, Václav Havel, Alice Paul, Rosa Parks, and others, noticeably Mahatma Gandhi. Many social justice movements have been inspired by the ideal and strategy of nonviolent resistance. For example, according to one estimate, between 1966 and 1999, "nonviolent civic resistance played a critical role in fifty [out] of sixty-seven transitions from authoritarianism" (Ackerman and DuVall 2000). In addition, in their book, Chenoweth and Stephan conclude both that "historically, nonviolent resistance campaigns have been *more effective* in achieving their goals than violent resistance campaigns" (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 220; emphasis added) and that, since "civil resistance campaigns are more successful than violent campaigns at overcoming barriers to participation" (Ibid, p. 28), they produce *more stable outcomes* in the long run.

In contrast, although "violent insurgencies captured power in some cases", the human costs in terms of casualties were very high. Moreover, "the conditions in these countries after the conflict ended have been overwhelmingly more repressive than in transitions driven by nonviolent civic pressure" (Ibid, p. 60). Typical for post-violent-conflict societies were widespread retaliatory violence, lack of respect for human rights and lack of respect for minority rights (Ibid, p. 60). Gene Sharp's influential 1973 three-volume opus, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Sharp 1973), provides a theoretical foundation for nonviolent action by linking it with a specific understanding of power. Different methods of nonviolent action that he discusses include nonviolent protest, social noncooperation, economic boycotts, strikes, political noncooperation and nonviolent intervention, and he explains that adversaries can be nonviolently affected or changed through conversion, persuasion, accommodation and coercion.

The specific contribution of Butler's book against this backdrop is to make a philosophical case for the use of nonviolent resistance toward oppressive regimes, without turning it into an absolute prohibition on violence or self-defence (Butler 2020, p. 23). Their argument is rooted in their understanding of the human subject as constituted in discursive and performative ways—an understanding they partly take from Michel Foucault, and partly develop more concretely in terms of the performative body. Butler's argument for nonviolence is therefore embedded in their earlier work on subject formation, and the in/ability to appear (and be recognised) in the social or public world as a moral and political subject—themes that run through their whole oeuvre, as we will show.

Even though Butler's book title references Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* (meaning love force, truth force or soul force),[2] and they evoke him explicitly a handful of times (Butler 2020, pp. 16, 21, 181, 201), Gandhi's own thinking does not feature much in the book. The point of this article is to go beyond the book's purview and place Butler and Gandhi in conversation on the topic of nonviolence. Although the abovementioned sources are important for addressing the common assumption that nonviolent tactics as a strategic choice are naïve, misplaced, ineffective or implausible (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 17), the focus of this article is on a more fundamental, i.e., ontological, level. In quite different yet complementary ways, Gandhi and Butler argue that the imperative for nonviolent resistance aimed at social transformation flows from a certain relational ontology, a certain perspective on the world and human co-existence. The aim of this article is to draw out the most salient implications of such a conversation for the right of public assembly and contemporary cultures of protest globally.

The ontology that Butler places at the root of nonviolence is a secular social ontology of the constituted, performative, exposed subject, coupled with a radically egalitarian imagination, as is discussed. In his turn, the vision that underlies Gandhi's nonviolence is a faith-based ontology that sees the force of love as a cosmic principle greater or more powerful than violent force. It is important to remain faithful to the very different vocabularies that these two thinkers employ; nevertheless, it is mutually illuminating and fruitful for a systematic philosophical exploration of the nature of nonviolent resistance, we claim, to place them in conversation with each other, on four central themes related to nonviolent resistance. The conversation between Gandhi and Butler is structured according to these themes: (i) the ontological roots of the nonviolent imperative; (ii) their rejection of an instrumental view of violence; (iii) nonviolent resistance seen as communicative action; and (iv) nonviolence viewed as a way of life. The discussion emphasises the continuities and complementarities between the two thinkers but also indicates where tensions remain. We conclude the article with some concrete suggestions that flow from this discussion for social protest and public assembly.

2. Gandhi and Butler on Nonviolent Resistance

2.1. The Ontological Roots of the Nonviolent Imperative

Butler's social ontology is best understood as being inspired by Foucault, who is a key critic of the "constituting" subject of western modernity. Against this influential view of the human subject as sovereign, as pre-existing its social conditions and as fully transparent to itself and governed by reason alone, Foucault posits a "constituted", i.e., a historically contingent subject, who is formed or moulded into a self through everyday social practices, dominant discourses and knowledge formations, and the power relations that infuse these. "Objectifying knowledge practices" and "processes of subjectivation" or of self-formation all represent a form of power that transforms human beings into the subjects required (and recognised) by the dominant, anonymous structures at work in modern societies. Thus, writes Foucault in "The Subject and Power" (Foucault 1982, p. 781), "[t]his form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him." There is therefore no presocial or prediscursive, or natural subject.

Instead, we find ourselves always already embedded in, shaped by, measured, called forth and named by a force field of norms embedded in language and in other material manifestations, ranging from singular bodies to institutions, to, nowadays, the Anthropocene planet itself. Butler largely adopts this Foucauldian understanding of the subject but focuses it on the notion of bodily performativity or the animate body. They define their key notion of performativity as "not a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice[s] by which discourse produces the [material] effects that it names" (Butler 1993, p. 2). Butler (2015, p. 28) in their later work noted that "performativity characterises first and foremost that characteristic of linguistic utterances that in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings the phenomenon into being".

Their notion of performativity thus equally inverts the modernist logic where action proceeds from a unified, pre-existing, rational and free mind. Performativity instead posits that people become subjects, e.g., gendered subjects, through the performance of desires, acts, speech and gestures that cite or reiterate the dominant (heterosexual) gendered and gendering norms (see their *Gender Trouble*, Butler 1990). An important point that Butler takes over from Foucault (1982, p. 778) is that we become subjects partly by objectifying ourselves as objects of knowledge and power; we are at once object and subject of these ongoing processes. It is by inserting ourselves through bodily gestures, expressions, motilities and so forth into the force field of norms that constitutes or moulds recognisable (gendered) subjects, and thus by "passing", that we come to recognise ourselves and be recognised by others, as properly gendered subjects. Our actions are themselves attuned to, or aligned with, discursive meanings. When this attuning translates into bodily habits, then discursive norms have been successfully materialised in the world. This understanding of performativity moreover extends far beyond gendering processes to encompass the subject as a whole. Butler's social ontology therefore entails that we are constituted as subjects in an inescapably relational, social and discursive manner. We only appear as legible persons or subjects to the extent that we align our sense of self and our behaviour (speech and action) with the social scripts and norms that shape personhood. Dominant norms and social recognition thus work together to give shape, form and content to individual subjects.

However, and this is key, Butler's social ontology does not lead them to an understanding of the self as fully socially or externally determined (as they explain in detail in *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler 2005). Key here is that abstract norms as deposited in language, are not only pervasive and powerful, but at the same time are unstable and ephemeral, and fully dependent for their endurance upon the ongoing, largely habitual obedience or docility of bodies that reiterate, repeat and re-cite them. Since it is obedient or imitative, citational actions and habits bring selves and other social realities into being and sustain them and make them matter and materialise in the human world; therefore, action is also the key to resistance against oppression. When bodies perform or act *differently*, by transgressing or otherwise challenging, disrupting, misquoting, parodying or queering the norms, then they can over time change, or subvert, the norms themselves. Furthermore, new sets of norms can shape radically different selves and institutions into being over time.

Butler's social ontology does not lead to a deterministic view of the self, as we have seen, but neither does it allow for change to be driven from somewhere beyond the social world. There is no self, and there are no hermeneutic resources on the radical outside of (or beyond) the discursive force field which has constituted us as subjects. Butler's commitment to nonviolence as preferred change strategy thus stems from their understanding of the deeply relational, communicative nature of the self. We only come into being as subjects or persons through our constant exposure to the norms embedded in discourse, action and institutions, and to others, who (we) need to recognise us as such.

Exposure to norms and others is a prerequisite for being shaped or moulded into a person; at the same time, it renders us vulnerable. This is because of what Butler calls "normative violence", or the violence of the norm (Butler 2004b): dominant norms are always embedded in, and serving, dominant power relations. On a basic level, Butler's

social ontology implies that every person is in principle, constitutively, equally vulnerable because of the pervasive ways in which we are all exposed to, and dependent upon, social recognition in conjunction with dominant norms. On another level, however, vulnerability is differentially distributed, and the distinction between our shared ontological vulnerability (precariousness) and politically wrought vulnerability (precarity) is important here (Butler 2009). The potential for violence lies in the precise way in which norms distribute the terms and conditions of subject-formation. Simply put, where heterosexism, patriarchy and racism are dominant norms embedded in discourse and institutions, and in practices of recognition and knowledge production, and thus in self-understandings, there, bodies marked as gender nonconforming, female and/or black, are likely to struggle to appear as "proper" subjects and citizens, both to themselves and to others.

This is precisely the kind of situation where Butler would evoke the force of non-violent resistance, which is exerted where and when "a social and political practice [is] undertaken in concert, culminating in a form of resistance to systemic forms of destruction coupled with a commitment to world building that honours global interdependency . . . and equality" (Butler 2020, p. 21). We want to draw attention to a number of elements in this quote. First, note the element of collective action[3] ("undertaken in concert") in which shared resistance is expressed towards a situation that is read as systemically destructive. Moreover, this collective resistance is performed against the normative violence exerted by the dominant social system, which prevents some human beings from appearing as subjects and citizens in public spaces. For Butler, then, wherever there is performative resistance against oppression, one can discern a struggle against socially induced precarity or the destructive unequal distribution of the chance of becoming (social) subjects. Butler (2020, p. 10) therefore argues that "nonviolence requires a critique of egological ethics as well as of the political legacy of individualism in order to open up *the idea of selfhood as a fraught field of social relationality*" (emphasis added). Nonviolent resistance illuminates not only the direct suffering or grief carried by groups and individuals that struggle to appear as social subjects but also shows how social mechanisms operate in order to pre-emptively "disappear" that suffering as suffering, to render those lives publicly "ungrievable".[4] As Ruti (2017, p. 97) points out, Butler "deftly demonstrates [that] one of the ruses of power is to delimit the domain of grievability so that—under normal circumstances—we are prevented from mourning the suffering (or death) of those deemed different from, or inferior to ourselves". Grievability therefore does not only play a role at the end of a life: whether the loss of any particular life would register socially and publicly as a loss or not is already inscribed in the multiple ways in which people's lives are either materially and symbolically supported or not (Butler 2020, p. 59).

Note also from the quote above that the destruction (violence) identified in the system is opposed in nonviolent resistance not by yet another form of destruction but rather by a force of a different nature—by the power that springs from "a commitment to world building that honours interdependency and equality". The commitment to world building and respect for interdependency is rooted in Butler's social ontology, which is wary of processes of individualisation that turn the oppressed into the main cause of their own oppression and thereby obliterate or erase the largescale social complicity that is always needed for systemic oppression, as discussed. They relate equality with interdependence as follows: "Equality is . . . a feature of social relations that depends for its articulation on an increasingly avowed interdependency—letting go of the body as a 'unit' in order to understand one's boundaries as relational and social predicaments: including sources of joy, susceptibility to violence, sensitivity to heat and cold, and tentacular yearnings for food, sociality, and sexuality" (Butler 2020, p. 45). This quote helps us to understand why Butler proposes that a radically egalitarian imagination must inform nonviolent resistance and provides much of its countervailing force or impetus. For Butler (2020, p. 16), this radically egalitarian vision lies on the level of the social imaginary and springs from the understanding that each person is dependent, "or formed and sustained in relations of depending upon, and being depended upon". Thus, "social interdependency characterizes

life, and ... violence [is] an attack on that interdependency". Therefore, the infliction of harm (violence) requires a forgetfulness of interdependency, and the egalitarian imagination by contrast increasingly avows and reckons with it, also or especially, in how it performs its demands for social inclusion and change. The shape or nature of performative resistance must be compatible with the affirmation of equal grievability.

Active, collective resistance to destructive (bond-denying and -defying) norms must therefore take the form of bond-affirming ("world-building") yet transgressive action; the performance must be at once relational and resistant, resisting *through* relations. Put differently, in our activist attempts to change socially embedded norms, we must remain ever mindful of their very nature. Recall that norms only have power over us because and insofar as we repeat and uphold them in our everyday actions. In that sense, every norm that holds sway does so through a pervasive yet often silent social pact. This is why all lasting and effective change in the shared world depends upon new ways of acting, in concert, combined with a respect for fundamental equality. In addition, why those very ways of acting must be respectful of the ontological sociality or interdependence, or the very worldliness, of all meaning making, including subject-formation. The *force* of nonviolence as conceived by Butler lies in the fact that as collective transgressive action, it remains steadfastly social, communicative, relational and committed to "living and sustainable [and sustaining] bonds" (Butler 2020, p. 15). Concerted transgressive action therefore demonstrates and reveals at once the social nature and power of existing norms and their dependence upon obedient repetition, as well as their fundamental changeability.

Gandhi's ontological orientation takes another, yet comparable, route to nonviolent resistance. Butler (2020, p. 181) comments on what Gandhi calls "the law of love", which he views as "a higher law than that of destruction". True to Butler's social ontology, they state that his stance "may not rest upon a discoverable law" but rather function only rhetorically. However, Gandhi does not intend for the law of love to be a mere rhetorical device. In *Hind Swaraj* (CWMG (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi 1958) vol. 10, p. 84), Gandhi explains that the [human] universe would disappear without "the force of love and pity[5] [which] is infinitely greater than the force of arms". He writes, "[h]istory is really a record of every *interruption* of the *even* working of the force of love or of the soul ... History, then, is a record of an interruption in the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history" (CWMG 10, p. 90; emphases added). He gives the example of two brothers who overcome their mutual animosity as a story that would not go down in history. Soul-force or love force (*Satyagraha*) works evenly, constantly and unnoticed in the background, *building the world*, which is why the world as such is based "not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love". Similar to Butler, then, Gandhi also derives his nonviolent imperative from a vision of the human world as consisting of a fabric of social bonds, woven, built and continuously sustained through the force and labour of love and pity or empathy.[6] In contrast with Butler for whom the force of nonviolence derives purely from social bonds, Gandhi's ontology is however a religious one: truth force or soul force is an "indefinable mysterious power that underlies everything"; it is also called "God", by Gandhi.[7] He sees love force, truth force, or God, as "purely benevolent", for "in the midst of death, life persists, in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness, light persists". Therefore, if one aligns oneself with love force, one sides with and taps into the stronger force in the universe. For Gandhi, then, there is a force in the world, in the cosmos and in nature, that is a force for good and that exists independently of the human world but which underpins and sustains also the social bonds in the human world. This is why he claims, "as long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge [of *Satyagraha*], there can be only one end to the struggle and that is victory" (Gandhi 1928, p. 116). Drawing from this quotation, and because Gandhi understands nonviolence as tapping into a divine source, one might deduce that Gandhi is more optimistic about the effectiveness of nonviolence than the secular Butler. However, later in his life, Gandhi also experienced many setbacks and failures of his nonviolent tactics, most spectacularly with conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India. He was thus finally not naïve about the

limits of nonviolence and conceded cases in which the force of violence was needed (see Note 10). However, we think the larger point which he shares with Butler is to draw our attention to the *limits of violence* as an instrument for decisive and lasting social change, and to open up more strategic space for nonviolent tactics.[8]

Gandhi's nonviolence therefore comes from a different place than that of Butler but ends up being very similar in its practical implications.[9] Because *Satyagraha* is attuned with the love force, which is God, it aims for "the conquest of the adversary" purely through persuasion, since it cannot be reconciled with causing him harm. For Gandhi, his faith position implies that "hatred is a positive breach of the ruling principle" of *Satyagraha*, and therefore, it has no place within nonviolent resistance—it would oppose and thereby dilute or completely thwart this alternative force. Moreover, because love force or God is an ontological force, it (or He) is also latently present in one's adversary—there is always the chance that the opponent can (learn to) tap into their own capacity for love and pity.[10] The adversary or opponent is never the enemy whom one is allowed to hate—this is very similar to Butler's idea that nobody should be socially construed as finally ungrievable. The temptation to construe another person as ungrievable and therefore violable is particularly strong within the frame of self-defence, as we see below. For Gandhi, for the *Satyagrahi* to indulge in having enemies would be a failure of faith in the force of love. Instead of aiming to harm the adversary, therefore, *Satyagraha* aims for and "postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person" (Gandhi 1928, p. 124). Where hatred and violence attempt to either eliminate the opponent altogether or to coerce them into obedience, through the infliction of harm or threat of harm, love force instead aims for the opponent to change their own perspective, to learn something and to connect with their own capacity for love and empathy. With their notions of vulnerability, precarity and grievability, we have seen how Butler positions suffering as a central element that is evoked and activated through collective resistance. Similarly, yet differently, Gandhi sees "the potency of suffering" as "key to *Satyagraha*" (Ibid, p. 18). At first glance, their attitudes towards suffering as a key element of nonviolent resistance may appear quite different, as Butler sees hidden suffering as being brought to light and simultaneously resisted through collective nonviolent action, whereas Gandhi sees the collective nonviolent action or *Satyagraha* itself as necessarily entailing bodily suffering. We show why we regard their positions on this point as complementary rather than contradictory, under theme (iii) below.

For Gandhi, based on his faith-based ontology, nonviolence cannot be treated as a mere instrument that might be discarded and replaced with violence as a supposedly more efficient means. Hatred and harm cannot be a viable alternative to love and truth. This leaves us with the interesting implication that Gandhi's nonviolence is not in the first place or only a moral demand but fundamentally ontological and strategic.[11] In order to "see" the force of love as stronger than the force of violence and hatred, as Gandhi does, one needs a kind of countercultural imagination.[12] At least in many scholarly circles in the west, violence is viewed as ingrained and inevitable, an inherent part of agonistic politics, and the ideal of nonviolence is viewed as naïve and utopian. Nevertheless, Gandhi might be described as sharing with Butler their alternative, "egalitarian imaginary" (Butler 2020, p. 24), which insists upon foregrounding the human capacity for love and pity and which foregrounds a similar relational ontology. In addition, similar to Butler's understanding of the social construction of subjects, Gandhi has a keen insight into how everybody's understanding is a finite function of their time, their social group and their upbringing. A vivid example is when he decided not to hold then President of the Transvaal Republic, Paul Kruger's, blatant racism against him, seeing that Kruger had only ever read the Old Testament and regarded Indians as the "descendants of Esau" (Gandhi 1928, pp. 56–57). Long before scholars such as Chenoweth and Stephan (2013) did the research to back up the empirical claim, Gandhi's faith position led him to reject violent resistance as a relatively ineffectual short-cut (CWMG 25, p. 424) to social change, rooted in a lack of faith. This critical view of violence, which shares many elements with that of Butler, is discussed next.

2.2. Their Rejection of the Instrumental View of Violence

Neither Butler nor Gandhi believes that violence (understood as the wilful infliction of harm or threat of harm) can be successfully contained and limited to a mere means.[13] For Gandhi, this view is firstly derived from his understanding of the relation between means and ends more generally. He offers a simile, saying, "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree . . . We reap exactly as we sow" (CWMG 10, p. 81). Different means thus bring about totally different results and ultimately, "only fair means can provide fair results" (CWMG 10, p. 289). Gandhi accordingly denies that violence can be used purely instrumentally without affecting and infusing, even shaping, the ends. However, he gives a further argument which applies specifically to violence as the means and social change as the aim. If one tries to forcibly change the world through harming others, it means that one tries to fight destructive injustice with its own means—one becomes destructively unjust in one's own right, thereby in turn morally justifying a violent retaliation by the opponent. In *Hind Swaraj* (CWMG 10, pp. 92–93), Gandhi explains: "To use brute force, to use gunpowder . . . means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And, if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement."

Violent means can therefore never mediate or facilitate a qualitatively transformed, yet stable or peaceful society—they are more likely to inaugurate more violence and coercion and less fundamental social change; recall Chenoweth and Stephan's telling findings in this regard. Such a situation, where violence or brute force is resisted with brute force, inevitably represents for Gandhi an impasse in strategic terms. He likens it to a blind horse forever moving in a circle around a mill, under the delusion that it is moving ahead and making progress (CWMG 10, p. 93). As we have seen, he sees love force and brute force as completely different kinds, where the former "completely opposes and rejects brute force and the use of arms" and constitutes "a danger neither to person nor to property" (Gandhi 1928, p. 121). The core point here is that violent resistance repeats or doubles (mirrors) the oppressive violence it professes to oppose, leading to escalation without a logical end in sight.[14] This impasse is therefore related to the idea that fearful people are less open to changing their views of the world in accordance with the views of those they fear. The only way out of a cycle of mutually inflicted violence driven by both fear and hatred and the only way in which to cultivate an effective counter force are if the field of contestation is disrupted using a completely different logic such as that of *Satyagraha* or love force. This entails a force that is intent upon fundamental change brought about without harm to others: through persuasion and cooperation. This is the way in which Gandhi translates or transfers his spiritual ontology into strategic action for transformation. He draws our attention to both the limitations and the potential dangers of derailment inherent in the use of violent force, challenging the widespread belief in violence as the most effective means of change and in so doing, opens up a larger scope for nonviolent techniques of resistance. Gandhi further illuminates the relative impotence of violent coercion, as follows: when facing soldiers of peace, "the commands of the rulers [oppressors] do not go beyond the point of their swords, for true men disregard unjust commands" (Gandhi 1928, p. 94). This means that he understands the point of Butler about how docile obedience is necessary for the maintenance of any oppressive social order.

For their part, Butler (2020, pp. 13–14) explicitly thematises the same question: "Can violence remain a mere instrument or means for taking down violence—its structures, its regime—without becoming an end in itself?". They are doubtful whether violence can be contained and controlled as a pure instrument or *technē*, ready at hand, in the manner envisioned by many proponents of violent change, because they suggest that it is "precisely the kind of phenomenon that is constantly 'getting out of hand'". Resonating with Gandhi's understanding of the integral connection between means and ends, Butler (2020, p. 19) argues that "the tool is already part of the practice, presupposing a

world conducive to its use; that the use of the tool builds or rebuilds a specific kind of world, activating a sedimented legacy of use". Thus, what might be regarded as a mere *technē* to be taken up or discarded once the goal is achieved, instead "turns out to be a *praxis*: a means that . . . presupposes and enacts the end in the course of its actualization" (Ibid, p. 20). Violence better understood as *praxis* (rather than *technē*) can thereby be seen to inaugurate a more violent world: "the actualization of violence as means can inadvertently become its own end, producing new violence, producing violence anew, reiterating the license, and licensing further violence" (Ibid, p. 20). Read together, Butler and Gandhi draw our attention to how acts "speak", i.e., how they are always embedded in discursive systems and participate in them. Part of the way in which violent acts in particular speak is in legitimising wilful harm and thereby calling forth counterviolence springing from injury, fear and hatred. However, as Gandhi also argues, they are blunt instruments that can at most attempt to put fear in others; as speech acts, violent acts are therefore meaning-poor and fairly ineffectual in conveying new meaning in a persuasive way.

Butler further complicates the picture of violence as a speech act by pointing to the inherent ambiguity in the meaning/s of any action—an insight that springs from their understanding of performativity as repetition, which sometimes means to repeat differently or to parody a norm. At the same time, they offer a further argument against the instrumental justification of violence. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence", they ask whether "we can know violence outside of the justificatory schemes by which it is approached", especially those schemes that frame and justify state violence, and "the coercion at the heart of legal regimes", in instrumental ways (Butler 2020, pp. 122–23). Butler is concerned with how "states and legal powers" justify "their own violence as legitimate coercion" and cast all forms of opposition or resistance to existing norms—even peaceful or nonviolent ones—as unacceptable violence. Their discussion raises the broader philosophical question about the relation between an act and its meanings, i.e., the politics of naming violence (cf. also Thaler 2018). Butler shows how modern states tend to frame their own coercive strategies as legitimate, necessary, instrumental violence (or even as nonviolence, as merely "the maintenance of law and order"), and all forms of opposition, protest, resistance and criticism against state coercion as illegitimate violence (even if no harm is either enacted or threatened).[15] Butler thereby alerts us to the field of contestation and unequal power relations within which acts get labelled as either violent or nonviolent, "where the power to attribute violence to the opposition itself becomes an instrument by which to enhance state power" (Butler 2020, p. 5). This insight is similar to their understanding of how lives are socially and politically framed as grievable or not.

Linked with this problematic is the pervasive use of the plea of self-defence to legitimate all kinds of nationalist, imperialist and other aggressive and violent agendas. Butler questions how the "self" to be defended is construed and delineated in each instance, and to what extent that construction allows for whomever is thereby implicated as the enemy, to be turned into a nonsubject, ungrievable, and beyond the pale of moral consideration. Because most overt deployments of violence are justified using the language of self-defence, the discourse of self-defence needs to be interrogated further. Butler's main point in this regard is that we should rethink the identification and demarcation of the "self" who is in need of defence in any instance where self-defence is deployed rhetorically. Because of the way in which they describe the self or subject as thoroughly socially constituted, they can claim "[t]here is a sense in which violence done to another is at once a violence done to the self, but only if a relation between them defines them both quite fundamentally". Again, we see that one has to grasp how selves emerge from other selves and social conditions in order to be able to realise the extent to which violence enacted on another is violence also enacted on the self. This ontology is crucial for understanding and practicing nonviolent resistance as a kind of ongoing conversation between selves caught up on different sides of the same, mutually constituting web of interdependences.[16] To this extent, "violence assaults the living interdependency that is, or should be, our social world" (Butler 2020, p. 25). For Butler, the one who practices nonviolence is inextricably implicated with the one

who acts from a position of violence and vice versa. Part of the force of nonviolence therefore relates to its ability to expose a pre-existing, mutually interdependent, relationship (however fraught or destructive it might be), and explicitly activating it in transformative yet world-building ways. Nonviolence lies at the heart of a vision that understands the inescapability of having to live together, even with those human beings that one has most successfully disqualified from moral consideration.

For these reasons, Butler (2020, p. 63) argues that "there is no way to practice nonviolence without first interpreting violence and nonviolence, especially in a world in which violence is increasingly justified [as self-defence] in the name of security, nationalism, and neo-fascism". It is precisely in such a world we need to renew our understanding of what violence does when it attacks living bonds. In contrast, we should aim to extend the claims and reach of nonviolent transformation, which takes the form of "a physical assertion of the claims of life, a living assertion, a claim that is made by speech, gesture, and action, through networks, encampments, and assemblies; all of these seek to recast the living as worthy of value, as potentially grievable, precisely under conditions in which they are either erased from view or cast into irreversible forms of precarity" (Butler 2020, p. 24). Thus, the differential distribution of precarity cannot be ignored in these so-called claims to self-defence. What is at stake when the "selves" who are being violently defended all belong to the same religion, nation, neighbourhood, racial grouping or community? What if, for example, "the selves" that you are "justifiably" defending yourself against are perceived as ungrievable to the extent where defending yourself against them assumes that their lives do not matter (equally or even at all)? When your actions performed under the label of "self-defence" are themselves so pre-emptive and excessive that they can no longer be meaningfully distinguished from pure aggression? It is in this sense that we understand also Gandhi's claim that he has no enemies. If the nonviolent resister's actions are rooted in the kind of relational ontology that Butler and Gandhi propose, then the "luxury" of having enemies, i.e., of framing some (groups of) people as sacrificable and disposable in the name of social justice, is no longer available. With this problematisation of the meaning of actions, including their naming or labelling as either violent or nonviolent, legitimate or illegitimate, we now turn to the theme of nonviolence understood as meaningful action.

2.3. Nonviolent Resistance Seen as Communicative Action

We have already seen how Butler uses the idea of performativity to describe how subjects are constituted through the citational practices in which they partake. Applying this lens to Gandhi's *Satyagraha*, they claim that "[t]he 'soul force' that Gandhi had in mind was never fully separable from an embodied stance,[17] a way of living in the body and of persisting, precisely under conditions that attack the very condition of persistence" (Butler 2020, p. 201). One could thus try to flesh out what nonviolent resistance means for both Butler and Gandhi at a very concrete level: how do they see bodies act differently, i.e., in resistance to destructive norms, without availing themselves of violence? What exactly does nonviolent resistance look like concretely, and how does it communicate relationality (an existing social bond) and resistance at the same time? The first idea that the two thinkers share is that nonviolent resistance is neither passivity nor inaction; it is not submission or acquiescence or obedience; instead, it is calculated action. Indeed, when Gandhi first felt called upon to define or describe the "new principle" that had come into being through the collective Indian resistance to the Black Act in the Transvaal (passed in 1906), it was in order to distinguish it more clearly from "passive resistance" and from being viewed as "a weapon of the weak" (Gandhi 1928, p. 121). Gandhi again and again contrasts *Satyagraha* with submission or acquiescence, which results from fear and cowardice.

Secondly, Butler (2020, pp. 21–22) draws upon Gandhi to insist that nonviolence need not be divorced from rage, indignation, or aggression.[18] Nonviolence may well be rooted in these types of emotions and might even be "aggressively" pursued, not too dissimilar from Albert Einstein's description of himself as a "militant pacifist". Moreover, Gandhi says it is a force or strength "that arms the votary with matchless power" (Butler 2020,

p. 21). *Satyagraha* is "manly", he insists, because more courage and strength of character is required for its practice[19] even than for the practice of violent resistance (CWMG 10, p. 93). Notable is that both Butler and Gandhi agree that this "soul force" must be distinguished from the kind of physical strength which aims to coerce through inflicting harm, but that on the other hand, it remains an embodied manifestation (and performance) of strength and of power. Butler (2020, p. 22) describes this physical force as follows: nonviolent resistance presents "a force against force"; it is "an ethical stylization of embodiment, replete with gestures and modes of nonaction, ways of becoming an obstacle, of using the solidity of the body and its proprioceptive object field to block or derail a further exercise of violence". The power of nonviolence crucially does not lie in its ability to induce fear in the adversary nor to harm them. The performance must thus include a reinforcement of the pre-existing social bonds that bind even resister and oppressor to one another.

At the same time, however, the performance must demonstrate steadfast resistance to, and transgression of, the violent rules and norms that structure the relationship between the two parties, thereby also insisting upon change in the name of radical equality. The *Satyagrahis* use their bodies to enter a field of violence and to simultaneously expose, block, divert and neutralise that violence. Instead of threatening harm, nonviolent resistance aims to transform relationships and the norms that structure them. This is why the body that performs resistance in a nonviolent way must also be understood as engaging in a kind of speech act whereby it communicates a rich set of meanings to a wider world, inclusive of the adversary. Butler (2020, pp. 195–96) provides the example of the "standing man" demonstration in Taksim Square, Istanbul, in 2013, where the demonstrators illuminated the ban on public assembly and free speech, by bizarrely performing it perfectly, thereby simultaneously opposing it. In this manner, nonviolent resistance always forms a key part of a larger conversation and takes it further; it is dialectic at heart. Butler's key notion of performativity helps to draw out more clearly some of the implications of the power that Gandhi also discerns in the implementation of *Satyagraha*.

Both Butler and Gandhi understand that oppressive systems can only be inaugurated and sustained through the continued cooperation of the oppressed. We have already discussed how Butler sees performativity as the reiterative and citational practices of action, speech and bodily comportment that materialise norms in the world. Gandhi holds a similar view couched in an alternative vocabulary, when he says for example, "Whether there is or there is not any law in force, the Government [of Transvaal] cannot exercise control over us without our cooperation" (Gandhi 1928, p. 172). He thus, based on the traditional Indian practice of *dhurna*, urges the oppressed to withdraw their support and cooperation from the rulers: 'We cease to play the ruled' (CWMG 10, p. 114). In addition, in *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhi (1928, p. 144) quotes Kachhalia's speech, again emphasising the inherent limitations of (normative) violence:

> We know how powerful the Transvaal Government is. *But it cannot do anything more than* enact such a law [Black Act]. It will cast us into prison, confiscate our property, deport us or hang us. All this we will bear cheerfully, but we cannot simply put up with this law (emphasis added).

We know that with its beginnings in the Transvaal, *Satyagraha* entailed that participants first refused to obtain passes that would regulate their movement, courting arrest. After promises made by the government, they registered voluntarily for passes and in a third movement publicly gathered to burn their passes as a way of registering their disobedience to the oppressive norms contained in the Black Act (Gandhi 1928, p. 144). Even though the actions might seem to be contradictory, Gandhi explains in his narrative how they are part of an ongoing conversation between the Indian population and the Transvaal Government and how the different actions all correspond with essentially the same message of nonviolent noncooperation with the hate-filled spirit of the Black Act. Different expressions of that noncooperation were needed at different points in the dialogue. Typically, we become docile and obedient bodies out of fear of the hidden (or not so hidden) violence (used for punishing, shaming, ostracizing, or otherwise injuring or killing) that undergirds the

dominant norms. This is why it is imperative that in their public actions, *Satyagrahis* first and foremost display and communicate the absence of fear—this courage in an important way starts to shift relations of domination. This is because, as Gandhi understood, if one forces another to do something against their will, only through violence or threat of violence, then "what is granted under [such] fear, can be retained only so long as the fear lasts" (CWMG 10, p. 78). In contrast, nonviolent resistance aims to change the will of the opponent itself.

Both thinkers therefore conceive of nonviolent resistance as meaningful, communicative action, which plays out in a kind of dialectic that enters into conversation with violent oppression, even as it disrupts and deflates (indicates the inherent limits of) the latter's logic. Neither underestimates the salience of structural or normative violence that denies subject status to some groups of people. One could perhaps say that nonviolent resistance triggers the latent self-defence mechanisms of instituted norms and their guardians and thereby reveals the physical violence that lies coiled just underneath the surface of structural violence, parading as peace. Often, the open performance of disobedience reveals, through activating, the hidden yet pervasive violence required for the sustenance of the *status quo*. Another way of putting this point might be to say that nonviolent resistance brings privately suffered dehumanisation into the public domain and insists upon its political, thus shared, social, importance. It has a way of transforming or translating often indirect, mutely and passively borne violation, humiliation and suffering in the form of debilitating injustices, into a public spectacle of overt violence.[20] It thereby makes systemic, invisible injuries visible for a wider audience and calls everyone as a witness. As Butler (2020, p. 22) describes the bodily act of nonviolent resistance, it "exposes the body to police power" and it "enters the field of violence" and "exercises an adamant and embodied form of political agency". It thus seems that when bodies "speak differently" in this specific sense, they do the work of translating injustice into complaint, victims into political agents, the everyday into spectacle, and nonsubjects into subjects. They do this performatively, by bringing to light violence and suffering that had been designed to be invisible or at least normalised socially.

Thousands of "everyday", dispersed humiliations or degradations suffered by a whole community get telescoped, gathered together, in the body of the one who publicly performs the disobedience, who "gives his or her body" in this way, in an attempt to force the system to change. In order to shed light simultaneously on the dignity of the oppressed and on the indignity of their treatment by the system, these nonviolent resisters must often face the direct violence that their disobedient or queering actions tend to unleash. Gandhi understood very well that this type of action is likely to bring harm upon the resister, and he sees "the potency of suffering" as lying at the heart of *Satyagraha*. Because *Satyagraha* aims for "the conquest of the adversary" purely through persuasion, it cannot be reconciled with causing him harm. By suffering in one's own person (Gandhi 1928, p. 124), one performatively works to "transform both oneself and social reality", writes Butler (2020, p. 22).

With the help of Butler's lens of performativity, one can therefore see Gandhi's *Satyagraha* also as a kind of public performance furthering an ongoing conversation. It was important for him that *Satyagraha* must manifest as open, collective transgression enacted in public. He made sure the authorities were informed about their plans and about what exactly they meant to convey by their actions.[21] Truth and transparency were an indispensable part of the movement, and this is because a type of communication, a dialectic, characterises the actions of the *Satyagrahis*. When Gandhi looks back upon the confrontation between the Indian and White communities in Durban in 1896, he is convinced that "our firm stance proved [to the Europeans] that the Indians, poor as they were, were no cowards, and . . . were prepared to fight for their self-respect and for their country regardless of loss" (Gandhi 1928, p. 67). Foreshadowing the notion of *Satyagraha* as dialectic and resonating with Butler, Gandhi shows that the event not only communicated their resistance to their opponents but also to themselves: "The [Indian] community [in Natal] had an opportunity of measuring their own strength and their self-confidence increased in

consequence. I had a most valuable experience, and whenever I think of that day, I feel that God was preparing me for the practice of *Satyagraha*" (Gandhi 1928, p. 67). Recall that the first task of the nonviolent resister is to perform fearlessness, because fear of normative violence is what upholds any unjust system. By performing the self-respect, dignity and courage that manifest in active disobedience, the *Satyagrahi* galvanise love force within their own ranks and community and trigger the imagination of the oppressed as much as the oppressors and bystanders and of the larger world. Another organisation of the world starts to appear as possible and even desirable: it is the social imaginary that is activated.

These descriptions show clearly how the bodily performance of steadfast yet nonviolent resistance by the Indians in Natal and Transvaal acted at once communicatively (as relational) and transformatively (as resistance). It led to a re-evaluation of themselves and their relations with others in all of the affected parties, and even beyond them, in the larger national and international worlds. For the *Satyagrahis* to bodily perform their disobedience is to demonstrate that they have lost the fear that is needed to keep them docile, and in this manner, the "spell" that normative violence holds over a community is broken. When its rules are broken in such an open and collective way, everybody realises that the norms are dependent upon large-scale buy-in, upon a tacit social contract, and accompanying bodily habits, and that the social contract may have to be renegotiated.[22] This is the way in which *Satyagraha* as bodily performance has the power to change social realities. As a form of communication, it respects the social bonds that hold together the human world, but as a form of contestation, it insists that the way those bonds are organised is violent and destructive to some and therefore has to be, and can be, changed. By staging a different performance, highlighting the violent clash between the dignity of the lives of the oppressed and the destructive structures of oppression, it urges and supports the community as a whole to imagine a different social world, more respectful of everybody's becoming-subject. By forcing into the open a hidden clash or contradiction, *Satyagraha* tries to force some form of metaphoric resolution beyond the status quo: how should the social world and its embedded norms be transformed in order for the dignity of the oppressed to be accommodated within them? It should by now be clear why for both Butler and Gandhi, nonviolence cannot simply be one strategy amongst others (including violent ones)—just like violence, it cannot be reduced to *technē* but is properly understood as a *praxis*, a kind of virtue. This topic is taken further in the fourth and final theme.

2.4. Nonviolence Viewed as a Way of Life

It is noteworthy that a crucial moment at the start of the *Satyagraha* movement in Transvaal was the taking of an oath by the Indian community, on 11 September 1906. At the meeting that was held to decide how to respond to the proposed Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance (also called the Black Act), Seth Haji Habib proposed they should all "solemnly" declare "in the name of God that [they] would never submit to that law" (Gandhi 1928, p. 112). Gandhi, who was "taken aback" by Habib's proposal, because of its solemnity, then spoke at length to the meeting about the individual responsibility that goes with swearing such an oath. He stated, "Everyone must only search his own heart, and if the inner voice assures him that he has the requisite strength to carry him through, then only should he pledge himself and then only will his pledge bear fruit" (Gandhi 1928, p. 115). He laid before the meeting the likely harm they will suffer if they stayed on this path of nonsubmission, including imprisonment, insult, hunger, hard labour, flogging, fines, loss of property, illness, deportation, and even death. Recall that Gandhi understood suffering to be integral to the practice of *Satyagraha*. He also understood that what was required for its success was a steadfastness in the face of suffering, great personal strength. When it came to *Satyagraha*, there was no hiding in the mob: "Although we are going to take the pledge in a body, no one should imagine that default on the part of one or many can absolve the rest from their obligation" (Gandhi 1928, pp. 116–17). This understanding of the nonviolent resister as an internally disciplined individual, who holds firmly onto both love and truth at the same time, runs through all of Gandhi's writings.

When the Indians first read the Ordinance and saw that even women might be required to produce passes, one of them responded with anger, saying that if his wife were to be confronted in this manner, "[he] would shoot [the officer] on that spot and take the consequences". To this, Gandhi responded that the Ordinance is indeed "designed to strike at the very root of [Indian] existence in South Africa", but at the same time, "[i]t will not do to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from this onslaught. But God will come to our help, if we calmly think out and carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and bearing the hardship, which such resistance brings in its train" (Gandhi 1928, p. 110). Clearly, then, he recognises the legitimacy of their anger, but implies that to act purely out of emotion renders the action ineffectual. Acting from emotions of hurt weakens us; instead, the *Satyagrahis* must act out of strength, and thus the cultivation of inner strength and especially courage is a constant task of nonviolent resisters. This is why we do not fully agree with Butler (2020, p. 21) when they enlist Gandhi to argue that nonviolence might be "an expression of rage, indignation, and aggression" and "does not necessarily emerge from a . . . calm part of the soul". While resistance surely emerges from an emotional part of the soul, a place of righteous indignation, for Gandhi, *Satyagraha* as a collective movement must mediate and transform those emotions from (understandable) feelings of rage, helplessness, humiliation and so on, into the kind of strength and determination that accompany calculated and strategic action. Maybe above all, anger must be transmuted into the kind of self-discipline and willingness to self-sacrifice that the movement requires.

He speaks of *Satyagraha* as a type of warfare and *Satyagrahis* as "soldiers of peace" (CWMG 69, p. 274), who have to be similarly self-disciplined as soldiers of war, even much more so. Just as nonviolent resistance does not stand alone as a mere instrument or strategy but is rooted in a complete ontology (as explained in Section (i)), its practice should ideally be rooted in nonviolence as a virtuous way of life that is cultivated over time. Gandhi proposed various practices of what might be described (following Foucault) as "care of the self", including a vegetarian diet, physical exercise, physical labour, meditation, fasting, and so on. Because *Satyagraha* is a kind of virtue ethics, we have to acknowledge that it takes time to be cultivated, and Gandhi's own struggles have moreover shown that it often takes a long time to achieve the desired effect. The struggle in Transvaal lasted eight years (from 1906 to 1914). A large part of the *Satyagrahis*' steadfastness relates to their ability to keep at the struggle in the face of setbacks, even if it lasts years.

Although Butler does not engage directly with the self-discipline and self-sacrifice that Gandhi sees as required from the *Satyagrahis*, their lengthy engagement with the constant potential for relations of interdependency to "become a scene of aggression, conflict and violence" (Butler 2020, p. 50), because the human condition of interdependency is "intolerable" at times (Butler 2020, p. 96), resonates well with Gandhi's concern described above. Butler's understanding of nonviolence as a way of life is also embedded in their ethical praxis. In fact, Butler urges us to "embed our ethical reflections within an egalitarian imaginary" because "the imaginary life turns out to be an important part of this reflection, even a condition for the practice of nonviolence" (Butler 2020, p. 77). Part of practicing these ethical reflections, which Butler (2020, p. 64) views as a "relational obligation", also include continuously subverting and resisting individualised modes of subjectivity through collective, performative action.

Further, their social ontology and deep insight into our constitutive relationality are not a romantic picture; instead, our implicatedness in one another is "lived out as an ambivalent social bond, one that constantly poses the ethical demand to negotiate aggression" (Butler 2020, p. 69). With the help of Freud and Klein, Butler tries "to think aggression as part of any social bond" and to consider the ways in which we construct rationales for "acting aggressively against an aggression that is [supposedly] coming from the outside" (Butler 2020, p. 80). These rationales (of self-defence) usually occlude our own capacity for and involvement in, violence enacted upon others. Thus, for Butler, there is no pure love force, absolutely separable from hatred, as there is for Gandhi. Instead,

"hatred for the ones upon whom one is intolerably dependent is surely part of what is signified by the destructiveness that invariably surges forth in relations of love" (Butler 2020, p. 98). In fact, (western) "phantasies of sovereign self-sufficiency" are infantile remnants of this unbearable dependency, a dependency that can nevertheless never be eradicated (Butler 2020, p. 99). What we see them nevertheless share with Gandhi is the understanding that the capacity for violence exists in every one of us, not in spite, but because of our fundamental and ineradicable sociality, and that therefore, self-examination and vigilance about one's own capacity, even lust, for violence must form a constant companion to the ideal of nonviolence. Even more clearly than Gandhi, Butler sees how violence and nonviolence are intermingled, not only in the politicised nature of their respective naming, but also in the very act of resistance itself. This is why they remind us of everybody's capacity for violence, and to be mindful of "the tipping point, the site where the force of resistance can become the violent act or practice that commits a fresh injustice" (Butler 2020, p. 23). In this different emphasis, we detect a similar vigilance to Gandhi's concern about the purity of soul and steadfastness that we described as a kind of individual-focused virtue ethics in his thinking, but one might say that Butler's focus is more on the collective. They are namely concerned about the ever-present possibility that collective resistance may turn violent and become indistinguishable from the violence that it professes to oppose, thereby losing the force that is unique to a nonviolent stance.

3. Concluding Remarks

The need to reimagine and practice nonviolent resistance continues as violent institutions and systems prevail within the global and South African contexts, and as people attempt to oppose this violence through violence of their own.[23] These conditions, we expect, will only worsen in the near future, under the impact of global communicative diseases and other challenges related to the climate crisis that deepen and starkly illuminate growing inequalities. Social and economic change is as urgent as economic and technological changes, and thus questions about the best means for change will only intensify. In considering the option of nonviolent resistance, we should be encouraged and empowered by the Guidelines for the Right of Peaceful Assembly[24] adopted by the United Nations in July 2020 that strongly reinforce the right to nonviolent assembly and protest as an integral aspect of promoting and strengthening democracy.

We propose that the nonviolent option of social transformation that both Gandhi and Butler put forward is a valuable option, even if it requires patience, hard work, and endurance. It might even seem unfair to expect these virtues, together with self-discipline and self-care, from those who remain precarious and ungrieveable. However, from our righteous anger about the layers of oppression carried by the worst off, all citizens should draw inspiration for this struggle and build alliances with and between marginalized groups and communities. In this respect, social movements should think about building and training "armies of peace" drawn from different sectors of society. Crucially, if we cultivate the social imaginary that Butler and Gandhi both endorse, then both religiously and nonreligiously motivated citizens can together acknowledge the inescapability of our interdependency and on that basis form alliances around radical equality and world-building. Although the struggle is unlikely to be either quick or easy, their proposal of nonviolence shows how thousands of smaller struggles might be envisioned as joining up and taking on a whole new, collaborative character, inspiring all of us (including the authorities) at the level of the social imagination, leading to more lasting and more inclusive social transformation.

Notes

[1] Judith Butler identifies as nonbinary. We therefore make use of the they/them pronouns throughout this article. Our sincere thanks go to the two anonymous reviewers for *Religions*, for their very helpful suggestions, this being one of them.

[2] *Satya* means truth or love; and *agraha* means force.

[3] Foucault (1982, p. 781) formulates a similar criticism of individualism, saying our resistance must "attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way".

[4] Like vulnerability, grievability is also differentially distributed, says Butler (2009, p. 37). Their primary example is the ways in which the US citizens were individually mourned after 9/11, contrasted with the anonymity and subjectlessness of the thousands of Afghani citizens who were killed by the US military in retaliation (in *Precarious Life*, Butler 2004a). This idea of ungrievability resonates with Rob Nixon's discussion of slow violence. He writes, "By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." One of his examples is when toxins are dumped in Africa as an "out of sight" continent (Nixon 2011, p. 2).

[5] Gandhi's idea that empathy is a force active in the world is a precursor the work of Damasio (2000) on neuroscience, human cognition and the role of the emotions.

[6] With their shared emphasis on the work and force of love and social bonds, Gandhi and Butler may be said to share a feminist imaginary, although it remains problematic that Gandhi equates love force with nature and thereby might be accused of erasing typical women's work as labour.

[7] See his famous Kingsley Hall speech of 1931 (Gandhi 1931), available at Mohandas Gandhi—Address at Kingsley Hall—Online Speech Bank (americanrhetoric.com (accessed on 4 July 2021)).

[8] Butler and Gandhi are equally sceptical about the justification of violence as a more effective means to bring about social transformation, as we discuss in the next section. For example, Butler (2020, p. 13) writes: "One of the strongest arguments for the use of violence on the left is that it is tactically necessary in order to defeat structural and systemic violence, or to dismantle a violent regime, such as apartheid, dictatorship, or totalitarianism. That may well be right, and I don't dispute it. But for that argument to work, we would need to know what distinguishes the violence of the regime from the violence that seeks to take it down".

[9] This difference in their ontological basis (spiritual versus social) reflects the difference in the vocabularies that they use to describe our shared impetus for nonviolent resistance.

[10] There is some debate about this, but it would seem that Gandhi's principle of nonviolence is in the end not an absolute principle. He concedes that circumstances may arise where violent force is needed. See his discussion of some examples in *Hind Swaraj*, p. 80, a child rushing into a fire and a thief breaking into one's house. The point is that for Gandhi, such instances are exceedingly rare, and because nonviolence is better in every respect than violence, the former should receive much more scope and consideration from social activists. Similarly, Butler (2020, p. 56) writes, "nonviolence is not an absolute principle, but an open-ended struggle with violence and its countervailing forces".

[11] I (Louise du Toit) am grateful to the late Christof Heyns for bringing this point home to me in a discussion at STIAS during March 2021.

[12] In setting out his opposition to violence, Gandhi argues that his creed of nonviolence compels him to associate with "all those who believe in violence", but only in order to wean them away from their error. Tellingly, and somewhat tempering of his strong belief in nonviolence and love force, he adds, "Even if my belief [in nonviolence] is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion" (CWMG 25, p. 424). His "fond delusion" we argue, is a counter-cultural, or radically egalitarian, way of viewing the world.

[13] Of course, the rejection of an instrumental view of violence is shared by numerous advocates of nonviolence and not just Gandhi and Butler specifically. Hannah Arendt, for one, likewise cautions that violence tends to exceed the limits of instrumental logic, i.e., it has "an overwhelming and generative character . . . which, abandoned to its own logic, loses the distinction between means and aims" (Varela Manograsso 2017).

[14] This may be read as a kind of Girardian insight into mimetic desire which leads to an escalation of violence that eventually gets separated from the original source of desire and turns into a mirroring desire for violence as such (cf. Palaver 2013).

[15] An example is the frequency with which critics of repressive regimes are charged with "incitement to violence", whatever form their opposition takes. Butler (2020, p. 5) gives an example from Turkey, 2016.

[16] It is illuminating to refer here to the decolonising work done by Stein et al. (2021, p. 50). They describe "the house modernity built" (or modern coloniality) as founded upon the "illusion of separation", as if some people can be definitively and successfully separated from others, and humans from the natural world that sustains us.

[17] Gandhi held a dualist view of body and mind/soul (see, e.g., CWMG 52, p. 258), yet we agree with Butler who sees no inconsistency in asking how Gandhi's notion of "soul force" manifests in particular bodily behaviours, and one could add, in a variety of self-disciplining rituals such as fasting, prayer and handicraft.

[18]   We later show that Gandhi's understanding of the emotions is more complicated than Butler implies here.

[19]   An earlier footnote already commented on the problematic ways in which Gandhi genders *Satyagraha*. When it is linked with the cosmic love force, he seems to erase typical women's work of patient yet invisible world-building. However, he gives many examples of women's nonviolent resistance such as the Boer women and the Suffragettes that inspired him (Gandhi 1928). In other places in his work, he emphasises *Satyagraha* as a manly virtue, thereby equating women with cowardice. As with many other 'experiments with truth', he seems to have shifted his position over time, towards greater inclusion of women as practitioners of *Satyagraha*.

[20]   An excellent example is the peaceful civil rights marches that took place in Selma, Alabama, in the USA, in March 1965. They were met with considerable state violence, e.g., on "Bloody Sunday". In organising these protests, Martin Luther King Jr was greatly inspired by Gandhi (see Gandhi, Mohandas K. | The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute (stanford.edu (accessed on 5 July 2021))).

[21]   An example was the public burning of the passes in the Transvaal (Gandhi 1928, p. 312).

[22]   We are reminded of Abraham Joshua Heschel's insight that in a free society, if there is oppression and violence, only some are guilty, but all are responsible (see the documentary "Spiritual Audacity: The Abraham Joshua Heschel Story", MPT Presents | Spiritual Audacity: The Abraham Joshua Heschel Story | PBS)).

[23]   South Africa specifically witnessed recent protest following a court judgement that sentenced former-President Jacob Zuma to 15 months in prison. The provinces of Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng (coincidently where Gandhi also lived in South Africa) experienced civil disorder, including wide-spread acts of looting and violence (such as burning of trucks and looting of grocery stores). The events led to a death toll of over 300 people and thousands of arrests were made by the police (Thamm 2021). While it is beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that Gandhi and Butler read together offer an enriching perspective with which to analyse these events and consider the legacy of nonviolence for contemporary South Africa.

[24]   Christof Heyns headed up the committee that developed these guidelines.

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Article

The Non-Violent Liberation Theologies of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Mahatma Gandhi

Ephraim Meir [1,2]

1   Department of Jewish Philosophy, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University,
    Ramat Gan 5290002, Israel; meir_ephraim@yahoo.com
2   Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University,
    Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: This article explores how Gandhi and Heschel developed a liberation theology that was rooted in their religious praxis, which implied an active, non-violent struggle for the rights of the oppressed. A first section discusses what separates the two spiritual giants. A second section describes the affinities between them. The third, main section describes how they formulated a non-violent liberation theology that aims at the liberation of all.

Keywords: liberation theology; religions; suffering; tradition; Zionism; swaraj

1. Introduction

Judaism and Hinduism have much in common. Studies on the relationship between both cultures have blossomed (Goodman 1994; Holdrege 1995; Goshen-Gottstein 2016; Theodor and Kornberg-Greenberg 2018; Brill 2019). Barbara Holdrege, a comparative historian of religion, has characterized the Hindu and Jewish communities as non-missionary "embodied communities," with modes of bodily practice such as purity codes, sexual disciplines, dietary laws, and scriptures (Veda and Torah) (Holdrege 2013). Judaism and Hinduism value people and land, language (Sanskrit and Hebrew), and rituals and laws (dharmic injunctions and halakha). They are both an orthopraxis, concerned with right actions and performances. Given these commonalities, it is not surprising that Gandhi's relational thinking and Jewish dialogical philosophies also display similarities.[1]

In previous publications, I dealt with the similarities between Gandhi (1869–1948) and Levinas (1906–1995) and pointed to Buber's nearness to Gandhi, despite his criticism of the Mahatma in the thirties of the preceding century (Meir 2021a, 2021b). Another Jewish dialogical thinker close to Gandhi is Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972). In the present article, I demonstrate how Gandhi's active non-violent attitude in view of a change in society runs parallel with Heschel's social and political activities. More specifically, they were engaged in the non-violent liberation of people. In a way, Heschel's multiple social and political activities throughout the sixties until his death in 1972 continue Gandhi's liberating work for the Indian indentured workers in South Africa and later for the decolonization and spiritual independence (*swaraj*) in India. The former's endeavor to change the negative Christian attitude toward Jews and his—at that time unusual—engagement in favor of the black citizens in America are in line with Gandhi's pacifist worldview, aiming at the transformation of society. Just as Gandhi interpreted *swaraj* as implying a transformation of society and of the self, Heschel envisioned a model society in Israel, according to a prophetic blueprint. Gandhi and Heschel opposed war. I argue that both spiritual icons developed a liberation theology that was rooted in their unconventional religious worldview, which implied a non-violent struggle for the rights of oppressed and humiliated human beings. Their theologies had political relevance and led to social action.

Uma Majmudar has explored Gandhi's inner world and his search for Truth/God, which expressed itself in his active non-violence and service to others (Majmudar 2005).

She describes the evolution of Gandhi as a spiritual seeker and a man of vision and action. Heschel too combined religiosity and engagement in the world. Like Gandhi, he criticized a kind of religion that is severed from the world. Gandhi searched for the Truth in *samsara*, in the world. *Moksha* (liberation) was not outside, but inside, the world (Majmudar 2005, pp. 186–87). The two belonged to different worlds, but they underwent an amazing self-transformation, and their thoughts and acts had a global impact. They were profoundly religious men who were involved in a permanent struggle for equality and peace and who imagined a different society. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called Heschel a great prophet and was inspired by Gandhi. Reinhold Niebuhr, who taught at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, predicted that Heschel was "an authoritative voice not only in the Jewish community, but in the religious life of America" (New York Herald Tribune, 1 April 1951). For the pacifist clergyman John Haynes Holmes, Gandhi was "a great religious leader" and "the greatest man in the world" (Guha 2019, p. 184). Already in 1910 Pranjivan Mehta, before Rabindranath Tagore, called his friend Gandhi "Mahatma" "great soul" (Guha 2019, p. 164). The Trappist monk and later hermit Thomas Merton appreciated Gandhi and called him "one of the noblest men of our century" (Merton 1964, p. 32; 2007).[2]

Whereas Gandhi pled the cause of the Indians during his twenty-one-year stay in South Africa, Heschel supported equal opportunities for black people in the United States and defended the rights of three million Jews in the ex-Soviet Union (Kaplan 2007, pp. 214–34). They fasted and prayed as tactics of spiritual opposition (Kaplan 2007, pp. 305–13). Heschel opposed the American warfare in Vietnam and was the co-founder of the anti-war organization Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. In a more radical way, Gandhi disapproved of war as such.

A related salient characteristic of Heschel's and Gandhi's worldview is that they radically put themselves in the service of others. Echoing the prophetic empathy with the poor and with victims of oppression, Gandhi sided with his discriminated and unfairly treated Indian brothers and sisters. Much as Gandhi and his Jewish friend Hermann Kallenbach (1871–1945), Heschel heeded a prophetic call and became actively involved in social and political actions. He inspired Martin Luther King's vision, embodied in his speech "I have a Dream." In his own famous lecture "Religion and Race," held in Chicago in 1963, he stated: "The exodus began, but is far from having been completed. In fact, it was easier for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea than for a Negro to cross certain university campuses" (Heschel 1967, p. 85).[3] All had to be liberated. Racial prejudice was "*an eye disease, a cancer of the soul*" (Heschel 1967, p. 87). Marching at the side of King from Selma to Alabama, Heschel felt his legs were praying. In a letter to King, dated 29 March 1965, he qualified their famous walk a few days before (on 21 March) as "a day of sanctification."[4] Public humiliation was for him a form of oppression, worse than physical injury or economic privation (Heschel 1967, p. 88).[5] An infringement of human rights was a spiritual danger to the Kingdom of God. Heschel lived his prophetic faith in sympathy with the divine care especially for the under-privileged. Gandhi, in turn, wanted to restore the dignity of the Indians in defiance of British imperialism. Both men bring to mind the prophet Amos, who called for the liberation of all (Amos 9:7). Throughout history, the Bible was interpreted in view of the justification of racism. With the Bible in one's hand, one defended racial oppression. In order to counter such a scriptural-underpinned racism, Heschel and King referred to Amos in their struggle for equality of all (Johnson 2020).

Gandhi's permanent and fierce struggle for the equality of all parallels Heschel's opposition to racism as incompatible with religion: "Religion and race. How can the two be uttered together? To act in the spirit of religion is to unite what lies apart, to remember that humanity as a whole is God's beloved child. To act in the spirit of race is to sunder, to slash, to dismember the flesh of living humanity. Is this the way to honor a father: to torture his child? How can we hear the word 'race' and feel no self-reproach? [. . .] racism is worse than idolatry. *Racism is satanic*, unmitigated evil" (Heschel 1967, pp. 85–86).

With all their differences, Gandhi and Heschel imagined an alternative reality. Their religious thoughts inspired them to formulate a liberation theology, in which the unselfish

service to others was focal. Before expounding my main argument, I pay attention in a short section to what separates these exceptional human beings, who lived and worked in different situations. In a second move, I explore what unites them. In the last part, I explore how, in very different life settings, both spiritual leaders endeavored to formulate a kind of non-violent liberation theology that aims at the liberation of all.

2. Different Worlds

Gandhi's religiosity differed greatly from that of Heschel. Although Christian interpreters of Gandhi have superimposed their belief onto Gandhi,[6] he has to be understood firstly from his Hindu religiosity, which was already shaped in his childhood and youth (Majmudar 2005, pp. 42–44). He was raised in Vaishnavism, with its belief in Lord Vishnu and its avatars Rama and Krishna. He was influenced by the *Krishna-bhakti* that teaches that God is accessible to all and by the *Rama-bhakti*, which breached narrow caste, class, and gender divisions. In the latter tradition, the saint-poet Tulsidas occupied a central place. His Hindu epic *Tulasi-Ramayana* was read in Gandhi's household. Gandhi's mother adhered to the Pranami faith, in which the *Bhagavata Purana* of Vaishnavism and the *Qur'an* were closely linked. Vaishnavism and Islam peacefully coexisted. His mother also inserted Jain practices in her religious life, such as hard vows, palate control, and *ahimsa* (active non-violence), which was a means to the Truth. She practiced the Jain self-purification and self-perfection through *asteya* (non-stealing), *sunrita* (non-greed), *brahmacharya* (abstinence), and *aparigraha* (non-possession). She lived the Jain principle of *anekantvada* (many-sidedness of reality), which involved the validity-claim of all judgments. Gandhi's parents practiced the Vaishnava, Pranami, and Jain traditions (Majmudar 2005, p. 62).

Gandhi was a *bhakta*, who had God permanently in mind. Majmudar rightly remarks: "Although Gandhi believed in *Advaita Vedanta* (non-dualistic) philosophy of Hinduism, he was still a *bhakta* at heart—a man of prayer and inner contemplation, whose every breath, thought, and action was rooted in and dedicated to God" (Majmudar 2005, p. 186). By his experiments, he desired to realize the Truth/God. His optimism stemmed from his profound belief that God was present everywhere: all had the potential for goodness and forgiveness (Majmudar 2005, pp. 228–29). In the *Isha Upanishad* he found the kernel of his religiosity: all is filled by Isha (God) and belongs to God alone. One may enjoy what is given by God, but in detachment (Majmudar 2005, pp. 235–36).

Heschel belonged to an entirely different world. He was raised as a Hasid and he lived and transmitted a profound Hasidic tradition. Through his parents, Heschel was steeped in Hasidism. On his father's side, he descended from Dov Baer (the Maggid) of Mezeritch and Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt; on his mother's side, he descended from Levi Isaac of Berdichev. The Ba'al Shem Tov { XE "Baal Shem Tov" } (Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer) and the Kotzker { XE "Kotzker" } rebbe (Menachem Mendel Morgensztern of Kotzk) lived in his soul: the Ba'al Shem Tov represented love and compassion, but the force that called out to change the world was the prophetic voice of the Kotzker, with whom Heschel profoundly identified. Heschel's heart was with the Ba'al Shem Tov and his mind with the Kotzker (Heschel 1996b, p. xiv). While the former brought God near to the human beings, the latter challenged the view of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The Kotzker did not rest upon a glorious past but searched uncompromisingly and restlessly for the truth. He protested against mediocrity. Edward Kaplan, Heschel's biographer, { XE "Kaplan" } succinctly depicts Heschel's personality by writing how the two divergent teachers shaped Heschel's spiritual life: the optimistic Ba'al Shem Tov and the abrasive, judgmental rebbe of Kotzk { XE "Kotzk" }. Heschel was alert to the pervasiveness of evil and self-deception and awed by God's concern for humankind (Kaplan 2007, p. xi). The Ba'al Shem Tov and the Kotzker rebbe { XE "Kotzker rebbe" } were present in his personality as two figures, who generated a creative tension in his soul.

As a result of their different religious background, Heschel and Gandhi were almost opposites. Gandhi believed that human nature is intrinsically good. Brahman was present in all and had to be uncovered in reality through active non-violence. Heschel also saw

God mainly in the poor and oppressed, whose battles he fought. Yet, he sided with the Kotzker rebbe, who emphasized humans' problematic nature.

Dissimilar to Heschel, who emphasized the differences between religions, especially Judaism and Christianity, Gandhi was less interested in differences. The religion of non-violence was the only true religion, the ocean to which all religions flow. Human beings are not really separate. On the individual as well as on the collective level, separation and differences are an illusion (*Maya*). Gandhi largely overlooked differences.

At first sight, the worlds of Gandhi and Heschel greatly differ.[7]

Gandhi and Heschel travelled through completely different worlds: Heschel from Poland to Germany, to England, and to the USA and Gandhi from India to London and South Africa. Heschel went his own way by deciding to study in Vilna and Berlin and by adding social activities to his professorship. Gandhi stood alone against his caste elders, who disapproved of his plan to study in London, and returned as a barrister. Although they ostracized him and his family, Gandhi was resolute in shaping his own identity and becoming a lawyer and a perfect English gentleman (Majmudar 2005, pp. 75–76, 81). He became a bargainer, making many compromises, in his attempt to realize God through his non-violent way of living.

Differences manifest themselves on several other levels. Gandhi and his *satyagrahis* cheerfully went to jail. Pledging vows, they gladly took upon themselves self-suffering and self-purification as a transforming power, aiming at convincing the opponent of his wrong way. Self-punishment for justice characterized Gandhi's *satyagrahis*, who presented their vulnerable bodies to the violent oppressor, showing his inequity and the violence of his laws. With his self-penance and even self-sacrifice until death, if necessary, Gandhi aimed at persuading the adversary and transforming him. Heschel did not share Gandhi's radical self-suffering and self-purification. He lacked the self-austerity that characterized Gandhi, who lived a simple, self-sufficient life in his ashrams. Although he was self-disciplined and with self-restraint, he did not adopt Gandhi's renunciation and austere way of life. He did not take upon himself suffering in order to melt the heart of the opponent. Gandhi loved to be arrested and felt privileged to be removed forcibly as a result of his civil disobedience. He pled for the severest punishment and praised God to be worthy of his prison experience (Sarid and Bartolf 1997, pp. 50–51, 60). His ascetic, anti-hedonist tendencies and self-punishment, including even fasting to death, were a means of self-purification. Whereas an ascetic Gandhi took upon himself voluntary suffering and other austerities, Heschel used different strategies in his fight against violence and injustice.

Gandhi interpreted the Gita allegorically: it was a battle between positive and negative elements in the human being. He also read the Hebrew Bible allegorically. He followed the Christian traditional way of reading Paul, who wrote that the letter kills, whereas the spirit frees (2 Cor. 3:6). Heschel too wanted a spiritual reading of the Hebrew Bible, but unlike the traditional Christian reading of Paul, he remained with the letter that contained the spirit.[8]

Gandhi loved the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says that one has to pray for the enemies and love the ones who hate you. Heschel did not go so far as to love those who hate you. However, both found in their foundational religious texts the motivation for their social and political struggle against humiliation and discrimination.

3. Affinities

Although Gandhi's and Heschel's worlds differ greatly, they also meet. As I will explain in detail in the next section, religion as implying action and empathy with suffering people was central in their worldviews. To be human implied to suffer with and for others.[9] Heschel wrote much about rituals and prayer (Heschel 1939, 1954). Yet, he emphasized that they had to lead to action. Religion was not a sanctimonious bubble above reality and far removed from everyday life. Like Heschel, Gandhi distanced himself from the humbug of his religion (CWMG 1999, 11: 64–65). Gandhi was not a temple-goer and did not build temples in his ashrams. Heschel did regularly attend synagogue services.[10] Yet, both knew that God

was not to be found in temples but rather in the face of the oppressed, whose suffering had to be alleviated. Religion had to be brought into contact with economic, social, and political life. It pervaded the entire existence and was relevant also and foremost for politics. One was in contact with God not in seclusion but by working in a concrete, messy world. Gandhi opposed the discrimination of the *Dalit*. In his view, untouchability was irreligion. He could not conceive of politics as divorced from religion (Harijan, 10 February 1940).

Gandhi and Heschel did not fear the authorities when they protested and breached existing norms. In Butlers' terminology: they imagined an alternative social society in which all lives are grievable and equal (Butler 2020). Judith Brown pointedly remarked that Gandhi "was profoundly God-centered and man-oriented" (Brown 1989, p. 90). God was to be found in the face of the downtrodden and outcast. All had "sparks of the divine"; all were rooted in God and therefore interconnected (Majmudar 2005, p. 139). Similar to Heschel, Gandhi served God by caring for the poor and the afflicted. He was ready to die for the sake of the untouchables. "I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived" (CWMG 1999, 51: 62). He loved the poorest of the poor, the *Dalit*, calling them *Harijans* (Hari = God; jana = people). Gandhi and Heschel revitalized and regenerated their tradition. Just as Gandhi saw Brahman in all, Heschel perceived God in every human being.

3.1. The Insufficiency of Human Language

Gandhi was aware that human words are inadequate to express the Divine. In Heschel's depth-theology, the Ineffable cannot be reduced to human concepts. Scriptures are a mixture between the Divine and the human. Following the Jewish tradition, Heschel emphasizes that the divine name is ineffable. "Our creed is, like music, a translation of the unutterable into a form of expression. The original is known to God alone" (Heschel 1951a, p. 167). Our words are allusive and hinting (Heschel 1951a, p. 16). Religious language is not denotative and unequivocal but connotative and polyvalent: "[. . .] poetry is to religion what analysis is to science, and it is certainly no accident that the Bible was not written *more geometrico* but in the language of poetry" (Heschel 1951a, p. 37).

Gandhi and Heschel developed similar ideas on God and human concepts. In Gandhi's view, God appears in the form in which one worships, which implied that one must allow that He appears in other forms to others too (Chatterjee 1983, p. 23). The Truth or God was experienced in multiple ways; it was above words. The concept of God was not God. Similarly, Heschel refused to reduce God to a human concept of God. He wrote: "to equate religion and God is idolatry" (Heschel 1996a, p. 243). He could not stand the idea that one's God is not the God of others.

3.2. Beyond the Confessional

Heschel's thoughts on depth theology come close to Gandhi's thoughts on "religion underlying all religions" (Gandhi 2009, p. 41). Just as Heschel's depth theology united people, Gandhi's belief in the divine presence in everybody made it possible to look to what unites more than to what separates. The "religion underlying all religions" was the pursuit of Truth: it was present in all religions, transcended them, and allowed to see the equality of all. The religious truths were relative; they were different sides of the Truth (Majmudar 2005, pp. 106–7). For Gandhi, the Truth was God. It was the praxis and social action that made the manifestation of Brahman in everybody and everything visible. For Heschel, God's Name was at stake in the struggle for the equality of all.

Heschel and Gandhi did not accept Christian exclusivity. Yet, they had many Christian friends. The English priest Charles Freer Andrews was Gandhi's close friend, who appreciated, but also criticized, the Mahatma, as real friends do. Gandhi visited the Trappists at Mariann Hill, where he met monks who were vegetarians, living in silence and chastity, performing manual labor like carpentering, shoemaking, and printing. King and Merton were amongst Heschel's friends. In his endeavor to change the Christian attitude towards

Jews, Heschel was in contact with Cardinal Augustin Bea and even went to Rome to talk with the Pope for the sake of the Jewish people.

3.3. Prayer, Prophecy, and Activism

For Gandhi and Heschel, prayer and activism went hand in hand. Their religiosity was intimately linked to justice, compassion, and reconciliation. Heschel perceived prayer as turning oneself to God and making God immanent. In prayer, one becomes aware of the divine presence and realizes that one is the object of God's concern. To pray was "to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the Divine margin in all attainments" (Heschel 1954, p. 5). Before the divine face, the usual becomes unusual, and daily life becomes wondrous. In the "spiritual ecstasy" of prayer, one does not leave the world but sees it in a different light (Heschel 1954, p. 17). Self-consciousness is replaced by self-surrender, which is not a mystical negation of the ego but rather a state where God becomes the center and where one perceives the world in the mirror of the holy (Heschel 1954, p. 7). Heschel wanted to become a *shivitti*, a living reminder of having God's face permanently before oneself.[11]

In an interview with Carl Stern, conducted on 4 February 1973, Heschel stated that his work on *The Prophets*, published in 1962, prepared him for his social action. He became involved in the plight of the Vietnamese people, precisely because of his spiritual discipline, which made him sensitive for the suffering of others, dismissed by many American citizens. His religious inwardness expressed itself in reverence of the human being, who was a divine image: God was present in the human being. In Heschel's theology of pathos, the prophets were spiritual radicals, who identified with God's care for humankind and who became socially and politically involved. The human being was "a disclosure of the divine, and all men are one in God's care for man. Many things on earth are precious, some are holy, humanity is holy of holies" (Heschel 1991, pp. 7–8). Heschel criticized routine prayer without *kavvana* (intention). Prayer without an ethical life was a lie: "Prayer and prejudice cannot dwell in the same heart. Worship without compassion is worse than self-deception, it is an abomination" (Heschel 1967, p. 87). The spiritual discipline of prayer educated the human being to live a life in the face of God.

4. Non-Violent Liberation Theologies

The previous section dealt with the many parallels between Gandhi's and Heschel's thoughts and acts. The most striking affinity between them lies in the conception and realization of a non-violent liberation theology, in which God is present in all his creatures. They aimed at transforming human beings into humble servants for each other. To be sure, Gandhi was less systematic than Heschel in shaping his religious thoughts, but, like Heschel, he uttered them in view of the liberation of all. Their theologies contested economic and political inequalities. The main objective of their religious thought was the improvement of the situation of the oppressed, the poor, and the disenfranchised. They did not close themselves in small community life and did not content themselves with rituals. Their religiosity forbade the humiliation of others and implied the mending of the world.

Whereas liberation theologies in the seventies of the preceding century and also today are at times associated with violent struggles and armed rebellion, Gandhi's and Heschel's liberation theologies were explicitly non-violent. It is not to be excluded and even plausible that Heschel heard about Gandhi's *satyagraha* through his friends Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton, who admired Gandhi. In his prophetic religiosity, which asks for the mending of the world and for activity in the social, economic, and political arenas, Gandhi defended the defenseless and supported the cause of the oppressed and the poor. His active non-violence wanted to uncover Brahman in all that lives. Many times, the Bhagavad Gita affirms the identical existence of God in all beings. So, for instance, in chapter 13:18: "The Supreme God exists identically in all beings" or in chapter 18:61: "God abides in the heart of all beings." King, Heschel, and Gandhi loved to march for the cause

of the disadvantaged and in support of civil rights. Their marches were a religious act, a non-violent testimony to the presence of God in all human beings.

In the US, where racial segregation was common, Heschel stated: "From the point of view of religious philosophy it is our duty to have regard and compassion for every man regardless of his moral merit. God's covenant is with all men, and we must never be oblivious of *the equality of the divine dignity* of all men. The image of God is in the criminal as well as in the saint" (Heschel 1967, p. 95). For him, "[t]he symbol of God is man, every man" (Heschel 1967, p. 95). The human being was created in the image of God and in His likeness: "Man, every man, must be treated with the honour due to a likeness representing the King of kings" (Heschel 1967, p. 95).

In his Yiddish poems, Heschel identified with God's concern for suffering people. Parallel to Gandhi, he developed a theocentric view in which the human being was considered to be "something transcendent in disguise" (Heschel 1951a, p. 47). Whereas Gandhi uncovered Brahman in all human beings, even the evil ones, Heschel in his neo-Hasidic view looked for the divine "sparks" in the souls of all (Heschel 1996a, p. 250).

Gandhi lived his relationships with people in interconnectedness. Like Heschel, he was convinced that only deep interaction with others could lead to a better future. Brahman was in everyone; one had to make efforts in order to become conscious that creation was nothing less than Brahman's self-multiplication. The unity of mankind unveiled the oneness of God: "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source" (CWMG 1999, 25: 199).

4.1. Suffering the Sufferance of Others

Much like Gandhi, whose religiosity manifested itself in the understanding of the pains and suffering of others, Heschel suffered with the sufferers and shared the hope of the dispossessed and the oppressed (Kaplan and Dresner 1998, p. 79). In a parallel way, Gandhi experienced the suffering of (human and non-human) others as his own suffering. His favorite hymn "The true Vaishnava" begins with the words, "He is a real Vaihsnava, who feels the suffering of others as his own suffering" (Chatterjee 1983, p. 27). He saw his God Rama "face to face in the starving millions of India" (Chatterjee 1983, p. 17). Meeting poor peasants and living with untouchables, he felt face to face with God. A first untouchable family entered in the Sabarmati ashram, which was founded in 1915. Like Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi saw God in the faces of the poor (Chatterjee 1983, pp. 178, 256). Similarly, in his Yiddish poem *Ikh und Du*, Heschel recognized God and himself in the bodies of millions "as if under millions of masks my face would lie hidden" (Even-Chen and Meir 2012, pp. 16–17).

Gandhi's empathy for the poor and the maltreated runs parallel with the Jewish prophets, who—according to Heschel—identified with the divine pathos (Heschel 1962). Heschel and Gandhi were modern prophets, who cared for the humiliated and protested against white privilege and white supremacy. They felt the pain of others. Gandhi even wanted to be reborn as an untouchable, sharing their degradation. He belonged to the class of the traders. Yet, Brahmans, warriors, traders, workers, and untouchables were all equal in that all had to perform humble and polluting tasks. In Gandhi's non-dualist religiosity, God was present in all of them. Following John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi thought there was no social hierarchy and no distinction in status in the *varnas* (classes) (Markovits 2000, pp. 182–88).

4.2. Guilt

Gandhi and Heschel emphasized the responsibility of each individual for all. They both wrote and talked about responsibility and about guilt as its counterpart. February 1938, Heschel lectured before a public of Quakers (Kaplan and Dresner 1998, pp. 259–62). He reminds their leaders that human beings are in the likeness to the Creator. He further quotes the Ba'al Shem Tov, who said: "If a person sees something evil, he should know

that it is shown to him so that he may realize his own guilt—repent for what he has seen." All had to repent, victims and evildoers. God was in exile, imprisoned in temples. Only by abandoning indifference could one bring an end to the divine exile: "Perhaps we are all now going into exile. It is our fate to live in exile, but He has said to those who suffer: 'I am with them in their oppression.' The Jewish teachers tell us: Wherever Israel had to go into exile, the Eternal went with them. The divine consequence of human fate is for us a warning and a hope" (Kaplan and Dresner 1998, pp. 261–62). God wanted the human being; He went into exile with his *Shekhinah* (the divine Inhabitation). He suffers with the fate of the world, until all is united by human beings. In difficult times, Heschel said that all have to repent.

In a parallel manner, Gandhi used to fast when something went wrong and when people did not behave as non-violent *satyagrahis*. He felt himself the guilty party (CWMG 1999, 21: 462–64, 481). Gandhi blamed himself for what befell the Indians in colonial Africa and India. Faced with evil, both Heschel and Gandhi strived for self-improvement. They turned inward in self-examination. In their attempt to change evil, they looked for ways to counter the tide.

4.3. Use of Religious Sources

In their liberation theology, Gandhi and Heschel developed a non-violent hermeneutics of their foundational religious sources. Just as the Gita was for Gandhi the book par excellence, the Hebrew Bible was for Heschel the most holy book. The Bible had a message for the world: "It would be an achievement of the first magnitude to reconstruct the peculiar nature of Biblical thinking and to spell out its divergence from all other types of thinking. It would open new perspectives for the understanding of moral, social and religious issues and enrich the whole of our thinking. Biblical thinking may have a part to play in shaping our philosophical views about the world" (Heschel 1976, p. 23, n. 8).

The Bible as well as the Gita were used for violent purposes. Many times, one read the Bible in function of white supremacy and the privileges of whiteness. In the United States, one turned to the Bible in order to justify slavery (Johnson 2020, pp. 41–46). In South Africa, the Boers saw themselves as elected. They read the Bible in a racist way. Gandhi emphasized non-violence in biblical literature and interpreted the Gita as describing the inner battles of the human being. His allegorical interpretation of the Gita runs parallel with King's peaceful use of the Bible. In his previously mentioned speech, "I have a dream," King referred to the prophet Amos in affirming: " [. . .] we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24) (Johnson 2020, p. 49).[12] Heschel identified with King's peaceful struggle for an egalitarian society and participated in mass protests of the black people in America. In a prophetical manner, he became intensely involved in worldly affairs. Racism and religion excluded each other (Johnson 2020, p. 48).

In their struggle for human rights, Gandhi and Heschel used religious texts that linked religiosity and politics. They participated in public assemblies that contested the status quo and promoted the equality of all. They desired to change politics and bring it into contact with spiritual realities. In Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi 2009), home-rule or *swaraj* (swa = self; raj = rule), was not merely presented as political independence; it was an elevated spiritual reality.

4.4. Religions in the Service of Humankind

In his lecture "No Religion Is an Island," Heschel stated that the diversity of religions was "the will of God" (Heschel 1996a, p. 244). According to Harold Kasimow, Heschel was "a Jewish interreligious artist" who does not enter easily in the Christian categories of inclusivism or pluralism. He deems that Heschel cherished his Judaism and was convinced of the truth of his religion, but he saw that there was more than one way of serving God, although traditions were not "*equally*" valid (Kasimow 2009, pp. 199–200).

Heschel wanted religions to be involved in the world, but he did not develop an interreligious theology, in which interaction between religions leads to mutual learning and criticism and in which one does not leave a dialogue without being changed. Rather than formulating an interactive theology, he underscored the common task of all religious people, especially of people belonging to the Abrahamitic religions, and he described conditions for an interreligious dialogue (Heschel 1996a, pp. 239–40). He met with Cardinals Bea and Willebrands and with Pope Paul VI and was in dialogue with Thomas Merton and Reinhold Niebuhr. Through encounters and dialogue with religious others, he contributed to a more positive approach to Jews and Judaism.

Heschel and Gandhi did not develop a full-fledged interreligious theology. Yet, their openness to religious others and their interaction with them represent the basis for the construction of such a theology. Whereas Heschel focused on Jewish–Christian relations, Gandhi's interest was much broader. He read books on other religions, including Zoroastrianism and Islam. Prayers from different traditions were an integral part of the routine in his ashram. He valued the great variety of religions and focused upon the Hindu–Muslim relation, in view of the necessity of their cooperation in India. The spinning wheel that was so crucial in the *swadeshi* movement had to appear on the flag together with the green and red colors that represented Islam and Hinduism (Kapoor 2017, p. 142).[13]

Gandhi's and Heschel's religiosity was praxis-oriented. Gandhi conducted a lifelong interreligious dialogue and endeavored to move religious others to a non-violent way of life. There is an evolution in his thoughts on other religions (Meir 2021b, pp. 2–3). Gandhi himself was conscious of his own evolution and maintained that his later opinions were decisive. Although he accentuated the differences between religions less, he knew about "trans-difference," in which there is unity but also a multitude of particularities. He dealt with all kinds of diversity: children, women, languages, and religions. He was a real pluralist, although one may also find inclusivist standpoints when it comes, for instance, to Buddhism and atheism.[14]

Like Heschel, Gandhi was an engaged human being, who inserted religion conceived as non-violence into politics and social life. In this manner, he influenced many people, including Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King and entire social movements such as engaged Buddhism (King 2009, pp. 2, 11). His Tolstoy Farm, created in 1910 and located near Johannesburg, was an experiment; it was "a center of spiritual purification and penance for the final campaign" (Gandhi 1968, p. 239). There were Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Christians (Gandhi 1968, p. 219). Although Christians and Muslims in the ashram were used to eating meat, it was decided to stop eating meat because of religious others. This, of course, solved problems between religions and promoted *satyagraha* as a non-violent religion. On the occasion of the decision of abstaining from meat, Gandhi noted: "[. . .] where love is, there is God also" (Gandhi 1968, p. 220). At school in the ashram, children of various faiths learned together. Muslims read the Qur'an, Parsis the Avesta, and one read, of course, Hindu texts (Gandhi 1968, pp. 224–25). The aim of the education, in which Gandhi was actively involved, was the cultivation of a spirit of friendship and service (Gandhi 1968, pp. 224–25). At prayer time, they sang *bhajans* (hymns), sometimes there were readings from Ramayana or a book on Islam (Gandhi 1968, p. 229). When Muslims fasted, there was only one meal for non-Muslims, at the evening before sunset, then for Muslims after sunset and in the early morning. Such a solidarity and sensitivity are characteristic for Gandhi's view on interreligious cohabitation. Like Gandhi, but less infrequently, Heschel prayed with religious others, for instance with King.

In his "Constructive programme" addressed to the members of the Indian National Congress in 1941, Gandhi reminds the Congressmen of the concrete steps of his political philosophy (Gandhi 2009, pp. 169–80). In view of the betterment of the life of all citizens, he emphasizes the need of a "communal unity" or "an unbreakable unity" (Gandhi 2009, p. 170). Every Congressman should "represent in his own person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc., shortly, every Hindu and non-Hindu" and "have the same regard for the other faiths as he has for his own . . . " (Gandhi 2009, p. 170).

In her doctoral thesis, Nicola Christine Jolly remarked that Gandhi's religiosity allowed him to be in touch with religious others, with whom he became friends. His friendship with them was relational, web-like, which supplements other ways of dialogue (such as the academic one or the official institutional one) (Jolly 2012, pp. 312–13). In his ashram, prayers were inter-religious, and religions were equal. With time, he adopted a positive attitude to inter-caste marriage and inter-dining (Jolly 2012, p. 108).

Jolly describes Gandhi as a pluralist, who maintained that no religion can have a full grasp of the multidimensional Truth, since all religions are mere human responses to God. For Gandhi, a moral atheist like Gora was truly "religious" (Jolly 2012, p. 43). Gandhi was influenced by atheists, who fought against injustice of the Hindu orthodoxy (Jolly 2012, p. 110). His standpoint towards atheists was inclusive, rather than pluralist, given the fact that in his adagio "Truth is God," the term God is still present.

Gandhi was a *sanatani* Hindu, who believed in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita. However, these scriptures had to stand the test of reason (Majmudar 2005, p. 190). As I noted, his was most of all a religion of non-violence, which he found in all religions. He therefore could not stand the humiliation and the violence committed towards the untouchables.

Gandhi wanted to understand Christians from a Christian viewpoint and Muslims from a Muslim viewpoint. Yet, he himself looked at the Jewish tradition through Christian lenses (Meir 2021b, pp. 5–10). In principle, he respected the writings of religious others and wanted to interpret the writings of a religious tradition in the way the best minds of that tradition understood their own tradition. Basically, he would not dare to criticize these writings as an outsider, since he himself had experienced how outsiders of his own tradition had attacked it out of ignorance: "I have nowhere said that I believe literally in every word of the Koran, or for the matter of that of any scripture in the world. But it is no business of mine to criticize the scriptures of other faiths or to point out their defects. It is and should be, however, my privilege to proclaim and practice the truths that there may be in them. I may not, therefore, criticize, or condemn things in the Koran or the life of the Prophet that I cannot understand. But I welcome every opportunity to express my admiration for such aspects of his life as I have been able to appreciate and understand. As for things that present difficulties, I am content to see them through the eyes of devout Mussalman friends, while I try to understand them with the help of the writings of eminent Muslim expounders of Islam. It is only through such a reverential approach to faiths other than mine that I can realize the principle of equality of all religions. But it is both my right and duty to point out the defects in Hinduism in order to purify it and to keep it pure. But when non-Hindu critics set about criticizing Hinduism and cataloguing its faults they only blazon their own ignorance of Hinduism and their incapacity to regard it from the Hindu viewpoint. It distorts their vision and vitiates their judgement. Thus my own experience of the non-Hindu critics of Hinduism brings home to me my limitations and teaches me to be wary of launching on a criticism of Islam or Christianity and their founders" (CWMG 1999, 64: 332).

4.5. Between Tradition and Renovation

In the formulation of his liberation theology, Heschel differed from Gandhi in that he was less of a reformer than Gandhi. He was a traditional Jew who went to the roots of his tradition, in which the identification with the discriminated was the alley to the Divine. As a Jew who knew about oppression, he developed a solidarity with the oppressed. He distanced himself from a pious Hasidism and found in the prophets a religiosity that was socially and politically relevant. The prophets were his heroes, because they sympathized with the divine concern for the poor and the suffering. God was a responsive God, a most moved mover, suffering with the sufferers. The prophets identified with His pathos. Heschel's and Gandhi's liberation theologies were the result of their religious engagement in the world. They refused to remain passive in front of political injustice, but they abhorred armed rebellion.

Gandhi lived his Hindu tradition and loved other religious traditions in as far as they were committed to an ethical life and to communication and dialogue. Religion with a capital letter was instrumental to create a "new we," in view of the good for all (Kalsky 2014a, 2014b). All religions contained care and compassion for the other. Gandhi deemed that belonging is not merely belonging to the own group, it was a world-wide belonging to all: a universal brother- and sister-hood. However, he opposed the abolishment of the caste system and the principle of hereditary occupation as the kernel of this system. The hereditary principle was an eternal principle and to change it was to create disorder. He reformed Hinduism, but only partially. His traditional standpoint raises the question of how this structural violence was compatible with his non-violence. He was severely criticized by the *Dalit* dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), who opposed the caste system in his book "Annihilation of Caste." That system was hierarchical and discriminatory and had to be abolished. Drawing consequences, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism (Anand 2014). He wanted the *Dalits* to have the same status and opportunities as everybody else. He accused Gandhi of speaking in different voices: one in English in *Young India*—later *Harijan*—and another in his publications in Gujarati language in *Navajivan*—later *Harijan Bandhu*. It was not enough to allow *Dalits* the entry in a temple and give them the name *Harijans*, "people of God," as Gandhi did in 1933. More had to be done. Ambedkar could not see Gandhi as representing the *Dalits*. Against Gandhi who refused isolation and fragmentation, he wanted a separate electorate for the *Dalits* in the Congress.[15]

The human rights activist Arundhati Roy has also severely criticized Gandhi.[16] In her introduction, "The Doctor and the Saint," to the critical edition of Ambedkar's book, she mentions that Gandhi distinguished between the Indian business men, the "passenger Indians," and the indentured laborers, who mostly belonged to lower castes. She quotes Gandhi, who wrote on these laborers that they did not have any moral or religious instruction worthy of the name (CWMG 1999, 1: 200). The indentured workers were different from his own group. Roy notes that Gandhi did not want Indian prisoners in the same jails as the Kaffirs (CWMG 1999, 9: 256–57). Moreover, Gandhi and the "passenger Indians" were loyal to the British and served in the war on their side. They belonged to the "Imperial Brotherhood" (CWMG 1999, 2: 421). Yet, recently, Coovadia criticized Roy, who did not grasp Gandhi's radicalism, his personal independence, and his rapid change. Coovadia notes that the hope of "Imperial Brotherhood" was given up with Gandhi's translation of Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindu* into Gujarati and with *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi 2009) (Coovadia 2020, pp. 59–60). Gandhi had a complex approach to his tradition, which he kept and reformed. The problem of traditions lies in shaping the collective self on the negative background of others. In the worst-case scenario, the own value is affirmed, whereas others are devaluated. In this way, inequality and discrimination are born or kept alive; the humiliation of the ones constitutes the greatness of the others. Gandhi was aware that traditions are threatened by fear and segregation of the other.[17] He deemed that one may overcome these negative tendencies in tradition by realizing universal brother- and sister-hood. He affirmed the equal worth and dignity of every human being in an inclusive, non-discriminating community.

Gandhi departed from the traditional understanding of Hindu terms. For instance, whereas *ahimsa* was traditionally defined as non-injury and non-killing, Gandhi added to it compassion or love: "Where there is no compassion, there is no *ahimsa*" (CWMG 1999, 40: 192). *Ahimsa* meant active love. This positive interpretation and broadening of the traditional term *ahimsa* allowed Gandhi to be actively involved in the world. He referred to Tolstoy, who equated non-violence with active love and who would have understood non-violence better than anyone in India (CWMG 1999, 37: 262; Parekh 1999, pp. 112–16, 119–20).

One should not underestimate the radical novelty of Gandhi's independent thinking and of his doctrine (Parekh 1999, pp. 120, 123). Yet, he retained the four *varnas* with their hereditary occupations. These occupations were universal—imparting knowledge, defend-

ing the defenseless, doing agricultural work and commerce, and performing physical labor. They regulated social relations and conduct. With time, the harmful restrictions of inter-dining and intermarriage were added. Exploring Gandhi's alternative to or reformulation of the Hindu tradition, Dieter Conrad argues that, in a gradual process, Gandhi did not maintain the inferiority or superiority among the different occupations. Gandhi wanted to realize the truth of metaphysical human equality. However, this did not lead him to a condemnation of the caste system, in which one follows one's ancestors' occupation. He rather maintained the four divisions, which he viewed as functional: all had to serve and all had to hold on to their primary environment, avoiding in this way competition. In this manner, Conrad posits that Gandhi maintained and purified Hinduism from within (Conrad 1999).

Conrad's view on Gandhi and the Hindu tradition is not shared by others. Ambedkar already argued that Gandhi's approach to the Hindu tradition was highly problematic: untouchables are regarded as non-Hindus, since they are excluded from the *varna* system: oppression was affirmed in the name of religion. In our times, Anantanand Rambachan deems that Gandhi's ideal understanding of caste is not without controversy and that it is rejected by prominent *Dalit* leaders. He considers that it is a problem to affirm Hindu identity on the negative background of untouchables, who are dehumanized and humiliated. The challenge lies in the creation of a vision of the tradition that affirms the dignity of all. In the Advaita tradition, Rambachan finds that *Brahman* is present in all that is created. All, including the D*alits*, embody the infinite. Rambachan contends: "*Braham* includes everyone; caste excludes" (Rambachan 2015, p. 177). The Hindu perception of the divine equality is the basis for *ahimsa* as principle of non-injury or—positively—as the praxis of compassion and justice. Gandhi said: "No scripture which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance; it is a denial of God and Truth which is God" (Fischer 1962, p. 252). The four classes (*varnas*) were indeed complementary in Gandhi's ethical view. Rambachan, however, deems that there is no necessary correlation between birth and one's qualification for a particular kind of work. "Scripture," he concludes, "is not authoritative if it reveals anything that is contradicted by the evidence of other valid sources of knowledge" (Rambachan 2015, p. 184). A hierarchical social system is refuted empirically and cannot be justified by appeal to scripture. The goal of the *dharma* is the attentiveness to the good of all beings, not solely to specific groups (Rambachan 2015, pp. 185, 196).

In Rambachan's liberation theology, Gandhi did not go far enough. Hindus must recognize the inhumanity in the non-egalitarian, exploitative, and oppressive caste system. Concessions to the disadvantaged while maintaining a hierarchical social system is not enough. Advaita requires that one sees the suffering of the other as one's own (Rambachan 2015, p. 195). There is no separation between the self and the other: *atman*, the Spirit, unites all. The two Sanskrit words for compassion are *karuna* (used by Buddhists) and *daya*. This is parallel with the Hebrew word *rahamim*, mercy, a feeling in the belly. In the Jewish sources, God himself is called *ha-rahaman*, the Merciful. Additionally, in Islam, God is the Merciful, *al-rahim*; He is merciful and loves human beings (Qur'an 5:54). In Hindu thinking, God is in everyone, and interdependence implies that the suffering of others is one's own suffering. Rambachan values Gandhi's thoughts but also criticizes him.

Andrews, who had worked in the slums of London, equally opposed the caste system (Meir 2017, pp. 86–88). He lambasted the Christian missionary detractors of the Hindu tradition. Through Hinduism, he found God in everything. He influenced Gandhi, who in turn was attacked by the orthodox for making too many concessions and reforms, foremost in his attitude towards the *Dalit*.

The above criticism of Gandhi, however, does not diminish his merit of having developed a liberation theology for his own subdued people as well as for the British imperialists. With his liberating thoughts, he reimagined his own tradition radically. In Gandhi's and Heschel's perspective, tradition should never be a burden; it should remain open to the future. To value the wisdom of tradition does not contrast with its permanent

evolution. Gandhi was in *sampradāya*, the flow of tradition, which aimed to improve humanity. Heschel too deemed that tradition should remain an inspiration, as is eminently expressed in an aphorism attributed to the Austrian composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911): "Tradition is the preservation of fire and not the adoration of ashes" ("Tradition ist Bewahrung des Feuers und nicht Anbetung der Asche"). Raised in the spirit of great Hasidic masters, he continued the tradition in a novel way. He rediscovered the social critic of the prophets.[18] Gandhi and Heschel developed a non-conventional approach to their religious tradition.[19] They criticized empty ritual and reformulated their tradition in view of mending the world. This approach allowed them to work out a liberation theology that protested against inequality and discrimination in a non-violent way.

4.6. Transformation through Non-Violent Protest

Gandhi and Heschel wanted to transform the human being. It was not enough to analyze: one had to act and to change reality. For Gandhi, this meant that one had to be the change one wants to see. His *satyagraha* was a love-force, based upon non-violence (*ahimsa*) as a process and upon a Truth (*satya*) that is to be realized. It aimed at changing people by not perpetuating the circle of violence. Active non-violence would bring forth a new world, in which state violence, oppression, humiliation, conflicts, and wars could be avoided or at least diminished. Instead of being motivated by greed, people could be metamorphosed into a universal brother-and sister-hood. Gandhi wanted to convince the British in South Africa that they do not have to envy the Indian traders through discriminating laws. He tried to arouse in them their humanity. Through *satyagraha* he wanted to melt the heart of opponents. He was convinced that, in the end, Truth would vanquish.

Gandhi was not an absolute pacifist. He recruited Indians for the English army in WW1. Heschel resembles Gandhi in that neither of them was a full-blown pacifist (Heschel 2020, p. 33). However, he adopted a non-violent approach in opposing the war in Vietnam and in siding with Martin Luther King's civil right movement.[20]

Gandhi actively protested against the colonial policy of the British vis-à-vis Hindus. In the same vein, Heschel protested against state violence in the case of the Vietnam war.[21] Both Heschel and Gandhi came up against racial prejudices, called by Gandhi the "deep disease of color prejudice" (Majmudar 2005, p. 98). They fought against racism and for human rights. Gandhi came up for the humiliated and oppressed Indians in South Africa. Heschel defended the rights of the Jews in Europe and in the Soviet Union and marched with King for the rights of the black people in America, where racism was prevalent. Gandhi's and Heschel's spirituality uttered itself in their concrete commitments. Yet, Gandhi himself was not entirely free from racial prejudice. He has even been accused of being a racist, of discriminating the African blacks. In his careful chronological account of Gandhi's writings, Nishikant Kolge answers the question whether Gandhi was a racist (Kolge 2016, pp. 88–93). Gandhi demanded separate lavatories and separate food for Indian prisoners. Kolge deems that, in the case of the lavatories, it was not a question of color but of hygiene and sanitation. In the case of food, the Indians had to get the food they wanted. Nevertheless, Kolge writes, Gandhi "held some strong opinions about the African blacks" (Kolge 2016, p. 93). However, if one situates his utterances in their context, his concerns "were guided by political consideration" in order to obtain rights for the Indians. Kolge further notes that, generally, Gandhi was supportive of the cause of African blacks. Gandhi, he concludes, "was neither a champion of the anti-racist movement which aimed at complete eradication of racial prejudices nor a fanatical racist who always showed disdain for the South African blacks" (Kolge 2016, p. 93).

4.7. Zionism and Swaraj: Beyond Mere Nationalism

Heschel and Gandhi significantly differed on the subject of Zionism. Heschel was profoundly shocked by the murder of six million Jews, amongst whom were many members of his family. After the Shoa, Israel was extremely important for him in order to save Jews. It was also and foremost an occasion to realize the prophetic visions (Heschel 1974). In

the thirties, Gandhi was asked to support the Jews in Germany and in Palestine. He did not favor the Jewish presence in Palestine that e belonged to the Arabs. In Germany and Palestine, the Jews had to adopt *satyagraha*. Gandhi did not favor legitimate, active self-defense (Meir 2021b, pp. 5–10). He did not conceive of Judaism as a peoplehood and did not favor Zionism. To be Jewish meant for him to belong to a religious denomination rather than to an ethnic group.[22] He understood the Jewish yearning to return to Palestine, but Zionism with its leaning upon the British was problematic. The real Jerusalem was the spiritual one (CWMG 1999, 48: 106–7). Gandhi did not take into account that many Jews identify as Jews because they belong to the Jewish people, notwithstanding a minimal or non-existing commitment to the Jewish religion.[23] To be a Zionist is one way of identifying as a Jew. Of course, Judaism is not merely a question of descent, of having a heritable foundation. It is rather performative, pertaining to communal belonging. A purely ethnic approach becomes quickly exclusive. Yet, Gandhi failed to see that Jewishness has also an ethnic dimension and that Zionism is an expression of Judaism. Zion was a safe haven for persecuted Jews in the thirties, when Gandhi was asked to raise his authoritative voice in favor of the Jews, which he failed to do.

In his article "The Jews," which appeared in November 1938, Gandhi did not support the Jewish cause, not in Germany and not in Palestine. Instead, he advised them to adopt *satyagraha*. He did not counsel them to defend themselves.[24] Martin Buber and J. L. Magnes wrote to Gandhi that they disagreed with him. In Buber's mind, the situation of the Indians in South Africa was quite different from that of the Jews in dictatorial Germany. The Indians were discriminated against, whereas the Jews were persecuted, tortured, and murdered. The Indians had India. The Jews had no homeland. To be a Jew did not mean solely to belong to the Jewish religion. Judaism was more than a religion: it was linked to a people, who returned to their land. Magnes similarly doubted that the proposed *satyagraha* would work in Nazi Germany. It was an unrealizable ideal. His own pacifism was in a crisis, and he wrote about a necessary war. Magnes's and Buber's letters were left unanswered. According to Buber, Gandhi only replied in a postcard that he regretted he did not have the time to write a reply (Crane 2007, p. 48, n. 10). It is a pity that we do not have Gandhi's explicit reaction to these two men, who admired him but who disagreed with him at this crucial moment.

One may only speculate on what Heschel would have written to the Mahatma at the time. He was thirty-one years old when Gandhi published his article "The Jews." He had succeeded Buber in the Center for Jewish Adult Education (*Mittelstelle für jüdische Erwachsenenbildung*) and the *Jüdische Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt. At the end of October 1938, he was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Poland. Two years before, he had published his book *Die Prophetie*, a revision of his doctoral dissertation, in which he expressed his view on the prophets, who had an intercourse with God and who were empathic with the divine ecstasy and the divine active concern for humankind. Heschel fled from Europe and finally reached the United States, where he continued to be worried for the survival and equal rights of Jews. Zion was for him a refuge, but it contained also a promise.

Heschel saw Israel as a haven for persecuted Jews all over the world, but he looked also to Israel with prophetic eyes, full of expectation and hope. He lived the Bible, as Gandhi lived the Gita. The biblical history was for him alive, and Jews wrote the chapters of the Bible (Heschel 1974, p. 49). In his *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, he looked upon Jerusalem through the eyes of the prophets. His was a prophetic vision. Jerusalem was a promise: the promise of peace and God's presence. God had a vision of man, whom He created according to His image, but the resemblance to God's image had faded rapidly: "God had a vision of restoring the image of man. So He created a city in heaven and called it Jerusalem, hoping and praying that Jerusalem on earth may resemble Jerusalem in heaven. Jerusalem is a recalling, an insisting and a waiting for the answer to God's hope" (Heschel 1974, p. 32). He addresses Jerusalem: "For centuries we would tear our garments whenever we came into sight of your [Jerusalem's] ruins. In 1945 our souls were ruins, and our garments were tatters. There was nothing to tear. In Auschwitz and Dachau, in Bergen-Belsen and

Treblinka, they prayed at the end of Atonement Day, 'Next year in Jerusalem.' The next day they were asphyxiated in gas chambers. Those of us who were not asphyxiated continued to cling to Thee. 'Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him' (Job 13:15). We come to you, Jerusalem, to build your ruins, to mend our souls and to seek comfort for God and men. We, a people of orphans, have entered the walls to greet the widow, Jerusalem, and the widow is a bride again. She has taken hold of us, and we find ourselves again at the feet of the prophets. We are the harp, and David is playing" (Heschel 1974, p. 17).

In his writings, Heschel famously stressed the importance of time as against place. Nevertheless, the land of Israel was important for the Jewish people. Did the land have holiness in itself? Did it have the special status it had for the medieval philosopher Jehuda Halevi { XE "Halevi" }? Heschel was certainly influenced by Halevi's writings. However, he recalled the ancient rabbis, who discerned three aspects of holiness: the holiness of the Divine Name, the holiness of the Sabbath, and the holiness of the people of Israel.[25] The ancient rabbis did not mention the holiness of the land *in se*. The holiness of the land was derived from the holiness of the people of Israel. Heschel quotes a variety of sources in order to prove this position.[26] The land, he concludes in contrast to Jehuda Halevi, was not holy during the early times of Terah and the Patriarchs; it only became "sanctified" by the people of Israel (Heschel 1951b, pp. 81–82). In the land, the people had to measure themselves according to prophetic standards and therefore the Bible had remained a moral challenge for them (Kaplan 2007, p. 337).[27] Heschel did not have a territorialist view of the land of Israel. He embraced a biblical and prophetic perspective: a person had to deserve to live in the land. For Gandhi too, *swaraj* implied personal improvement and cooperation of all with all.

Heschel pleaded for Jewish–Muslim cooperation in 1967. In a chapter entitled "Jews, Christians, Arabs," he devotes some thoughts to "Arabs and Israel" (Heschel 1974, pp. 173–89). As enthusiastic as he was with Israel of 1967, he did not forget the Arab neighbors. He wrote that in our world light and shadow are mingled: there is no wheat without chaff, no vineyard without weeds, no roses without thorns. There is joy over the rebirth of Israel but also pain over the suffering and bitterness in the Middle East (Heschel 1974, p. 173). Heschel cleaves to the original, prophetic dream: "Israel reborn is bound to be a blessing to the Arab world, to play a major role in their renaissance. The Arabs and the Israelis must be brought into mutual dependence by the supply of each other's wants. There is no other way of counteracting the antagonism" (Heschel 1974, pp. 182–83). He dreamed about communications running from Haifa to Beirut and Damascus in the North, to Amman in the East, and to Cairo in the South and about economic cooperation in agricultural and industrial development that could lead to supranational arrangements like the ones of the European Community. Young Israelis and Arabs could join in a mutual discourse of learning; excessive sums previously devoted to security could be diverted to development projects (Heschel 1974, pp. 184–85). Heschel asked from the nations in the Middle East to drop their antagonisms and antipathies, their hatred and fear, and demanded of them that they start to think in terms of one family. "The alternative to peace is disaster. The choice is to live together or to perish together" (Heschel 1974, p. 186). He ends with the words: "The Arabs and the Jews in addition to having a common background and history, early contacts and a prolonged and fertile symbiosis during the Middle Ages, have also another affinity in common: a heritage of suffering and humiliation". With the revival of Israel and the resurgence of the Arab nations, one faces many problems, according to Heschel, but cooperation was a vital necessity and a blessing for both (Heschel 1974, pp. 188–89).

With his theology that strived for the liberation of all, Heschel demanded that Jews and Arabs come to a covenant of brothers (*berit ahim*). He asked the perennial Jewish question: what is required from us now, what is the *Halakha* (the law)? The *Halakha* was to make peace with the Arabs, and, with this, he followed his prophetic vision of *shalom*.[28] Heschel told the story of Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel, who posited himself between two fighting camps and proposed to make peace: "Make your peace with us and we shall make peace with you and together we shall enjoy God's blessings on this holy land." He addressed

the Arabs as "our dear cousins": "Our common father, Abraham, the father of Isaac and of Ishmael, when he saw that his nephew Lot was causing him trouble [. . .] said to him: 'Let there be no quarrel between me and you, and between your shepherds and my shepherds, for we are people like brothers.' We also say to you, this land can sustain all of us and provide for us in plenty. Let us then, stop fighting each other, for we too, are people like brothers" (Heschel 1974, pp. 177–78).

In a mystical mood, { XE "Halevi" } { XE "Kook" } Heschel felt the hidden light in *Erets Yisrael* (the land of Israel). After the Shoah, in which there was no divine intervention, he again felt the wings of the *Shekhina* in *Erets Yisrael*. Yet, he also felt the pain of lack of fulfillment. He sensed that the return of the people was due to divine intervention. However, the people of Israel had to return to God in *qedusha* (holiness).

In Pinchas Peli's interview with { XE "Peli" } Heschel, conducted in Hebrew and broadcasted on Israeli television in 1971, Heschel spoke as a man with vision, who wanted an exemplary life in Israel, inspired by the prophets. He saw the continuation of the biblical narrative in the land of Israel. Concomitantly, he was concerned about the situation of the Arabs (Heschel 1974, pp. 25–26). Although he was convinced that Judaism was intimately connected to a concrete people with a concrete land, he was not a territorialist.

Gandhi's view on Zionism was far removed from Heschel's approach, but they both had a staunch belief in communication and dialogue. These two towering spiritual men were convinced that their respective traditions were an enormous contribution to the betterment of humankind. Their liberation theology criticized a mere nationalism without inner transformation of the human being. Gandhi broadened the traditional meaning of *swaraj*. For him, it was never merely political; it was first of all an ethical program. Similarly, in Heschel's view, the State of Israel was a means in order to realize a just society.

5. Conclusions

Heschel and Gandhi protested without fear against unjust and discriminating laws. Before the famous march from Selma to Alabama, closely followed by the FBI, Heschel read Ps. 27 in a chapel: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Heschel 1998, p. 134). Away from the disastrous and all devouring fire of violence, Heschel and Gandhi marched for justice and for the liberation of all, for the Vietnamese as well as for the Americans, for the Hindus as well as for the British. Gandhi did so in *satyagraha* and Heschel in prophetic sympathy with the divine pathos. They did not react to violence with violence. Gandhi referred to *ahimsa* as the praxis of not causing harm to living beings, while Heschel contrasted the unbearable human violence with the prophetic perception of the silent sigh (Heschel 1962, p. 9). They opposed killings and white supremacy and envisioned a more equal society. Their remarkable religiosity expressed itself in non-cooperation and in the moral battle against human suffering and humiliation. Heschel never met Gandhi, but their thoughts and actions were correlative. If a meeting between these two giants of the spirit would have taken place, they would have had much to say to each other as two profoundly religious persons, who inserted a humanist religiosity in economic, social, and political life.

Notes

[1]   I would like to thank Ithamar Theodor and Wolfgang Palaver for their thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

[2]   For a characterization of Merton's and Heschel's religiosity: (Magid 1998).

3   Twenty-three years earlier, the entrepreneur Prafulla Chandra Ray compared Gandhi's salt march in 1930 to the exodus of the Israelites under Moses (Guha 2019, p. 342).

4   For an account of the theological affinities between King and Heschel: (Heschel 1998).

5   "In the Hebrew language one word denotes both crimes. 'Bloodshed', in Hebrew, is the word that denotes both murder and humiliation. The law demands: one should rather be killed than commit murder. Piety demands: one should rather commit suicide than offend a person publicly. It is, better, the Talmud insists, to throw oneself alive into a burning furnace than to humiliate a human being publicly" (Heschel 1967, p. 88).

6   According to Markovits, Sir Richard Attenborough in his film of 1982 contributed to the iconic understanding of Gandhi. The cineaste makes a parallel between Jesus and Gandhi. He de-Hinduized Gandhi and simplified a more complex person. Romain Rolland saw Gandhi as a Francis of Assisi. In a sermon of 1921, Rev. Holmes regarded him as a new Jesus (Markovits 2000, pp. 31–37, 46–49). Markovits's merit is that he looks for Gandhi beyond the icon. He gives more weight to the South African period in order to understand Gandhi and depicts him in his everyday action, a humorous and daily economizing person and a "genius of agitprop" (Markovits 2000, p. 171).

7   In their private lives, the differences between them become even more pronounced. Heschel was a devoted father and spouse, for whom God dwelled in the harmony of husband and wife (Heschel 1976, p. 95). In line with mainstream Judaism, Heschel did not consider celibacy as an ideal in order to achieve detachment of the physical world (see Kornberg Greenberg 2018, pp. 214–15). Gandhi vowed to remain a celibate at the age of thirty-seven. His vow of *brahmacharya* (God/Truth-conduct) was taken after the Zulu Rebellion in 1906. Through his abstinence he wanted to control his sexual energy and sublimate it into spiritual power (Majmudar 2005, p. 69). He was an authoritative and jealous husband and marital battles were not infrequent. The biographer Rambachandra Guha notes that "for all his empathy and concern for those outside his family, Gandhi was curiously blind for the pain of his own sons" (Guha 2019, p. 64). He desired to shape his family in his image. Later in his marriage he was sorry that he caused disharmony and he came to appreciate his wife's non-violent resistance (Majmudar 2005, pp. 117–18). Majmudar pointedly remarks: "'The Father of the Nation' could not be a father to his own sons" (Majmudar 2005, p. 193). Gandhi was a reformer and not a stubborn traditionalist who was opposed to changes (Majmudar 2005, p. 207). Nevertheless, as I will explain further, he maintained the traditional four major occupations, without hierarchy between them. Majmudar defines him as a "critical traditionalist," as was Swami Vivekananda (Majmudar 2005, pp. 20–21, 112). At times, he attracted the wrath of some orthodox Hindus. Heschel cannot be called a reformer. He was a scion of a Hasidic dynasty, deeply steeped in the Jewish tradition as well as in a prophetic Judaism that identified with God's care for all. However, he left the pious Hasidic community in Warsaw, of which he was destined to be the Rebbe, in order to become active in the wider world.

8   Paul disagreed with Jewish missionaries in Corinth, who wanted the non-Jewish Christians to keep the Jewish laws. He argued that, since they were not Jews, they were not obliged to keep the Jewish Law. Therefore, the letter killed, whereas the spirit freed.

9   As E. Levinas formulates it beautifully in his Talmudic lecture "Damages Due to Fire": "To be human is to suffer for the other, and even within one's own suffering, to suffer for the suffering my suffering imposes upon the other" (Levinas 1990, p. 188); "L'humanité, c'est le fait de souffrir pour l'autre, et, jusque dans sa propre souffrance, souffrir de la souffrance que ma souffrance impose à l'autre" (Levinas 1977, p. 167).

10   Heschel did not share Buber's anti-institutional Judaism, but, like Buber and Gandhi, he wanted to renew the human being (Buber 1932).

11   The *shivitti* is a plaque that reminds of Ps. 16:8: "I have set the Lord always before me".

12   The verse is engraved at King's memorial in Atlanta.

13   The *swadeshi* independence movement boycotted foreign goods and promoted Indian products, in order to protect the poor against colonial exploitation.

14   In *Hind Swaraj*, p. 104 he still writes that "[r]ank atheism cannot flourish" in India. Later on, Gandhi approached the atheist Goparaju Ramachandra Rao (nicknamed Gora; 1902–1975) as an anonymous believer (in Karl Rahner's terminology) (Jolly 2012, p. 313).

15   The differences between Ambedkar and Gandhi do not prevent Debjani Ganguly to situate both personalities together on the stage of world history and to understand them in complementary terms as adopting both—in Bhabha's phrasing—a "vernacular cosmopolitanism". Both brought their small narrative in dialogue with world-enveloping ones. From a world historical perspective—so Ganguly—India is not a footnote of British history (Ganguly 2007).

16   In her article on Gandhi, parson Walter follows Roy in her harsh criticism of Gandhi (Walter 2016).

17   In his Hindu liberation theology, Anantanand Rambachan canvasses how the oppressive caste system and the oppressed *Dalit* community came into being. From the Rig Veda (around 1000 BCE), there was a split between those of noble descent (*arya*) and those who lacked this descent. Around 800 BCE, the *varnas* (castes) came into being: *Brahmanas*, priests, *kstriya*, soldiers, *vaisyas*, merchants and farmers, participated in the Veda ritual. The *sudras*, laborers, were impure and segregated. By the time of Manu (ca. 150 BCE), it was believed that to be born in a certain caste was the result of a good or bad karma. Other groups were outside the system. By the period between 400 BCE and 400 CE untouchables had to live apart, they were not allowed to eat with others and not intermarry. After contact with an untouchable, a bath of purification was required. Today—so Rambachan—15 percent

of the population of India is "untouchable" and the discriminating and marginalizing phenomenon persists. Given this context, conversion of untouchables to other religions becomes attractive (Rambachan 2015, pp. 169–70).

[18] Susannah Heschel notes that, whereas Gerhard von Rad placed the Hebrew prophets in the context of ancient Near East traditions, contesting their uniqueness as brilliant religious personalities close to God and presenting a counter-balance to the priestly religion of cult, Heschel rediscovered the prophetic social critique (Heschel 1998, p. 132).

[19] In his article on Heschel and Merton, Magid develops a similar argument: Heschel and Merton criticized modernity as well as tradition. Delving deeply into their spiritual sources, they went beyond institutionalization and convention. They criticized tradition and used it in order to criticize modernity, without abandoning the world (Magid 1998, pp.115–16, 121).

[20] He fought antisemitism and other forms of racism. For Susannah Heschel, the claim that Esau will forever hate Jacob should be rejected (Heschel 2020, p. 35). Instead of essentializing Christianity and stating that anti-Semitism was inherent in Christianity, one should give a chance to different, more peaceful relations. Susannah's father deemed that transformation was possible.

[21] Lately, the word "self-defense" has become more and more problematized (Butler 2020). State violence continued in the Trump era, with police killings of Afro-Americans, a high number of imprisoned black people and the public appearance of white supremacists. Cell-phone videos of witnesses changed the game in the case of police officer Derek Chauvin, who killed Georges Floyd. Movements as "black lives matter" and "Say Her Name" as well as slogans like "I can't breathe" have drawn the attention to white power and white privilege at the expense of colored people. Ethicists protest against negative stereotypes in black or brown bodies and develop a non-violent protest against discrimination. Gandhi and Heschel preceded these moral protests of today.

[22] Leora Batnitzky argued that Judaism came to be seen as a religion in the 18th century (Batnitzky 2011, pp. 13–14).

[23] Jewishness can be defined in manifold ways (Imhoff 2020).

[24] Gandhi also wrote: "[. . .] there are not wanting men who do believe that complete non-violence means complete cessation of all activity. Not such, however, is my doctrine of non-violence. My business is to refrain from doing any violence myself, and to induce by persuasion and service as many of God's creatures as I can to join me in the belief and practice. But I would be untrue to my faith if I refused to assist in a just cause any men or measures that did not entirely coincide with the principle of non-violence" (CWMG 1999, 20: 165). Notwithstanding this, Gandhi gave the Jews the Ahithophel counsel to behave as *satyagrahis* in the thirties.

[25] *Yalkut Shimoni*, parashat va-etchanan, dalet-he.

[26] Mekhilta parashat Bo, 12:1; Edyot 8, 6; *Mishneh Torah*, Terumot 1, 5; Tosafot Zebahim 62a.

[27] { XE "Kaplan" } Kaplan writes that Heschel preferred eternal values to ideology.

[28] Sic Ze'ev Harvey in his lecture on "Heschel on the Jews and the Arabs in the land of Israel" (Hebrew) at the Jerusalem Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in 2003.

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Article

Gandhi and the Gender of Nonviolent Resistance

Louise Du Toit [1,2]

1 Philosophy Department, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa; louisedt@sun.ac.za
2 Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: The special issue of which this article forms a part looks at human violence and tries to investigate religious potentials to strengthen the case for nonviolence as the preferred method of social change. This article's focus is on Gandhi's version of a faith-based form of nonviolent resistance, called *Satyagraha*, and its relation to gender. In particular, the article asks whether this Gandhian tradition holds any value for women's struggles and for contemporary feminist politics. The first section follows the historical development of Gandhi's thinking on women's participation in *Satyagraha*, from South Africa to India. The second section gives a brief overview of the recent empirical work conducted by Erica Chenoweth on the impact of women's participation on the outcomes of mass movements over the past century. The final section places these two thinkers in conversation and draws out the value and limitations of Gandhi's thinking for contemporary women's struggles and feminist resistance. Although the direct focus is on the relation between women and nonviolent revolutionary campaigns and movements, indirectly the unstable gendered dichotomies, male–female, masculine–feminine, and violence–nonviolence, will be simultaneously drawn upon and problematised.

Keywords: nonviolent resistance; Gandhi; Chenoweth; gender; creative transgressions; revolution

1. Introduction

Different contemporary thinkers are redirecting attention to Gandhi for our times—for example, Mark Juergensmeyer (2005), Pankaj Mishra (2017), Brown and Parel's (2011) *Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, Ramachandra Guha's (2018) recent biography, and Wolfgang Palaver (2019), linking his work to current challenges, including global terrorism and the environmental crisis. However, the relation in Gandhi between *Satyagraha*[1] and women, and its relevance for women's and feminist politics, is a topic that has not yet been extensively explored. This article aims to kick-start this conversation. When, as part of this project, I started to understand the concept of *Satyagraha* better, I was immediately struck by what might be called its gendered frame.

On the one hand, the practice of *Satyagraha* emerged and received its name in the context of all-male activism in the Transvaal, in opposition to the Black Act of 1906. Within this context, and in opposition to two important contesting viewpoints, Gandhi emphasised that *Satyagraha* was a 'manly' form of activism. As we shall see in the detailed analysis that follows, these two alternatives, from which Gandhi needed to distinguish *Satyagraha*, were firstly 'passive resistance', which he associated with passivity and weakness, and secondly violent resistance to oppressive regimes. Whereas the former was for him characterised by weakness (either in numbers, political power, or inner strength) (Gandhi 1928), the latter was characterised by force without love or truth, or by 'brute force'. The term *Satyagraha* was carefully chosen to reflect forceful action (*agraha*) propelled by love and truth (*satya*). Steering between the absence of force (passive resistance) and the absence of love (brute force), Gandhi tried to develop a new method for social transformation, namely the deployment of the force of love. At many instances, he had to insist on the 'manliness' of this method, and he did this by arguing that one requires greater courage for *Satyagraha*

or nonviolent resistance than for armed resistance. For example, in *Hind Swaraj*, he writes, 'Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister'. And further on in the same text: 'Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend, or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.'

And yet, on the other hand, as I will show in detail, Gandhi over time comes to associate *Satyagraha* more and more strongly with women and typical feminine virtues. This for me points to a fundamental gender ambiguity within the heart of the concept and the very reason why Gandhi had so often to defend it as 'manly', typically in the sense of 'courageous'. It is no secret that many of the historical examples of nonviolent resistance that had inspired him were women-led, e.g., the suffragettes (Gandhi 1928), the Boer women in the British concentration camps (Gandhi 1928), and the Ireland Ladies Land League of the 1880s (Chenoweth 2022)[2]. And in *Hind Swaraj*, as elsewhere, he emphasised that even though (or maybe because) *Satyagraha* did not require physical or 'brute' strength but, rather, exceptional courage and moral strength, even those who are physically weak (including women and children) could participate in it. Put simplistically, *Satyagraha*'s surprising 'third way' between counter-violence and acquiescence also means that it upsets the traditional gender binary between active masculine courage (too often equated with the willingness to engage in violence) and passive feminine fear and submission. It is a surprising or unexpected third way beyond the gender binary in that it neither acquiesces nor engages in violence. It combines traditional 'masculine courage' with traditional 'feminine love and pity'. For Gandhi, the latter means that *satyagrahi* must purify themselves of enmity and hate towards the opponent, and their methods of resistance may never include the deliberate infliction of harm.

Despite Gandhi's insight into the advantages that women in the frontlines of *Satyagraha* brought to the movement, as I will discuss, it also seems that he remained hesitant about the greater risk women ran in these frontlines, especially those of sexual harassment and attack. It was also because of this greater risk that he thought the numbers of women signing up for frontline participation would remain low for the foreseeable future (Gandhi 1941). Inspired by the Ireland Ladies Land League, Gandhi saw *Satyagraha* as consisting of two prongs, namely mass non-cooperation and obstruction on the one hand and, on the other, the constructive work of the development of alternatives that would make the group self-reliant and wean it from dependency on exploitative systems (Chenoweth 2022). For example, Indians should burn their imported saris and spin their own cloth to gain self-reliance vis-à-vis colonial products and services. From his writings in *The Women* (Gandhi 1941), with all the (non-frontline or 'constructive') resistance activities he sees women as especially well-suited for, and his reluctance about them being on the frontlines, one might glean that Gandhi saw these two prongs as gendered to some extent, with women more involved in developing alternatives and men possibly more involved in offering *Satyagraha*. This will correlate with his understanding of gender as simplistically dichotomous and given in nature, with men being more prone to temptations of violence and sex and women being naturally more capable of suffering and self-sacrifice, especially as learnt through motherhood. He sees the genders as equal but different, in a supplementary or complementary way.

In what follows, I will first (Section 2) pay detailed attention to the development of Gandhi's thought on women's roles in *Satyagraha,* in social transformation, and in the Indian struggle for independence (*Hind Swaraj*) and decolonisation more broadly understood. In the second section of the article (Section 3), I give a brief overview of the important work of Erica Chenoweth. They[3] have of late been doing ground-breaking empirical research on women's participation in revolutionary movements globally and are in the process of co-authoring a book titled *Bread and Roses: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution* with Zoe Marks. In the third and last section (Section 4), I aim to place Gandhi's understanding of the 'gender of nonviolent resistance' in conversation with Chenoweth and thereby show

the relevance as well as the limitations, particularly with regard to Gandhi's later views, for contemporary women's and feminist resistance politics.

2. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, and Gender

In this section, Gandhi's gendered understanding of *Satyagraha* is discussed in detail, and some of his wider views on gender will inevitably also feature. It is characteristic of Gandhi's thinking that it was always rooted in his religious, practical, and political life and in what he called his 'experiments with truth', which means that it was an organic kind of thinking, always growing and morphing with new insights gleaned from new experiences. In 'Question Box'[4], he refers to his early insight in South Africa (Transvaal) that the form of resistance developed by the Indian community in response to the Black Act was not the same as 'passive resistance', which he understood as 'the weapon of the weak' (see also Gandhi 1928, p. 121). He associated both of these labels with the British suffragettes. At the time of its initial development in the Transvaal, *Satyagraha*, which for Gandhi was much more 'the weapon of the strongest' (Gandhi 1941, p. 223), was still practiced exclusively by men. At this point, he made an effort to distinguish *Satyagraha* from passivity, acquiescence, and cowardice: nonviolent resistance is characterised by the deliberate, disciplined, and prolonged *suspension* of brute force or violence, rather than an unwillingness or incapacity to engage in it. In 'Question Box', he states: 'Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts' (Gandhi 1941, p. 224). This is echoed in, 'The argument of pity is a trap in which it is dangerous to fall' (Gandhi 1941, p. 66). He therefore often calls *Satyagraha* 'manly' to distinguish it from helplessness and the pity that helplessness evokes: *more* courage and strength of character is required for its practice than for the practice of violence (CWMG (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi) Gandhi 1958, vol. 10, p. 93). It is noteworthy that Gandhi does not regard the 'offering' or 'performance' of *Satyagraha* as the parading of one's weakness with the aim to evoke pity; instead, one performs one's strength, dignity, and fearless determination in the face of (in facing off) degrading treatment, with the aim of evoking respect from others, but also to evoke and sustain self-respect in the oppressed group (Gandhi 1928, p. 67). This is the sense in which the emphasis on force and manliness must be understood. One might be offended by his use of the term 'manly' here if the implication is that women are strangers to courage. But the charge of sexism softens somewhat if one reads his use of 'manly' as a way to emphasise that *Satyagraha* is an active principle, characterised by a specific manifestation of the universal cosmic *soul force* that inheres in everyone and everything.

Recall that those who practice *Satyagraha* align themselves with the 'soul force' or 'force of love and pity' that pervades all of reality: 'God', also described as 'the indefinable mysterious *power* that underlies everything' (CWMG 10, p. 90; emphasis added). In a way that is counter-intuitive to many modern and secular readers of Gandhi, his faith position means that he views this divine and benevolent force of love/soul saturating the cosmos, the social world, and nature as an 'infinitely greater force' than the force of arms (brute violence, destruction, and coercion). During his lifetime, there were many who opposed *Satyagraha* as too passive, too patient, and too slow and instead viewed direct violence as the only proper and effective ('manly') response to the racist and colonial systems of oppression Gandhi fought in South Africa and India. It was particularly in response to these opponents of *Satyagraha*—who nevertheless shared his political aims—that Gandhi insisted on the 'manliness' of the political movement and its methods. Du Toit and Vosloo (2021, p. 10) fleshed out Gandhi's view of *Satyagraha* as active and forceful, in conversation with Judith Butler's notion of performativity. They described its action as a bodily performance of non-cooperation and as a form of communicative action that expresses, simultaneously, relationality with the opponent and resistance to him, in one and the same public gesture. The bodies of *satyagrahi* are inserted into a field of structural or latent force, in opposition to the latter, as a soul force pitted against brute force. Therefore, *satyagrahi* fully expect to suffer physical injury when the latent oppressive force is compelled by their counterforce

of soul to show itself in physical form, such as when the police start to whip or arrest the nonviolent protestors. Note here the complex interplay between violence and nonviolence: essentially violent oppression often does not need to display any overt violence unless it is explicitly challenged. Then, it must 'show its force', make manifest what was only latent before, namely that it is secured through brute force. Du Toit and Vosloo emphasised in their analysis of *Satyagraha*'s performative nature an aspect which is underlined by Gandhi (1941, p. 23) when he states, 'our *acts* will have a more powerful influence on the public than any number of speeches and writings' (emphasis in original); and 'acts [have] immense potency'.

I indicated above that the suffragettes in England (Gandhi 1928, p. 109) and the Boer women in the British concentration camps[5] (Gandhi 1928, p. 22) were early womanly examples that had inspired Gandhi greatly in the development of nonviolent resistance. Another instance of a woman's exemplary behaviour is recounted about the time in 1896 when Gandhi was accosted by 'an enormous mob' of white people in Durban (Gandhi 1928, p. 60). Gandhi had been hit with stones from the crowd, then slapped and kicked by 'a burly fellow' up to the point of losing consciousness. Mrs Alexander, the wife of the Superintendent of Police in Durban, an acquaintance of Gandhi, then coincidentally came on foot from the opposite direction and saw his predicament. He says 'she was a brave lady'—she opened her sunshade to protect him and led Gandhi to safety (Gandhi 1928, p. 60). She effectively formed a one-woman 'human shield' because the crowd would not injure the respected (white) wife of the superintendent; she was an early practitioner of *Satyagraha*. Another decisive influence on his life came in the person of Ms Sonja Schlesin, who started working for him when she was sixteen. Gandhi remarked of her: 'She was then only sixteen years of age, but she captivated my clients as well as the fellow Satyagrahis by her frankness and readiness to serve. This young girl soon constituted herself the watchman and warder of the morality not only of my office but of the whole movement . . . When all the leaders except Sheth Kachhalia were in jail, Miss Schlesin had control of large funds and was in charge of the accounts. She handled workers of various temperaments. Even Sheth Kachhalia would have recourse to her and seek her advice' (Gandhi 1928, pp. 168–69). Gandhi would later hold her up as an example to women in India, of how they could contribute to the movement (Gandhi 1941, p. 196). However, at this stage in South Africa, Gandhi saw women as contributing mostly to the 'back office' of the cause, rather than on the frontlines.

Here, Gandhi (1928, p. 255) describes his view at that time: 'Some brave women had already offered to participate, and when Satyagrahis went to jail for hawking without a licence, their wives had expressed a desire to follow suit. But we did not then think it proper to send women to jail in a foreign land. There seemed to be no adequate reason for sending them into the firing line, and I for my part could not summon courage enough to take them to the front. Another argument was, that it would be derogatory to our manhood if we sacrificed our women in resisting a law, which was directed only against men.' However, when on 14 March 1913 the Cape Supreme Court passed a judgment that rendered all Indian customary marriages illegal, the women were outraged because they were 'degraded to the rank of concubines' (Gandhi 1928, p. 256), and their children lost their inheritance rights. This event led Gandhi to the active recruitment of women *satyagrahi*. Gandhi says, 'Not only could the women now be not prevented from joining the struggle, but we decided even to invite them to come into line along with the men' (Gandhi 1928, p. 257). Among the first 11 women volunteers, one was pregnant and six 'had young babies in arms', but they were not put off when Gandhi explained to them the risks involved. One of the greatest concerns at this point was that the women would be ignored by the police, not get arrested, and *not* go to jail. This would almost definitely happen if the police were to find out they were related to Gandhi. It was therefore decided that two groups of women would simultaneously cross the Natal-Transvaal border in different directions without permits, i.e., illegally. If the Transvaal group did not get arrested on the border, they were to move on to the Newcastle coal mines and persuade the Indian

labourers there to go on strike (Gandhi 1928, pp. 257–58). Gandhi thought such direct political action would force the authorities to arrest the 'sisters' together with the striking labourers, and clearly, such a 'gendered' provocation of the authorities was what he hoped to achieve with the women's frontline participation.

It is further interesting to note that Gandhi would not ask his wife, Kasturbai, to join in the struggle, for reasons that he explained to her: 'In matters like this everyone should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request' (Gandhi 1928, p. 259). This view is fully consistent with the very first meetings of the movement, when Gandhi cautioned the men against joining from peer pressure or momentary enthusiasm. Each man had to investigate his own heart to know whether he was fully committed and strong enough (mentally) for the challenges that lay ahead. If Kasturbai was only following Gandhi's orders to participate, she would likely not be strong enough in herself to withstand the hardship of arrest and jail. Kasturbai answered as follows: 'You may have nothing to do with me if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle' (Gandhi 1928, p. 260). Kasturbai's insistence and her eventual excellent endurance of prison (three months, with hard labour) must have also played a large part in changing Gandhi's earlier position on the role of women in nonviolent resistance.

Moreover, the women's campaign in Natal succeeded beyond all expectation: 'Their influence spread like wildfire. The pathetic story of the wrongs heaped up by the three pounds tax touched the labourers to the quick, and they went on strike. I received the news by wire and was as much perplexed as I was pleased. What was I to do? I was not prepared for this marvellous awakening' (Gandhi 1928, p. 261). He described the women's bravery in jail as 'beyond words.' A girl prisoner of 16 years old, Valliamma, died after her release from jail with a fever and without repenting of going to jail even if it cost her life. Gandhi emphasised that 'the sacrifice offered by these sisters' was 'absolutely pure'—a key theme in his understanding of *Satyagraha* as an offering or a sacrifice—it must always be accompanied by self-purification and inner conviction. As discussed above, *Satyagraha* is inseparable from Gandhi's faith ontology and his politics from spirituality. He writes, 'The world rests upon the bedrock of *satya* or truth. *Asatya* meaning untruth also means non-existent, and *satya* or truth also means that which *is*. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being that which *is* can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of *Satyagraha* in a nutshell' (Gandhi 1928, p. 264). For Gandhi, thus, the universe will disappear without 'the force of love and pity' which is 'infinitely greater than the force of arms' (CWMG vol. 10, p. 84), and this soul force works constantly, quietly, and unspectacularly in the background to build and maintain the human world, consisting of social and familial bonds, institutions, and friendships. He sees violence as the spectacular destruction and interruption of this constant, slow, and patient labour of love and creation, and he clearly associates men more with the former and women more with the latter, although not in a deterministic way: Gandhi's stance never suggests men might be excused for being violent; instead, he sees male violence as a diminishment of their manhood as well as their humanity.

The selection of essays and other short pieces collected in the 1941 publication *The Women*, shows a more mature Gandhi working in India, commenting on women's interests, issues, and involvement in *Satyagraha* and *Swaraj* (Indian independence). If Gandhi had been 'perplexed' and caught off guard by the runaway success of women's nonviolent work in South Africa[6], by this later date he had come to view women as the natural leaders in this work. For example, in the essay 'What is Woman's Role?' he states 'Let her transfer her love [of her children] to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was, or can be, the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world . . . She can become the leader in *satyagraha*, which does not require the learning that books give, but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and

faith' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29). The indication we find in this citation that Gandhi now sees women as naturally more suited to *Satyagraha* than men is found in many other passages in the same publication. Women's extraordinary ability to endure suffering and their capacity for self-sacrifice are for him a function of motherhood. For example, he writes, 'I have suggested . . . that woman is the incarnation of *ahimsa* [meaning nonviolence]. *Ahimsa* means infinite love, which, again, means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months, and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29). It is thus as mothers that women most clearly learn or know, from nature, what it means to suffer and to sacrifice oneself for another and for love.

Recall that in his earlier work, especially in the attempt to defend himself against the proponents of violent resistance, Gandhi often insisted that *Satyagraha* was manly because it required extraordinary courage. Now, in 'What is Woman's Role?', he argues that women in fact excel in precisely this type of courage: 'Woman is more fitted than man to make explorations and take bolder action in *ahimsa*. For the courage of self-sacrifice, woman is any day superior to man, as I believe man is to woman for the courage of the brute' (Gandhi 1941, p. 33). This theme of two different types of courage and strength (the higher courage and inner strength to *endure* violence versus the lower courage and strength to *inflict* violence) runs throughout many of his writings. It is the same two types of courage that face off when *satyagrahi* endure violence from an unjust government and the police, for instance. In the essay 'To the Women of India', Gandhi gives possibly the most explicit and strongest version of this conviction that women excel in the higher type of courage. He writes, 'In this non-violent warfare, their ['sisters'] contribution should be much greater than men's. To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then, woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women' (Gandhi 1941, p. 36). This leads him to state that certain nonviolent campaigns (such as the picketing of liquor shops) should even be 'initiated and controlled exclusively by women', who should accept men's assistance, but 'the men should be in strict subordination' to them (Gandhi 1941, p. 37). The striking practical reason for women's leadership in the nonviolent work is also given in the same essay: men's picketing of liquor shops succeeded up to a point, Gandhi says, but in 1921 'failed because violence crept in'. Gandhi explains why recourse to violence amid nonviolent resistance is fatal: 'If [picketing] remains peaceful to the end, it will be the quickest way of educating the people concerned. It must never be a matter of coercion, but conversion, moral suasion. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?' (Gandhi 1941, p. 37). With the picketing of liquor shops, the logic of resistance-in-relation is required: the acts are aimed at persuading the owners and clients of the wrongfulness of their business, of the harms thereby inflicted. Gandhi denies that real (deep and lasting) social change can happen through coercion (cf. Gandhi 1928, p. 94).

We should, however, also note that what Gandhi describes in 'What is Woman's Role' as women's leadership in social transformation through *Satyagraha* is written in a somewhat conditional tone, such as when he says, '*Let her* transfer her love . . . , *let her* forget . . . *And* [then] *she will* occupy . . . ' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29; emphases added). It is telling that he suggests in the quotation above that '*If* non-violence is the law of our being' (which he emphatically believes), *then*, it must follow that '*the future* is with women' (emphases added). Here too, we see the need for concrete political life to catch up with the faith-based ontological truth about the stronger force of truth and love over violent coercion if women are to become the political leaders in the way he foresees. As I read him, he is envisioning what we would call a feminist social revolution: women's full participation in public life will 'purify' public life by importing 'feminine values', such as love, care, community, and

change-through-persuasion[7]. But there is a bit of a chicken-and-egg dilemma here: women must first find their own strength. Moreover, their full political participation and a more feminine world are mutually interdependent. He often alludes to woman not knowing or not understanding 'the status that is hers' (for example on p. 29 of the same text), which he links with a divine status. Her leadership position in *Satyagraha* is therefore dependent upon a certain awakening to a higher truth. *Everybody*, men as well as women, should wake up to this truth about women's real but hidden status, which flows from Gandhi's understanding of God as a force of love.

Gandhi understood very well that oppressive systems could not be indefinitely maintained without the tacit support of the oppressed, whether through ignorance and internalised lies or through fear. For example, he equates *Satyagraha* with 'ceasing to play the ruled', and the Indian movement for non-cooperation with a refusal to play the colonised. The same is true about women's oppression by men, which is why he is deeply concerned that women should stop 'playing the doll' to men's lusts and fantasies. For example, in the speech 'Advice to Girl Students', he tells the students that only if they 'refuse[d] to disappear into the kingdom of dolls', and instead will 'aspire to be *Satis* [goddesses] like Parvati, Damayanti, Sita and Savitri', will they have finally done justice to the good education they were receiving at that college (Gandhi 1941, p. 121). Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 214), he uses the divine examples of Sita and Draupadi as female figures of 'robust independence', 'imperiousness', and 'in no need of protection', to argue against the *purdah* as an attempt to impose chastity on women from the outside. He further suggests that men lack the 'manfulness', i.e., the necessary courage, to 'resist the brutal custom [of the *purdah*] and sweep it away at a stroke' (Gandhi 1941, p. 213). He is similarly forcefully opposed to child marriage and enforced child widowhood (e.g., Gandhi 1941, pp. 147–49), even calling upon boys to consider marrying only widowed girls, thereby playing their part in abolishing the custom. His reinterpretation of *Satihood*, furthermore, suggests that 'self-immolation at the death of the husband is not a sign of enlightenment, but of gross ignorance as to the nature of the soul' (Gandhi 1941, p. 136). His attempts to radically transform those traditions that seem to him to violate the equal dignity of women are connected to the national goal of *Swaraj*: 'Fight for *Swaraj* means, not mere political awakening, but an all round awakening—social, educational, moral, economic and political' (p. 123).

In the pages of *The Women*, Gandhi is often exasperated by the way women's powers and labour are, as it were, privatised and monopolised for the benefit of men within the home. He understands that *Swaraj* (liberation, independence) requires not only political independence from Britain, but a comprehensive social revolution, inclusive of women's liberation, so that women may do their much-needed part for national liberation and maturation. Underlying this understanding is a radically egalitarian view of humans: 'In the eyes of God Who is the creator of all, His creatures are all equal . . . It can never be an act of merit to look down upon any human being as inferior to us' (Gandhi 1941, p. 209). 'Man and woman are of equal rank, but they are not identical' (Gandhi 1941, p. 21). 'Women must have votes and an equal legal status' (Gandhi 1941, p. 16). In the name of this radical equality, the *purdah* must be abolished, which seeks today 'to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India', which, crucially, in turn interferes 'with the growth of free independent-spirited men' (Gandhi 1941, p. 215). Gandhi often repeats the idea that 'anything that will impair the status of either of them [man or woman] will involve the equal ruin of them both' (Gandhi 1941, p. 21)[8]. He thus supports 'an intensive campaign against the system, which puts a cruel ban on social service by one half of Bihar humanity, and which denies it freedom in many cases and even the use of light and fresh air.' 'The sooner', he says, 'it is recognised that many of our social evils impede our march towards *Swaraj*, the greater will be our progress towards our cherished goal . . . Surely, we must be incapable of defending ourselves or healthily competing with the other nations, if we allow the better half of ourselves to become paralysed' (Gandhi 1941, p. 217). The oppression of women is thus seriously detrimental to the nation, as a whole and to its status among nations.

But in the name of that same faith-based understanding of equality, orthodox widows who refuse to dine with the Harijans (Dalits, untouchables) Gandhi prefers not to have enlisted as *satyagrahis*, since restrictions on 'interdining' are 'a hindrance to spiritual and national progress' and to a pure heart (Gandhi 1941, pp. 225–26). Yet, in 'Women and Untouchability', Gandhi goes much further and urges women to play a leading role in destroying 'this evil' that will 'eat us up'. He sees the issue of untouchability as a sin so great that it might destroy the Hindu religion itself: 'There will not be a single Hindu left even to do penance, and I think we shall well deserve it if such a fate overtakes us' (Gandhi 1941, p. 210). If women 'root out untouchability' from their hearts and 'serve the Harijan boys and girls as [they] would serve their own children' and regard all of them as 'children of the same Mother India', then 'Hinduism will be purified', and this self-purification of one-fifth of the human race 'cannot but have a healthy reaction on the whole of humanity' (Gandhi 1941, pp. 208–9). Women's practical tasks in this respect are both personal and structural: they must 'befriend the Harijans, by going to their quarters, by hugging their children . . . , by interesting [them]selves in their welfare' (the personal) and pledge themselves to wear *Khadi,* a local fabric produced by the Harijans (the structural, economic level), in order to support their industry (Gandhi 1941, p. 212).

Another prominent woman-focused campaign Gandhi drove was to ask women to give up their jewellery as donations for feeding the Harijans (see, e.g., 'Kaumudi's Renunciation'). For him, the public renunciation of jewellery was beneficial, in the first place, because it underlined his view that expensive decorations were 'a criminal waste of money in a poor country like India' (Gandhi 1941, pp. 187, 192). Moreover: 'No man or woman is entitled to the possession of wealth, unless he or she has given a fair share of it to the poor and helpless . . . He who does not offer this sacrifice has been called a thief' (p. 200). It was, secondly, good for the individual woman because often her jewellery was all that a woman truly could call her own; thus, it was an act of true sacrifice and self-purification on her part (Gandhi 1941, p. 193). Thirdly, Gandhi emphasised the 'tremendous moral effect that such a step on the part of the rich daughters of India will produce upon the nation, and particularly the starving masses' (p. 192). He also saw that great public renunciations had a contagious effect, so that one powerful example could lead to 'a shower of ornaments' (p. 201)—this example again underlines the power of surprising, self-sacrificial actions that are performed in collective settings. They can start to shift social relations towards greater solidarity between rich and poor, for instance. A fourth motivation for his call for the renunciation of jewellery is distinctly feminist. He writes in 'To the Sinhalese Women': 'I tell you if you want to play your part in the world's affairs, you must refuse to deck yourselves for pleasing man. If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything' (p. 195). Women should thus refuse *en masse* to be 'the slaves of men' and a good place to start is to refuse to decorate yourself (p. 196). Gandhi (1941, p. 34) quotes Tolstoy, who said women 'are labouring under the hypnotic influence of man'. Again, we clearly see the theme of an *awakening to one's own dignity* and worth: 'It is your birth right [to captivate not man, but humanity]. Man is born of woman; he is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. Come to your own and deliver your message again' (p. 196).

Thus, for Gandhi, women were destined to play a key role and to participate equally with men in the achievement of *Hind Swaraj*. In the essay 'Swaraj Through Women', he describes the Salt Campaign as having 'brought out tens of thousands [of women] from their [domestic and private] seclusion and showed them that they could serve the country on equal terms with men' and it 'gave the village woman a dignity which she had never enjoyed before' (Gandhi 1941, p. 174). It is precisely because the methods of resistance employed by *Satyagraha* are nonviolent, and in more than one sense 'feminine', that women can, and indeed have a duty to, become leaders in the movement. A further example beyond picketing and embracing the Harijan children and renouncing jewellery and the wearing of Khadi, the locally produced cloth, is *spinning*, as a form of political and economic self-empowerment and the boycott of foreign products. By and large, Gandhi accepts that

there must be division of labour between the sexes, based on what he considers to be their natural aptitudes and tendencies. It is important for him that women do not emulate men in the public and political spheres but rather bring something true to their different nature into the public. 'In trying to ride the horse that man rides, [woman] brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling [as mistress of the house and bringer up of infants]' (Gandhi 1941, p. 27). So, for example, he believes that 'Adam wove and Eve span', and '[i]n spinning [women] have a natural advantage over men' (Gandhi 1941, p. 174). Nevertheless, as was made clear throughout our discussion so far, he does not hesitate to challenge traditions in the name of equal dignity and the duty of self-sacrifice. Thus, he started his spinning campaign by spinning himself and by convincing the men to spin as an integral part of 'India's peaceful campaign for deliverance from the imperial yoke' (p. 174). He mentions that the men initially objected to spinning on the grounds that as women's work it was below their dignity, but on the principle of equality, he could not accept such reasoning, and 'men nowadays do not object on the ground of dignity' (p. 174). Nevertheless, because of its very nature, such as its slowness, he believes spinning 'will remain women's speciality' (p. 174). We see how Gandhi vacillates here between 'nature' and 'nurture'; he still thinks there are natural differences between the sexes that must be respected, but he also draws on custom when he says that 'a proof of the different functions of the sexes is unnecessary for my purpose', and then, 'at any rate in India, millions of women regard spinning as their natural occupation' (p. 175) and thus, when the Working Committee decided to make spinning 'an indispensable condition of civil disobedience', the women were naturally drawn into the movement and called upon to turn their everyday occupation into an act of civil resistance.

If one reads this essay together with another moment where Gandhi was in conversation with a sex worker, one can see how Gandhi in a radical manner relates his own self-purification to the notion of 'becoming woman'. After talking to the young girl sex worker in Barisal and hearing her story, he writes: 'As I listened to that girl my heart sank within me, and I asked God why I was also not born a woman[9]. But if I was not born a woman *I can become a woman*, and it is for the women of India . . . that I am going about the country with my spinning wheel and my begging bowl' (p. 177; emphasis added). In 'What is Woman's Role?' Gandhi describes his 'envy' of woman for 'the status that is hers, if she only knew' (p. 29). Moreover, in 'To the Sinhalese women', Gandhi, after stating that *if he were born a woman*, he would rise in rebellion against the notion that women should be the playthings of men, adds: 'I have *mentally become a woman* in order to steal into her [woman's] heart. I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do, and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so-called rights as her husband' (pp. 195–96; emphasis added). Here, Gandhi renounces his patriarchal and husbandly rights over his wife in order to 'restore to her all her rights', thereby, by my reading, showing that men cannot remain as they are if women are to be restored to their true equality and equal dignity with men; their fates are intertwined. This call for change on the side of men can be expressed by this enigmatic notion of 'becoming-woman', roughly equated with being stripped of historically embedded but unfair patriarchal entitlements. At the same time, however, he calls them to a new idea of 'manliness'—we saw how men should be 'manly', i.e., brave enough to erase traditions that oppress women, in the name even of *men's own dignity*. Gandhi further redefines manliness in the essay 'For Contraceptives', when he writes 'Man's estate is one of probation . . . He is ever prey to temptations. He has to prove his manliness by resisting and fighting temptations. He is no warrior who fights outside foes of his imagination and is powerless to lift his little finger against the innumerable foes within' (Gandhi 1941, p. 78). In his view, men are more prone to temptations than women, especially the temptations of sex and violence, and their manliness consists almost exclusively in controlling these inner demons. As is always the case with Gandhi, the deeply personal, the familial, and

the intimate (gender identities and roles) cannot be finally separated from the public, the political, and the national.

Satyagraha, the nonviolent movement for social and political transformation, is the link between women's 'nature', as viewed by Gandhi, and the world at large, the anticipated world of the future. It is in this sense that 'the future is with women', or the future is feminine, as he said. 'Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice, and, therefore, non-violence. Her occupations must, therefore, be, as they are, more conducive to peace than war.' Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 99), he proposes that woman 'lacks the brute instinct of man' and 'is weak in striking'; but 'she is strong in suffering' and 'the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*'. Gandhi places much hope and belief in what he views as woman's essentially peaceful nature when he says she will 'instinctively recoil from a function that belongs to man, [i.e., violence, such as hunting or warfare]' if placed in positions where she must take up arms herself (p. 175). Participation in violent war would 'contaminate women with the evil' (p. 30). He also believes European wars will be ended if European women steadfastly opposed their men in this respect (Gandhi 1941, p. 34). For his nonviolent struggle, women are Gandhi's natural allies: 'I would love to find that my future army contained a vast preponderance of women over men. If the fight came, I should then approach it with much greater confidence than if men predominated. I would dread the latter's violence. Women would be my guarantee against such an outbreak' (p. 175). It is noteworthy, as I have said, that Gandhi often lapses into the conditional or future tense when he speaks about women becoming the leaders of movements for social and political change. Even though he seemed to change his position significantly about women's participation in the frontlines of *Satyagraha* after certain specific campaigns, as I showed above, he remained reluctant to see women sent to prison for the struggle[10].

In 'Women's Part', this reluctance seems to be related to the women's 'honour' and what he fears may happen to them in jail. Gandhi is not unduly concerned about the physical suffering of the *satyagrahi* in general—he told them to expect to be whipped, tortured, jailed, tried, to be forced to do hard labour, and even to be exiled (Gandhi 1928). I can therefore only understand this reluctance about women's frontline work as a concern about sexual harassment and rape in this concrete instance where three women from the movement in Calcutta had been arrested alongside the men. He repeats his view that women 'should have as much share in winning *Swaraj* as men' and are in many respects better suited than men for 'this peaceful struggle'. He calls on more women to participate, and then asserts that 'God will protect their honour' (Gandhi 1941, p. 172). The impression that he is here talking about rape is strengthened when he then directly refers to the myth of Draupadi being stripped naked, with only 'the power of her own virtue [preserving] her honour'. We saw earlier Gandhi also rejecting in the name of woman's freedom of movement, independence, and dignity, the idea that she (or her honour) must be protected externally, e.g., through seclusion in the home or through the *purdah*. Here too, he talks about a situation where men are unable or unwilling to protect her, such as prison. Women should not (have to) rely on male protection. He holds that 'even the weakest physically have been given the ability to protect their own honour' and that 'one who knows how to die need never fear any harm to her or his honour' (p. 173). These are somewhat enigmatic statements and should thus be correlated with other comments he made in this respect.

In 'Obscene Advertisements', Gandhi (1941, p. 99) writes: '[Woman] has to learn not to rely on man to protect her virtue or her honour. I do not know of a single instance of a man having ever protected the virtue of a woman. He cannot, even if he would . . . [The noble women Sita and Draupadi] protected their own virtue by the sheer force of their purity. No person loses honour or self-respect but by his consent. A woman no more loses her honour or virtue, because a brute renders her senseless and ravishes her, than a man loses his because a wicked woman administers to him a stupefying drug and makes him do what she likes'. In this passage, he clarifies what he means. For Gandhi, one's honour or inner strength and dignity cannot physically be either protected or violated because it is a quality of one's soul, not a state of one's body. One can only lose one's honour by

consenting to do what is shameful. Another important piece in this regard is 'Students' Shame[11]' (Gandhi 1941, p. 103), in which he discusses the letter of a female student from Punjab who talks about sexual harassment on campus and asks specifically about 'what part non-violence can play on such occasions.' Although her focus is on non-violence (*ahimsa*), she also relates that she in fact, when harassed by a youth on a bicycle, and felt 'in danger', 'hurled [a] heavy book at the cycle' and 'roared' at the man, who was thrown off balance, and then sped away. To this, Gandhi responds in an interesting way, saying this 'was quite correct' and 'an age-old remedy'. Because of technological advances, even 'a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction'. Young women can (and he seems to say should) train themselves in self-defence and thereby protect themselves (p. 107). Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 57), he states, 'I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance [even to her husband]. She thinks now that she has not got it'. He seems to say that in the immediacy of a personal attack it is better for women to violently defend themselves than to acquiesce. Whatever the outcome of her resistance, whether she manages to flee or gets sexually violated or even killed, the man's actions alone cannot violate her dignity.

But he also realises that this is no long-term solution to a pervasive problem; more important are the systemic solutions, such as that by which 'names of the offenders should be published when they are traced'[12]; thus, the force of public shame should 'castigate public misconduct' (p. 106). Moreover, men should be called upon 'as a class' to guard their own reputation 'and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates'; it is also the work of (adult male) professors and schoolmasters 'to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils' (p. 107). For those girls who pursue the higher goals and way of life of *Satyagraha*, however, 'they must [ideally] develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man' (p. 106). It is furthermore helpful to recall in this context that Gandhi does not regard the principle of non-violence as absolute. This is clear in *Hind Swaraj* where he discusses the examples of the justified use of physical violence or force: to resist when a child rushes into a fire, or a thief breaks into one's house—this cannot be understood as an act of violence (CWMG 10, p. 46). As other authors have also pointed out (Palaver 2021, p. 12; Chandhoke 2014, pp. 92–94), Gandhi increasingly acknowledged the entanglement of violence and non-violence and the sometimes blurred line between them. So, for example, when a nation defends itself violently against a one-sided, aggressive invasion by a stronger party, their self-defence he wants to describe as 'a justifiable war' (CWMG 68, p. 138), to be 'counted almost as non-violence' (CWMG 70, p. 181). And when a woman defends herself with force against a sexual attacker, he describes her actions similarly as 'nonviolent' (CWMG 72, pp. 387–88)—there are clear analogies between the house-breaking incident, the one-sided invasion, and the sexual attack.

I thus suggest that one may read his description of these instances of forceful (self-)defence as indicative of a distinction between the immediacy of a personal attack or imminent threat to life and the long-term strategic work of social transformation which is *Satyagraha*. As we have seen from many examples above, *Satyagraha* as nonviolent opposition to violence and oppression is a calculated risk one takes on voluntarily and fully autonomously and often as part of a larger, collective movement. When *Satyagraha* is deliberately entered upon as a social movement meant to communicate the dignity of the protestors and the injustice of their treatment to a wider audience, then it is of the utmost importance that the participants steadfastly adhere to nonviolent yet forceful action. It is often a long-term struggle in which one's endurance is tested. We have seen Gandhi's views on how the eruption of violence on the side of the *Satyagrahi* derails the nature and aims of the movement. I think it is fair to say that nonviolent opposition and resistance are for Gandhi instruments for social education, building social solidarity, and bringing about social transformation that are vastly superior to politically motivated violence but that in cases of surprise attack and the immediate threat of injury, rape, and death, it is often unrealistic to think one can win over the aggressor in such a short space of time through strictly nonviolent resistance. In such cases, he seems to approve of violent or forceful

self-defence much more than acquiescence and would call such forceful action '(almost) nonviolent'. As discussed before, *Satyagraha* can never be the stance of those who cannot or dare not engage in violence; it must always be the deliberate suspension of one's violent capacities for the achievement of a higher goal.

Acquiescence (especially out of fear) is for Gandhi the worst possible response to oppression and violation because it makes one complicit in one's own degradation. The offering of *Satyagraha* is always about overcoming fear in oneself because that courage is what starts to shift relations of domination (Du Toit and Vosloo 2021, p. 11). Gandhi wants to see women walking around in public spaces fearlessly and confronting evil-doers openly and collectively. Active resistance is always much better than submission, and if it can be nonviolent (depending on the situation), it will be even better than violent resistance. I think Gandhi has in mind here that women run campaigns, for instance to publicly shame sexual harassers, i.e., use nonviolent means to raise awareness and change attitudes more thoroughly and over the longer run. Nonviolent action works over the long-term and pre-emptively. But clearly, in the heat of the attack, it would be better for lone women to violently resist their degradation than to meekly submit to it. In contrast, the longer-term solution, even to something like gender-based violence, is to transform societies, hierarchies, and attitudes—and for this, again, nonviolent force and persuasion are more efficient than the forces of counter-violence, punishment, and coercion. Gandhi wants to wean us off the notion that violence can only be effectively opposed through violence. Thus, although he admits that the line separating violence and nonviolence is sometimes blurred, as we can see from his use of the term 'almost nonviolent', he nevertheless wants to distinguish clearly between the force of violence and the alternative types of force that might be deployed in a variety of nonviolent options.

Moreover, he wants to stick to his faith-based position that the latter is ultimately more effective for bringing about lasting change than the former. The point is thus not to say women should not defend themselves violently from sexual violence, but it is rather to say that women and others who support their sexual liberation should, when not under direct attack, fight tirelessly in all manner of creative nonviolent action to change the larger reality that leads to gender-based violence and rape (what we today call 'rape culture'). A large-scale, long-term movement aimed at empowering women will strengthen their self-respect and personal power and also enable them to resist men, both privately and publicly, and to counter the prevalent image of women as powerless and fearful victims or pre-victims of sexual violence. The effect of violence (even in self-defence), in contrast, is for Gandhi limited because it lasts only while the threat of harm and the fear of it lasts; it does not change anyone. *Satyagraha* by comparison is less a single act than a way of life, a kind of virtue (Du Toit and Vosloo 2021, p. 13), something which is cultivated over time and practiced through what Butler calls 'an egalitarian imaginary' fed by collective action and continuous performative resistance (Butler 2020, pp. 64, 77).

3. Chenoweth on Nonviolent Revolutions and Gender

To those who believe violent opposition is the only effective response to an autocratic regime and systems of oppression, it must come as a surprise to read the conclusions of Erica Chenoweth's co-authored comprehensive study of revolutionary movements from 1900 to the present day (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 220). They conclude not only that 'nonviolent resistance campaigns have been more effective in achieving their goals than violent resistance campaigns', but also that they produce more stable democratic outcomes in the long run. In contrast, the social and personal costs associated with the casualties of instances of armed resistance are very high, and although they might bring about a change in power, the chances are higher that they will deliver similar or more repressive political conditions than 'transitions driven by nonviolent civic pressure' (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 60). Chenoweth, as earlier indicated, is currently busy with a more focused project, specifically investigating the role of women-identified activists (WIA) in revolutionary movements, i.e., in movements that aim at the removal of an incumbent leader from power

or the achievement of national independence. In their earlier work, they had already found that there are four factors in particular that determine the difference between success and failure in these types of movements. The four factors are as follows (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, pp. 192–93):

i. Numbers: the larger and more diverse the movement in terms of visible participants, the more likely it is to succeed.
ii. Tactical innovation: how effective the movement is in using and creating innovative tactics of disruption that place significant pressure on their opponent plays a large role in their success.
iii. Defections: a movement's ability to affect defections and loyalty shifts within those pillars of support (such as security forces, the military) that are crucial to the incumbent regime is a key indicator of success.
iv. Resilience and self-discipline: a movement that can withstand escalating repression and that has the infrastructure and organisational agility to manoeuvre in a disciplined way, e.g., to change tactics, i.e., a movement that expects and can handle losses and setbacks while sticking to its original overall aim is more likely to succeed.

In terms of both short-term (regime change[13]) and long-term (establishing egalitarian democracy[14]) outcomes, nonviolent or unarmed campaigns achieve greater success than violent ones because they do better on each of these four points. In terms of both numbers and internal diversity, diversity of age group, class, occupation, ideology, and gender is important because such an inclusive campaign attracts larger numbers in sympathy with the core issue and because a more diverse group is 'likelier to have links to members of the regime and its support structure'. In terms of defections, nonviolent campaigns fare much better than violent ones in shifting loyalties among security forces. In contrast, violent campaigns 'embolden opponent regimes' and often seem to justify greater repressive force. For example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2013, p. 193) describe the situation in Israel during the First Intifada, when there were initially 'significant defections', but after violent factions emerged, this phenomenon 'largely reversed the Israeli divisions and unified the Israeli government'. In terms of the point of tactical innovation, they write that resistance campaigns are more effective (and resilient) when they can use a 'mixture of concentrated methods (e.g., protests, sit-ins and so on) and dispersed methods (e.g., stay-aways, boycotts, strikes, leaflets, and so forth)'. Such a campaign, working on multiple fronts, is 'better able to evade regime repression and force the regime to extend its forces beyond its capacity' (p. 193). The ability to make use of a variety of tactics is, moreover, linked with greater resilience, better organisational capacity, and greater discipline within the movement. One can thus see how these four key factors are all interlinked, describe a diverse yet focused movement with a social network penetrating a large part of society, and are typically much more strongly present in nonviolent than in violent campaigns and movements. This is thus the first major point I want to show from Chenoweth's work: there are good reasons why nonviolent revolutionary movements have become much more prevalent across the world than violent ones, armed resistance has declined over the past century, and the former are much more likely to achieve both short-term and long-term success than the latter.

The second important point relates to Chenoweth's more recent focus on the impact of women-identified activists' (WIA) participation in the outcomes of mass movements. They claim that women are always present in revolutions, but there is great diversity in their 'frontline participation'. Moreover, across the world, WIA argue that 'their frontline work has either been underrepresented or erased altogether in the global history of revolution'. Although feminist scholars have been working to recover these histories in specific campaigns (e.g., McGuire 2010, in relation to the civil rights movement in the USA), Chenoweth (2022) is the first to try and provide a 'full and systematic accounting of the ways in which women's participation in mass movements has affected the strategic options of those movements, their successes, [and] the consequences globally . . . '. Crucially, nonviolent campaigns are much more likely to exhibit an extensive women's presence

(that is, where WIA make up 50% or more of the participants) in the frontlines than armed campaigns, which are more likely to either exclude women altogether or have only small numbers of women present. However, women's notable presence in the frontlines changes other aspects of the campaigns as well. The data show that where women were extensively present in the frontlines, the actual number of participants tended to be *7.5 times higher* (instead of the expected 2 times higher) than when women were only barely visible.

One can now look at all four key factors for success in the revolutionary campaigns above and correlate them more closely with women's extensive and active (leadership) participation. For instance, women tend to bring to campaigns 'horizontal network effects' as opposed to the 'vertical network effects' existing among men. Women's social networks and bonds mean that they are generally differently, both more horizontally and more extensively, situated/embedded within society than men, and they bring 'a high degree of social knowledge about which levers of society might be vulnerable to pressure' (Chenoweth 2022). Chenoweth (2022) gives the example of the Ireland Ladies Land League referred to earlier: their innovative tactics (after their male-dominated counterpart organisation, the Ireland *National* Land League, had been banned) included refusing to provide services, the withholding of labour, the reinstatement of evicted tenants, physically building huts for evicted people, and withholding their cooperation generally. Their coordinated actions made life as usual impossible on multiple fronts and thus forced the embattled English landowner Charles Boycott to leave Ireland and return to England, whereafter 'boycotts' became a household name for the kinds of activities they had engaged in. Women's extensive participation in nonviolent campaigns thus facilitates tactics that are not so readily available to male-only groups.

Chenoweth (2022) therefore sees many nonviolent resistance tactics as 'highly gendered', with WIA facilitating 'new avenues for transgressions that help build power for the movement rather than alienate potential supporters.' As a pertinent example, they describe the 'Igbo Women's War', when Igbo women were resisting the Nigerian colonial tax system and the co-opted chiefs' powers, by 'sitting on the man'—a traditional form of social sanction where a group of women would surround the culprit's home and refuse to leave, sometimes occupying the home, singing, or screaming hostilities, even sometimes tearing down the house. Another example is a group of 'beauty queens' from Myanmar (March 2021) who held a beauty parade in explicit opposition to the 2021 military coup (Chenoweth 2022). There is also the example of women in Kenya stripping out of protest, thereby drawing on a powerful taboo against seeing elderly women naked; this was used to shame members of the police force (Chenoweth 2022). These nonviolent and highly gendered forms of resistance and protest are simultaneously very creative and powerful because they bring the everyday and private lives of people to bear on the resistance struggle. Clearly a whole different constituency of people will be affected by a beauty parade than by other forms of resistance.

Chenoweth (2022), moreover, shows that more women on the frontlines translate into more defection on the side of security forces—a key indicator of when a regime starts to collapse. When women 'bring their social networks and social power to bear on key political moments', the members of the police and other security forces may start to wonder if their children or other individuals dear to them are in the protesting crowd and may decide not to follow the order to shoot (as happened in Serbia on 5 October 2000, according to Chenoweth 2022). A majority of women in revolutionary movements helps to maintain the discipline of nonviolence and strengthens the perception of the movement as nonviolent and therefore safer to join—this leads to greater numbers joining. According to Chenoweth (2022), the emergence of violent armed activity within the context of an otherwise nonviolent campaign often backfires and allows for greater repression and thus an escalation of violence. Conceivably, it will also discourage many civilians from joining out of fear of getting caught up in violence, and as in the case of Israel mentioned above, this strengthens the resolve and unity of the beleaguered regime and its supporters.

4. The Value of *Satyagraha* for Feminist Politics Today

The echoes and resonances between Gandhi's thinking and Chenoweth's work are numerous, intricate, and instructive, even apart from the latter's explicit references to the former's influence. Looking through a gendered lens, one notices that many of the movements that inspired Gandhi were women-led, and many campaigns subsequently led and extensively participated in by women had been inspired by him. In South African history, there is a long tradition of black women's nonviolent resistance to colonial and apartheid labour regulations, restrictions of movement, and economic measures. Examples include the 1956 multiracial Women's March on Pretoria and many others, dating back as far as black women's protests in Bloemfontein in 1913 (the Waaihoek women's protest). Many of these campaigns, as well as the decades-long nonviolent policy of the liberation movement itself, the African National Congress, were indebted to the Gandhian tradition of successful *Satyagraha* in South Africa. It is impossible to capture the full influence of Gandhi on women-led and women-initiated mass movements around the globe—in the US civil rights movement, of course, Martin Luther King Jr. was directly influenced by Gandhi and inspired further nonviolent movements himself, but the decisive role of women in these campaigns has been vastly underplayed. It is thus important to acknowledge that beyond Gandhi's personal views on women's participation in *Satyagraha*, his example was in fact (and still is) adopted by many nonviolent campaigns, which include seeing thousands of women in the frontlines. However, the focus here is on Gandhi's own views, read alongside Chenoweth's findings, and what we can learn from them for women's resistance today.

When we bring Gandhi and Chenoweth in conversation with one another, the first remarkable insight is how Gandhi's faith-based ontology (namely that God, or the cosmic force of love, truth, and pity is a force stronger than the force of violence) is echoed in Chenoweth's striking (purely secular) findings about the socio-political effect (success, 'force') of nonviolent revolution being significantly greater than that of violent or armed resistance or revolution. Gandhi's view of violence as having only a limited and short-term (fear-based) coercive impact and therefore being an ineffective tool for deep and lasting social transformation is thereby borne out. Based on his understanding of *ahimsa* and *satya* as cosmic, divine principles, he believed that history/God/nature is finally on the side of love and truth and thus of the creative (constructive) forces of relationships, communication, and cooperation. Violence and destruction (brute force), therefore, by the very nature of reality cannot build or rebuild or transform human worlds. On the other hand, however, neither can mere speeches and writing; action is what is needed. The successful nonviolent movements described by Chenoweth correspond with these insights: they draw their strength on the building of alliances across differences and perform these cross-cutting solidarities through mass action. The success of large and diverse movements in affecting defections and dividing the loyalties of the pillars of support of the regime is a great example of Gandhi's idea that change only happens through persuasion or conversion and that women are somehow experts at appealing to and changing hearts. We have seen Chenoweth's finding that extensive female participation in nonviolent campaigns significantly increases defections.

Their work further supports Gandhi's intuition that male-only campaigns increase the chances of violence 'creeping in' and that this tends to undermine the self-disciplined nonviolence of the movement and, accordingly, its effectiveness in persuading or converting others. Women's extensive frontline (visible, performative) participation strengthens both the perception of a campaign as nonviolent and the internal discipline and thus the resilience of the group to stay with nonviolence, even if provoked through escalating repression. At least some of the power of nonviolent resistance lies in the spectacle of dignified and nonviolent, unarmed, vulnerable bodies being attacked by state forces. The sharper the contrast between the 'soul force' of the protestors and the 'brute force' of the oppressors, the greater the power of the spectacle to convert others to support of the protestors' cause. The visible presence of women in the frontlines tends to heighten the contrast between the protestors and the armed forces because of our traditional associations with femininity and

vulnerability. We saw how exulted Gandhi was when he discovered this principle, even though he remained concerned about 'sending' women into such positions throughout his life. Like Mrs Alexander, the superintendent's wife, women must, of their own volition, take up the role of human shield, driven only by their own courage and conviction; clearly, it would be wrong for Gandhi or anyone else to coerce women into such a vulnerable position and to instrumentalise them in this way. This is also why it is important, as Chenoweth shows, that women are not merely present on the frontlines, but that they are there in numbers at least equal to those of the men, including in leadership roles. Campaigns led or completely dominated by women employing gendered tactics (e.g., the Women's March in Washington the day after Trump's inauguration or the Igbo Women's War) can also work well.

We thus see that Chenoweth's conclusions support many of Gandhi's insights drawn from his experiences and intuitions based on his faith in God. Chenoweth's work clearly underscores his understanding that the landscape of resistance is strongly gendered and that WIA bring tactics, social networks and familial bonds, and social knowledge with them that are often not readily accessible to men. Moreover, the extensive participation of women and their leadership seems to considerably strengthen the nonviolent character of the movement over time and with that its overt emphasis on persuasion rather than threat and coercion. A steadfastly and visibly nonviolent movement with many women on the frontlines is more likely to draw a variety of supporters from different ideological persuasions to the core cause—a kind of mass support that comes under threat should violent factions emerge. If high numbers of women are in the forefront of demands for change, their presence brings the private, familial, and the personal into the public sphere. Security force members start to worry that their lovers, wives, friends, or children might be in the crowds and may defect more easily or at the very least refuse to shoot. Although a contemporary feminist scholar such as Chenoweth may be concerned about Gandhi's attribution of natural differences to the sexes, viewed in a dichotomous but complementary way, they will nevertheless, it seems, strongly agree with him that the difference that women's presence seems to make in unarmed or nonviolent revolutionary movements is a highly valuable one that will be lost if women were to act just like men.

As said, Gandhi's thinking was constantly informed by what he learnt in practice. It is commendable of him to have realised a century ago the potential that women's frontline participation holds for revolutionary action and to foresee that women's role would grow in the future as insight grows into the effectiveness of mass nonviolent action. His acknowledgement of earlier women's campaigns as sources of inspiration for *Satyagraha* and his later view that women are pre-eminently suited for it stand as a judgement on those later histories of revolutionary movements that have tried to minimise or erase women's often pioneering and leadership roles. As Chenoweth (2022) also indicates, the erasure of women's roles in social transformation is an erasure of their role in building democratic institutions, to the detriment of all, but especially of course to the detriment of women themselves, who might again be side-lined once the social transformation has been achieved (as might arguably be said of South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994).

Very briefly, Gandhi's position might also hold limitations for contemporary feminist politics. His naturalisation of sexual difference and his view that men are naturally more prone to violence and sex and women are naturally more self-sacrificial cannot, to my mind, but strengthen a kind of 'slave morality' in women, which expects of them to forever carry the burden of unpaid care work, however large their public contribution might be on top of that burden. And of course, it absolves men from care obligations. Joy Kroeger-Mappes (1994) explains convincingly that an ethic of private care does not simply stand alongside an ethic of public justice, but that the two ethics form one hierarchical system, with the ethic of care forming the material basis of society which maintains the male-dominated public sphere, at a great cost to the crucial but unacknowledged caregivers. As women's participation in the public domain increases, they are increasingly held to both of these ethics at the same time, while men are exempted from the ethics of care. This leads to a

kind of 'moral madness' in women, because the obligations of the two ethics often clash. These feminist insights challenge Gandhi's call that women should fulfil all their private care duties while also taking the lead in transforming society according to more feminine principles. Moreover, to instill self-sacrifice and endurance of suffering in girls and women as their special power seems set in an imperfect world to reinscribe women's servitude to the public world of men. It is possible that Gandhi's faith vision blinded him somewhat to the intractable nature of relations of gender domination.

On the positive side, Gandhi's formulation of the idea of 'becoming woman' is promising because it further destabilises the gender dichotomy that he himself mostly upheld as a natural given, and it shows, moreover, that the personal is political—not only for women, but importantly also for men, who must consider how their oppression of women is in fact impeding their own dignity and freedom and stifles democracy nationwide. These are radical gestures on the side of Gandhi which would endear him to many contemporary feminists, who would do well to engage more fully with his deep and prolonged, practice-based concern about women's roles in revolutionary movements, in national liberation, and in national sovereignty, more broadly understood. Placed in conversation with Chenoweth's findings, his ideas obtain a force that was surprising for its time and might again today surprise us as contemporary feminists and stimulate us to come up with ever new ways to transgress oppressive systems and put them under pressure.

Notes

[1]   I spell *Satyagraha* with a capital letter and italics throughout this article. When I quote directly, I leave the spelling as it is in the original. *Satyagrahi*, referring to the 'soldiers of peace' or nonviolent resisters, I will spell with a small letter and italics.

[2]   Note that the (Chenoweth 2022) is a very recent source. It is an online lecture Chenoweth gave at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced study at Harvard University, presented on 23 March 2022. This source is therefore referenced without page numbers. The full lecture is available online: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution | Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

[3]   Erica Chenoweth identifies as nonbinary. I will therefore use the they/them pronouns throughout the article to refer to Chenoweth.

[4]   For this discussion, I will be drawing much on the text *The Women* by Mahatma Gandhi (1941) and will use the headings chosen by the publishers for each paragraph or short chapter. 'Question Box' (Gandhi 1941, p. 223) is an example of a short section that falls under the larger heading of 'Of Tamil Women'—the final section of the book.

[5]   He believes that it was the dignified suffering and steadfastness of the women in the camps, much more than the men's guerrilla warfare, that led to the desire from England's side to end the war.

[6]   In a lovely piece of archival research, Corder and Plaut (2014) show through Molteno's private correspondence how the intimate involvement of influential white women, Betty Molteno, Olive Schreiner, and Emily Hobhouse, in Gandhi's cause helped to secure the success of his important 1913 campaign in South Africa.

[7]   This reminds strongly of Sara Ruddick's (1989) book, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, and some proponents of feminist care ethics that would like to see a value such as care become a pervasive socio-political value (e.g., Sevenhuijsen 1998; Tronto 1993, 2013).

[8]   An important aspect of Gandhi's faith-based ontology is that he views all humans as radically equal and also sees everyone as bound up in the same social bond. Therefore, in the case of women's oppression, their oppressors (men) are also harmed and degraded. These strong insights are also what led Gandhi to the position that a *satyagrahi* is never allowed to hate or to have enemies (Gandhi 1928, p. 124). This is why harm done to the opponent is ruled out, and change must come about purely through persuasion.

[9]   Read 'Our Unfortunate Sisters' alongside this passage. Gandhi's enormous shame on behalf of Indian manhood is probably what makes him long to have been born a woman. Prostitution 'is an evil which cannot last for a single day, if we men of India realise our own dignity' (Gandhi 1941, p. 167). For him, prostitution is nothing but 'the degradation man [the lawgiver] has imposed upon the so-called weaker sex', due to his 'unlawful and immoral indulgence' (p. 166).

[10] In 'Women's Part', he writes: 'I had hoped that in the initial stages, at any rate, women would be spared the honour of going to gaol' (Gandhi 1941, p. 172).

[11] In 'The Modern Girl' Gandhi makes it clear that 'The Students' Shame' deals with the male students' shame, rather than with 'the frailties of girls' (Gandhi 1941, p. 109).

[12] In this respect, it is interesting to note that female students both in South Africa and in India, have recently published lists of names of alleged male perpetrators of campus harassment and rape.

[13] Chenoweth (2022) explains that 'short-term success' was measured using the following criterion: whether a movement achieved its stated aim such as regime change within one year of the peak of its mobilisation.

[14] There is also a clear standard for long-term success: the establishment of what they call 'a genuinely egalitarian democracy plus women's formal (legal) empowerment' within five years after the campaign has ended.

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Gandhi and Sustainability. An Attempt to Update Timeless Ideas

Wilhelm Guggenberger

Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Innsbruck, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria; wilhelm.guggenberger@uibk.ac.at

Abstract: Linking Gandhi and sustainability may seem like a fashionable gimmick at first glance. However, if sustainability is understood in a holistic way, as a transformation of human–environment relations as well as of social and economic structures, this image changes. If one also takes seriously that Gandhi's understanding of non-violence does not only include the avoidance of physical violence, but a fundamental attitude in different areas of life, such as economy or the use of technology, it becomes clear that sustainability, as it is currently being promoted by the United Nations in *Agenda 2030*, and Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* pursue identical goals. Gandhi, as well as elements of the Christian ethical tradition, can enrich political programs with a spiritual dimension, without which profound changes in human attitudes will not be possible.

Keywords: Gandhi; sustainability; nonviolence; Catholic social thought; alternative development

This text deals on the one hand with Mohandas K. Gandhi's significance for the issue of sustainability and on the other hand looks for traces of this issue in Gandhi's thinking. Why this choice of topic? Gandhi is known for having led India to independence, but arguably not as a leading figure in sustainability thinking. In the first line, he is revered as a hero of non-violence. That Gandhi's ideas could also be important in an environmentalist context has only been discovered in recent years (Syal and Kumar 2020; Allen 2019). One could now argue that such a discovery is not at all appropriate to reality. Would it not be possible either that a current buzzword is attributed to an idealized figure or that this figure is being misused as a figurehead of the current environmental and climate-protection movement to give it an additional boost? Either one side or the other would then be misused as a publicity stunt.

At first glance, this perception may seem justified. If we look at things a little more closely, I guess we can see that this is based on two misconceptions. One misunderstanding concerns a too-narrow understanding of sustainability, the other concerns the interpretation of non-violence (*ahimsa*) in the sense of Gandhi. To provide argumentative support for this claim, I will first discuss the term sustainability, which is used so frequently—if not inflationary—today and then have a look at Gandhi's understanding of non-violence and its realisation in this context. Ultimately, it should be possible to show that Gandhi's thinking, particularly his concept of *sarvodaya* and the challenging project of sustainability overlap in many ways. I therefore advocate that Gandhi's thinking be used as a source of inspiration for the global transformation process that we are currently facing. Moreover, it will also be shown, at least to some extent, that there are clear parallels between Gandhi's approach and the tradition of Christian social ethics. This is significant because it shows that spiritual impulses from different origins can contribute to bringing sustainability goals to life in the world society. Reading the following it is important to bear in mind that both Gandhi as a person and large institutions such as the United Nations or religious communities such as the Catholic Church often fail in realizing their own ideals and objectives. However, this should not lead us to discard valuable ideas and convincing arguments, even if the deed admittedly remains more convincing than the word.

1. Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Sustainability

The first thought we associate with sustainability is probably that of environmental degradation and protection. This is by no means without reason. As it is generally known, the term sustainability originates from forestry (Caradonna 2014, pp. 20–21). During the period of early industrialisation, only a few agents recognized the limitations of natural resources to be an obstacle to technological and economic growth. If one is cutting his forests to expand his or her ore- or coalmine, faster than new trees are growing the expansion either will come to an end or become quite expansive as the means of production will have to be brought over from far away. Thus, the main field of sustainable action from the beginning was the ecological environment. Nevertheless, the term was coined within a context concatenating natural preconditions and economic outcomes. Such an interconnection of economic and social processes on the one hand and the natural environment on the other seems not to be surprising within a framework of somehow enlightened human self-interest.

In the beginning, the idea of interconnectedness of human and non-human spheres remained almost only anthropocentric, a fact that has changed meanwhile at least slightly. Eventually, the imagery of a holistic, complex network has become crucial in talking about sustainability. That means that nature, including bodily human reality, is not only recognized as a factor of production but rather as comprehensive precondition of human existence. Further economy is reclassified as it is not the unique aim of social activity but only one aspect of enabling quality of life. On a global level, this shift of perception gained importance at the latest with the publication of the so-called Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* in 1987.

This report, which still points the way forward, was also met with fierce criticism. A major reason for this was that according to the Brundtland Commission, combating global poverty only seemed possible based on further growth. Distributive justice and the necessity of equal opportunities were mentioned of course. However, the report assumes that more efficient but continued growth—including industrial production and mining—is indispensable to improve the situation of humankind. "Many essential human needs can be met only through goods and services provided by industry. The production of food requires increasing amounts of agrochemicals and machinery. Beyond this, the products of industry form the material basis of contemporary standards of living" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, chp. 8, No. 2). The demand for economic growth to be made ecologically compatible, as it were, came both from the technically and economically highly developed states and from the countries of the global South (von Weizsäcker et al. 2010, p. 17). The approach, which seeks to decouple growth and environmental degradation on the one hand, and to make growth more equitable on the other, is probably not radical enough given the magnitude and seriousness of the challenges. As Tim Jackson has shown in his famous book *Prosperity without Growth,* technological progress and increased efficiency in using resources will not avoid the destruction of our planet as long as the number of humans, as well as individual demands, will increase (Jackson 2017). It was further mentioned in a critical manner that "there is no emphasis on spiritual values, or individual responsibility in the Brundtland report. Rather the focus is on collective institutional responses, efficiency gains, and social responsibility" (Robinson 2004, p. 373).

In any case, the merit of *Our Common Future* is that ecological and social challenges are presented as interrelated ones. Since then, the need for a holistic way of thinking that perceives society and the environment as an interconnected unit has become more and more apparent. As it is said in the report: "A world in which poverty and inequity are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crises" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, chp. 2, No. 4). The task of integrating both aspects—the social and the ecological one—is by no means easy but undoubtedly indispensable and requires a synthetic, transdisciplinary way of thinking which "actively creates synergy, not just summation" (Robinson 2004, p. 378).

In line with the report of 1987 is the current UN programme called *Agenda 2030*. Considering the status of such a programme elaborated by representatives of all the UN member states and its prominence it seems justifiable to focus on it in our context even if there are manifold other approaches to sustainability and even if it may be questionable in detail. This framework for sustainable development of humankind until 2030 consists of 17 different goals (SDGs, i.e., Sustainable Development Goals) covering such diverse topics as reduction in poverty and hunger, improving innovative technologies and decent working conditions, reducing gender injustice, protecting global climate and ecosystems or engaging for peace. One may say that there is too much included in this agenda to enable purposeful action. By trying to reach all these aims at the same time one necessarily must fail in reaching one of them.

Even if it may be true that the agenda is too ambitious, its strength lies in the fact that it does not split sustainability into a multitude of individual, independently considered topics, but rather counts on synergies between the areas and realises the likelihood of trade-offs as well. Of course, it cannot be denied that the devil is in the details also in this case. This is expressed, for example, in the debate about whether the term sustainability is preferable or whether we should speak of sustainable development. The former draws attention to a change of basic attitude towards the natural environment and our life in it, the latter focuses on more pragmatic or technical management of environmental damage that affects us uncomfortably (Robinson 2004, p. 371). Sustainable development in this context is harshly criticised for its focus on a techno-economic concept of development. "Sustainable development, on this view, is a classic case of a technological fix, which will perpetuate the underlying disease by treating only the symptoms" (Robinson 2004, p. 377). This criticism applies in particular to Goal 8 of the *Agenda 2030*, which calls for sustained economic growth and full and productive employment for all.

Nevertheless, the accusation that goals and targets contained in the agenda are fundamentally contradictory is based on the concept of a conflictive and rivalling reality. Such a concept is not only incongruous with the concept of sustainability as such (Singh et al. 2018, p. 24) but also quite different from Gandhi's worldview. If our world would consist of separated functional systems competing with each other the wellbeing and unfolding of the one had to be tantamount to the diminishing and suppression of the other. Such a logic of mere trade-offs for example would mean that an economy providing human prosperity unavoidably had to exploit if not even to destroy nature. According to a common saying, you cannot have your cake and eat it. Although that undoubtedly is a fact a fundamental error of reasoning must be recognized if we consider nature a piece of property or a consumer item, which is at our disposal instead of acknowledging it to be a self-reliant vivid reality with which we must coexist enabling co-prosperity including the wellbeing of nature and human society. A study looking for co-benefits among particular SDGs focussing on ocean-related sustainability-targets states in this context: "A final hypothesis is that the SDGs that tightly couple environment, society, and economy may be the most important for meeting/achieving diverse sustainability goals" (Singh et al. 2018, p. 229). Thus, the current understanding of sustainability, even if requiring economic transformation, is not anti-economic as it must not refrain from social engagement. More generally speaking, it is far from being exclusively concerned with ecological issues. This opens a first connection to Gandhi who like the most part of pre-modern oriental as well as occidental philosophical and religious tradition "never demarcated between economics, politics, religion, education of man. For him they constitute an integral whole" (Sambasiva 2019, p. 35). None of these aspects of the comprehensive "Lebenswelt" (living world) can be practised or even understood separated from each other or separated from nature on which humans hinge and to which they belong as bodily beings.

To conclude these considerations, sustainable development must be understood as the coevolution of people, structures and institutions of society which may be called anthropo-sphere and their ecological environment, i.e., the geo-, atmo-, and the biosphere. Realising this is not an easy task at all and will not be achieved without conflict but

the ideal guiding our decisions and actions must be a mode of coexistence of human individuals, peoples, nations, and the nonhuman creation lifting and supporting each other while at the same time guaranteeing a place for future generations. Therefore, sustainability cannot be limited to political programmes or strategic tools. It presupposes a transformation of prevalent worldviews. Insofar as worldviews are not only rational concepts, but also contain emotions, attitudes, and beliefs, which are more difficult to change than information-based knowledge, we are ultimately dealing with a spiritual challenge. Gandhi's longing for *satyagraha* is one possible path to such an innermost change. Even if the *Agenda 2030* itself is an expression of at least an incipient rethinking, such a political project probably cannot adequately capture the dimension of the necessary inner change of heart. If this is true, the implementation of the agenda requires cultural and spiritual impulses, such as those that can come from the world's religions (Pope Francis 2015, No. 63; CWMG 1956–1994, p. 33). It is about a changed, more appreciative way of dealing with oneself, one's fellow human beings and nature.

2. Non-Violence in the Face of Multiple Forms of Violence

The latter idea leads directly to the issue of non-violence in the sense of Gandhi. It seems obvious that Gandhi was well aware of the multidimensionality of violence (Allen 2019, p. 6), which matches with his conviction that non-violence (ahimsa) has to be all-pervasive in the sense of a live shaping tenet. That means that not only he addressed direct, physical violence but also what in the wake of Johan Galtung we may call structural and cultural violence (Galtung 1969, 1990). Each social structure or institution preventing people from meeting their needs and developing their potentials represents structural violence. Cultural violence is rooted even deeper in the collective consciousness and justifies structural sometimes direct violence by providing imageries of "normal" or justified exploitation, suppression, or exclusion. We could add the form of epistemic violence currently under discussion, which can be seen as an expression of cultural violence in academically influenced discourse. The essential element of this violence consists in not allowing a certain part of reality, especially marginalized groups of people, to have their say (Spivak 1993). Particularly in a situation in which we are faced with scientific expertise and its authority widely marketed in the media, the depiction of reality distorted by narrow-minded epistemic frameworks is a crucial aspect of indirect violence that demands our attention. The use of terms and theories shapes public discourse and thus could establish manifest structures of violence. That Gandhi addressed the group of untouchables as Harijan (children of God) can be interpreted as an action against epistemic violence. Even if this is criticized today as a possible trivialization of a dramatic situation of injustice, Gandhi's intention to express the dignity of Dalits beyond all caste logic by using this term seems to be beyond doubt. This is supported by statements like the following: "The removal of untouchability means treating the so-called untouchables as one's own kith and kin. He who does treat them so must be free from the sense of high and low . . . " (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 379).

With regard to the concrete handling of the Indian caste tradition, there have always been disputes. The best known is probably the conflict between Bhimrao Ramji Ambedakr and Gandhi. Ambedkar, who himself had to suffer the experience of untouchability represented a reason-centred approach, which was strongly influenced by western enlightenment thinking. This led the important reformer to a kind of strict secularity that—although it does not discard religion completely—was far from Gandhi's understanding (Rodrigues 2011, p. 57). Gandhi largely judged modernity to be a reality that "was deeply caught in violence and stressed on power. It was not self-determining moral agents that were its priority but satisfaction of externally induced wants" (Rodrigues 2011, p. 60). He fundamentally valued India's religious tradition. In the course of this effort, he may have portrayed an element such as the ideal meaning of caste too positively and criticised too little the real political outcome and impact in the present. Nevertheless, he clearly condemned untouchability (Gandhi 2015, pp. 37–38). The disputes between Ambedkar

and Gandhi require a more in-depth discussion, which cannot be achieved here. It may suffice to note that both persons emphasised different aspects of social reform, which must complement each other. For Gandhi, the spiritual maturation of individuals and the inner change of attitude were at the centre of any social design, while Ambedkar had more of an eye on the question of structures.

Since violence comes in such a variety of forms, ahimsa must signify more than pacifism or foregoing of the use of weapons or brute force, it requires a change in the structures and concepts that shape our thinking and our attitudes and thereby also society at its core. Gandhi was deeply aware of this. Let me refer to two social areas now in which we particularly may detect both structural and at least traces of cultural and epistemic violence: economy and technology.

2.1. Economic Violence

Gandhi often mentions economic violence like exploitation or exclusion from the area of sufficient survival conditions. Perhaps his most sensational action during the Indian independence movement, the Salt March of 1930, was directed against a form of economic, structural violence. As Gandhi mentioned: "The salt-tax is not a small injustice" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 12). His approach to the sphere of economy moreover is stricter than the mainstream of the traditional Christian one that should have shaped the actions of the British colonial government. In Christian tradition, Thomas Aquinas mentions that keeping much more goods than is needed while others are lacking necessities is injustice. In this context, he speaks of abundance (superfluous goods), which denotes possession exceeding what is appropriate to a person's social position. (Summa Theologiae II-II q. 32, a. 5–6) To Gandhi economic violence is already there when one takes more for her- or himself than absolutely necessary. As he put it: "A thing not originally stolen must nevertheless be classified as stolen property, if we possess it without needing it" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 103). However, both traditions consider glaring economic inequality violence. Accordingly, not only does the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching speak of justice being another name for peace, but Gandhi also says that any political programme is "a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 381). Therefore, for Gandhi exploitation of the weak ones must be overcome no matter in whom it originates, either in foreign colonial powers or in domestic elites. Gandhi's resistance is thus not to be understood as a purely anti- or postcolonial one. If it is against anything at all, it is against injustice and violence in all its forms; but it is more appropriate to speak of resistance in favour of the oppressed and the poor.

A form in which structural violence manifests itself today is post-democracy in which an economic elite rules over the majority of the people although formally democratic structures do exist. The majority of people is excluded from very decision-making and overruled by the restricted interests of a small group of haves. "Their accumulated wealth has given them the power to influence governments" (Gandhi 2020, p. 78). Post-democratic structures can therefore be understood as a form of economic violence in which the one-person-one-vote principle is undermined by the logic that each act of purchase is a vote. The number of votes a person has is thus analogous to his or her ability to pay. Such conditions seem to be quite present in today's India confirming Gandhi's warning that a liberated India that follows Western patterns will never be truly free.

These brief reflections may suffice to draw our attention to the possibilities of economic injustice, since it is probably uncontroversial that economic exploitation and extreme inequality constitute a form of oppression that we rightly call violence against which Gandhi's *satyagraha* approach was consequently directed. Much more controversial is the topic of technology.

2.2. Violent Aspects of Technology

In general, advancement in technology today is considered to be one of the most important tools to overcome poverty, social inequality and also ecological threats. Gandhi

however considered the modern mode of technical development to be structural violence. He made this judgement under the impression of British industrialisation, which alienated and enslaved the masses of workers. He feared an analogous effect for India. Particularly in his early book *Hind Swaraj* he rejected technology which he called machinery completely. "I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 59). Such and similar formulations contributed to Gandhi's reputation as an anti-modernist ignorant of the reality of our time and its requirements. *Hind Swaraj* was written in 1909. In an introduction newly written on a further edition of the book 16 years later, the editor quotes the author still arguing that technological tools are but a lesser evil. His approach depicted there one may not only deem radical but also somatophobic. For Gandhi claimed that technology—like the human body—was inevitable but—like the body—it was also a hindrance to the highest flights of the soul and therefore had to be rejected (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 255). However, Gandhi realized that his approach though helpful in the context of the individual longing for spiritual growth could not be equally helpful in shaping communal life. Therefore, he argued a little bit more sophisticated nevertheless sceptical about technology, when the student Ramachandran, asked him during an interview in 1924 if he had been against all machinery. His response was: "How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning-wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such" (CWMG 1956–1994, pp. 250–51). The mentioned craze is rooted in greed according to him by which modern economy, as well as science and technology, are driven for the most part. The central point of his argument is that machines and factories should not work "for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 251) Therefore, the human person must be placed at the centre of considerations. Or as it was put by J.C. Kumarappa an economic advisor of Gandhi: "Gandhism aims at the development of the human being" (Kumarappa 1951, p. 48).

Since Gandhi's scepticism towards technological progress in general and the technologization of the economy in particular is not only accused of being backward but also could be perceived as rooted in a specific Hindu-Buddhist asceticism and renouncement, two more current approaches should be mentioned. They have emerged in the Western world and are characterised by a Christian approach to the topic. This may prove that Gandhi-like critique is not irrelevant to the western sphere as well as that it must not be attributed to resentment-ridden victims of colonialism, but rather always appears in a similar form where a spiritual–holistic worldview is established and urges for the formation of a new mindset.

One approach was developed by Ivan Illich one could call a catholic dissident or even anarchist, who like Gandhi was very sceptical about institutions of education and health care as far as they do not consider personal subjects comprehensively enough, including all their physical, intellectual, emotional, interrelational and spiritual dimensions. In general, there are parallels in the approaches of Illich and Gandhi that cannot be overlooked (Hardiman 2003, pp. 87–89). It is said that Illich "once told Madhu Suri Prakash that all of his writings could be thought of as a series of footnotes to Mahatma Gandhi's work" (Grego 2013, p. 92). His critical thoughts on technique can be found in a compacted form in his 1973-book *Tools for Conviviality*. In German, this book is titled *Selbstbegrenzung* (self-limitation); a term closely related to self-rule (*swaraj*) as it means a conscious decision for what is necessary and helpful for the unfolding of one's freedom, whereby the dominance of drives and external influences is broken. This kind of self-limitation entails the search for a new form of technology that no longer encounters us as an independent power to which we are subject in analogy to the laws of nature. "People need new tools to work with rather than tools that "work" for them. They need technology to make the most of the energy and imagination each has, rather than more well-programmed energy slaves" (Illich 1973, p. 23).

Depicting social reality as being in accordance with conviviality Illich targets the participation of people in decisions on technological development which requires small and manageable structures. As the Indian philosopher Gobinathan Pillai put it according to Gandhi, he "would appreciate the technological development beyond the "primitive" but it would be a highly selective technology and would be of such a nature that it could be controlled by relatively small communities" (Gopinathan Pillai 1988, p. 381).

Self-responsibility and self-rule on the one hand and a social system that enables participation on the other are two sides of the same coin. Both are more likely to come into play where the mere pursuit of possessions and power is not dominating. Illich worked out this connection clearly when he reflected on the fact that we have tried for a hundred years to replace slaves with machines that should work for us only to discover at the end that machines are enslaving men (Illich 1973, p. 24). This paradoxical development was depicted in a similar way by Hans Jonas (Jonas 1984, pp. 140–42). Illich answered the question of what went wrong with our intentions to make humanity freer by fostering technology as follows: "The illusion prevailed that the machine was a laboratory-made homunculus, and that it could do our labour instead of slaves. It is now time to correct this mistake and shake off the illusion that men are born to be slaveholders and that the only thing wrong in the past was that not all men could be equally so. By reducing our expectations of machines, however, we must guard against falling into the equally damaging rejection of all machines as if they were works of the devil" (Illich 1973, p. 33). This quotation shows the necessity to rethink our self-perception as rulers, which does not at all mean that we do not have the ability or even liability to shape and conduct our life and its conditions including the use of technical tools. On the contrary, it should lead us to a constructive mode of self-rule as Gandhi would put it. Conviviality based on such self-rule according to Illich, would mean an "autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment" (Illich 1973, p. 24).

Insofar as technology as such represents a habit of domination, it becomes understandable that it "is incompatible with the accomplishment of a non-violent, decentralised social order" (Gopinathan Pillai 1988, p. 378). Partnership rather than domination provides the guiding principle for conviviality that helps us to overcome the mingling of means and ends by showing "that only persons have ends and that only persons can work toward them" (Illich 1973, p. 65). The last point may sound too anthropocentric to a contemporary environmentalist's ears. Nevertheless, Illich claims that such a person-centrism is the precondition to re-establish ecological balance. It also resembles Gandhi's critique that in our modern way of living more and more means have been treated as ends.

However, we must recognize that presumably different concepts of reality are deeply engrained in the traditions of East and West, respectively. Human beings as well as God in western tradition cannot be imagined other than being individuals distinct from others. As the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber underlines, a personal individual cannot become a self without a You (Buber 1937, p. 11). This asserts relationship to be constitutional to human beings, however, a relationship that connects different entities. The starting point of eastern traditions on the other hand seems to be unity permeated by one vivid force or soul that interweaves everything. In Gandhi's very words: "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 199). Further: "The only way to God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. . . . I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 297). Thought through to the end, this also means, any distinction between human dignity the dignity of all living beings and the dignity of all existing reality is less fundamental in this context. For Gandhi, unity among human beings is primary, but where this is realized, there will also be unity between humanity and the whole of creation (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 285). We

should try to bring both approaches—the western and the eastern one—together to foster the respect of human persons on the one hand and to strengthen the respect of each kind of living creature on the other. Both will be necessary to find "an alternative to technocratic disaster" (Illich 1973, p. 25).

At this point of reflection, it may be appropriate to introduce the second author of whom Gandhi reminds us today: Jorge Mario Bergoglio, elected Pope Francis in 2013. Quoting the German philosopher and Catholic theologian Romano Guardini several times he criticises what is called the technocratic paradigm in his second Encyclical Letter *Laudato si*. A crucial argument in this context is that we as modern humans are not trained in a proper way to use the power we have gained by science and technology in the right way. Therefore, the formation of responsibility and consciousness did not keep up with the dynamic development of tools and skills we have undergone since the Age of Enlightenment (Pope Francis 2015, No. 104–5). Tools and skills embedded in a technological paradigm tend to become mere means of domination, domination of other people and domination of nature. This way of dealing with our environment has become so self-evident that there seems to be no alternative. Thus, the Pope writes: "It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same. Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic, and those who are surrounded with technology "know full well that it moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the human race", that "in the most radical sense of the term power is its motive—a lordship over all" (Pope Francis 2015, No. 108). From that clearly follows: not the physical object, a specific machine or infrastructure has to be criticized rather it is the habit carrying on the whole system or culture, which occurs to be fundamentally violent. Once again in the very words of Pope Francis: "My criticism of the technocratic paradigm involves more than simply thinking that if we control its excesses everything will be fine. The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities or institutions, but from the way that they are used. It has to do with human weakness, the proclivity to selfishness that is part of what the Christian tradition refers to as "concupiscence"" (Pope Francis 2020, No. 166).

Even if Gandhi as a Hindu does not use the concept of original sin and concupiscence and even if I have not found evidence for explicit Gandhian Influence on Bergoglio until now the two approaches resemble each other very much (Tschudin 2020, pp. 264–65) just as they both have similarities with Illich's approach. Particularly the Pope's call for more solidarity and respect of human dignity "has demonstrable synchronicity with a Gandhian approach" (Tschudin 2020, p. 268). All three concepts have in common to consider the intrinsically domination-seeking and acquisitive habit spurring modern economy and technology the crucial problem. As Gandhi answered the question about the reason for the personal and global chaos we observe: "It is exploitation . . . And my fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations to exploit others. In itself it is a wooden thing and can be turned to good purpose or bad. But it is easily turned to a bad purpose as we know" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 129).

A self-centred, domination-addicted human habit does not only affect human interrelations but also the relation between humans and nature. As Douglas Allen writes referring to Gandhi: "In modern civilisation, nature has no inherent value and serves as a valueless object, a resource, a nonhuman other, for us to control, dominate, and exploit for our own, human instrumentally-defined ends. Modern technology is a glorified means for exploiting nature. In Gandhi's *swaraj*, *dharma* civilizational approach, nature has value, allowing us to experience and constitute integral, meaningful, harmonious, sustainable relations with the other, and in realizing our unity and interconnectedness with reality. Nature, as other, is an integral relational part of our process of self-realization, self-transformation, and world-transformation" (Allen 2019, p. 121).

A fundamentally violent habit underlying a competitive style of economy, which is motivated by greed and a kind of technology, which has become an end in itself as far as it seems to guarantee power destroys nature, destroys human interrelations and in the end

destroys our possibility to become mature human personalities. Thus, we have to consider such a kind of violent habit a core obstacle to sustainable development as mentioned before in all its different dimensions.

3. *Sarvodaya*—An Integral Concept of Non-Violent Sustainability

Let us now move from the analysis to possible solutions. Gandhi's concept of *sarvodaya* could be taken as the epitome of sustainable development rooted in a non-violent habit. The Sanskrit term *Sarvodaya* denotes the comprehensive up-lift of all and is closely related to what we call common good also known as common weal in western tradition. The Catholic *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church* puts this as follows: "The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains "common", because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004, No. 164). According to John Rawls, each "government is assumed to aim at the common good, that is, at maintaining conditions and achieving objectives that are similarly to everyone's advantage" (Rawls 1971, p. 205).

3.1. Longing for the Uplift of All

Gandhi's understanding of common weal was immensely influenced by John Ruskin whose 1862 Essay *Unto this Last* (Ruskin 1907) he translated into Gujarati and published it under the title *Sarvodaya.* He referred to this text as "the magic spell of a book" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 238). Ruskin may not be recognized as a scientific authority by the mainstream of social and economic science. However, it is a matter of fact that he had a good sense according to ethical questions appearing with the industrial revolution and liberal market-society as well as to shortcomings of modern economic thought. Even if Ruskin may have inspired Gandhi in a more moral way primarily understood as affecting the habits of the mind or even hart his approach nevertheless has become a source of political and economic considerations in the long run. This—as Douglas Allen writes—is due to the fact that Gandhi was not willing to distinguish morality sharply from economics, politics, technology and so on: "Moral living is necessarily political, since it is concerned with real human suffering, exploitation, oppression, poverty, violence, war, inequality, and injustice. The political is necessarily moral, since it is not value free or an end in itself, but is concerned with establishing relations that are nonviolent, peaceful, compassionate, egalitarian, democratic, and promote welfare for all" (Allen 2019, p. 5).

The central point of Ruskin's book is the distinction between political and mercantile economy. The former is aimed at preserving and promoting the common good or as Ruskin put it at augmentation of the riches and well-being of the nation, the latter at increasing the wealth of individuals (Ruskin 1907, p. 133). Therefore, it is essential to focus on the actual goal of all economic activity, which is the continuance of the "happiness and power of the entire human nature, body and soul" (Ruskin 1907, p. 198), whereby, for Ruskin, it is out of the question that this must not be just the happiness of a small minority. In his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi writes that the first of three teachings he found in Ruskin was "that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 239). Which is quite the opposite to the liberal concept of gaining the good of all through everybody's striving for his or her own profit.

According to Christian social thought, common weal will only come true if a community and every single individual in it is willing to consider the needs of the weakest and poorest first. This has also become a key idea of the political agenda of the UN, put there as the standard "to leave no one behind" (United Nations 2015, No. 4, 26 etc.). In Gandhi, exactly the same principle is crucial when he formulates as a test criterion for truthful action: "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will

he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 125). At this point the connection of spiritually rooted self-rule and the realisation of common good in society becomes particularly clear. "As Gandhi repeatedly submits, it is when I discipline, control, and sacrifice my ego-driven self, when I identify with the needs of the suffering and unfree other, that is when the deeper, nonviolent, truthful self/Self, God, Reality, and so on, are revealed and become an essential part of my process of self-realization" (Allen 2019, p. 119).

However, self-realization is not the ultimate goal, it is an indispensable element in the process of transformation of mindset, individual life and social design. Part of the latter is the re-shaping of the economic system. According to Ruskin, exchange economy in which one party tries to gain maximised profit inevitably is "founded on the ignorance or incapacity of the opposite person" (Ruskin 1907, p. 174). Maintaining such a form of economy is tantamount to structural violence, which can only be overcome by empowering the uneducated and the poor. Accordingly, it is not sufficient to perceive the good of all as average welfare within a collective body but rather as situation free of structural violence. That means to remove all the obstacles which inhibit that many live a good life and long for his or her self-realization in the sense of *swaraj*.

3.2. Building Sustainable Societies from Below

These considerations remind the Christian social ethicist of another principle that stands alongside the common good in Catholic social teaching: subsidiarity. In Catholic Social Ethics, subsidiarity is one of the basic pillars of a society shaped according to human dignity. "Believing that most often best decisions are made at the local level, closest to the people who will be most affected by them, subsidiarity means handing decision making downward to smaller entities. It can also mean moving upward to larger entities, even to transnational bodies, if this better serves the common good and protects the rights of people. Subsidiarity, in this sense, becomes a corrective against the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a privileged elite" (Groody 2007, p. 115).

I think in Gandhi this principle is embodied in the idea of *swadeshi*. In 1946 he depicted in *Harijan* what is meant by that: "Ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. ... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units" (CWMG 1956–1994, pp. 32–33). As Gandhi states that the individual is ready to perish in favour of the comprehensive community and not that the community is ready to sacrifice the individual for its own sake—which is quite a crucial difference—the idea of common weal presented in this quote is shaped by the principle of subsidiarity, which supports the dignity of the person. "Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it" (CWMG 1956–1994, p. 33).

Gandhi's attempt to realize *sarvodaya* as village-*swaraj* and an economy focussed on small self-sustaining and subsistent unities was disputed from the outset. By the way, he was himself aware that this was a directional, somewhat utopian idea and not a master plan.

The criticism of this is at least partly based on misunderstandings. Gandhi's concept of economic self-sufficiency should not be understood in the sense of group egoism, nationalism, or market protectionism. During India's struggle for independence, it was not a market that needed to be protected, but the mostly rural population that was kept in poverty and dependency on British goods (Kazuya 2001, pp. 303–4). Further, the proposed

approach was not a revolutionary one resembling communism and its juxtaposition of hostile classes. On the contrary, "if Gandhi's theory of trusteeship is understood in the linkage with his *swadeshi* movement, we can see that he was trying to transfer peacefully the financial resources from the rich to the poor for the purpose of relief of the latter" (Kazuya 2001, p. 306). This follows from the principle of non-violence but also expresses the conviction that enforced justice stands on feet of clay unless the attitude of those driving the economy changes. Therefore, the approach to economy of the rich as well as of the poor should have been transformed. Such transformation unavoidably must start at a very local level, ultimately within each member of the community.

Village-*swaraj* of course includes the vision of economy mainly based on regional agriculture and handicraft. By the way, a praise of hand tools and manual work as an expression of creativity rather than cultivating then subduing or exploiting nature can also be found in Ruskin as well as in Illich.

However, we must concede that Gandhi's rural village concept taken literally or as the sole economic program will probably not work in today's India with 1.4 billion inhabitants nor in a global society in which already more than 50% of all humans are living in cities. Nevertheless, especially in the face of a worsening climate crisis and ecological threats, there are currently approaches that are related to Gandhi's ideas. One may admit that these will not replace the modern world economy in the short run, but they can complement and correct it in a beneficial way. In this context, a kind of "creatively reformulated Gandhi-informed approach can serve as an invaluable catalyst" (Allen 2019, p. 16) to support an urgently needed shift of paradigm. These approaches are certainly not completely in line with Gandhi's ideas and ideals, but they also aim at a more non-violent way of dealing with the ecological environment and more self-determination, especially for the economically and socially disadvantaged.

One can think, for example, of the promotion of local economic cycles, which is pursued in some places through alternative currencies (Lietaer 2013). These LETSs—which means local exchange trading systems—ultimately are voucher systems intended to keep purchasing power in a particular region in favour of the reduction in transport distances and thus the ecological footprint. However, their aim is not only to protect nature but also to maintain small and preferably sustainably operating production companies, which in turn create jobs close to home. Particularly, the COVID pandemic has shown that a solid regional economy could be decisive to keep necessary production going on and maintain supply. Now some companies begin to manufacture components of products themselves again in order to become less dependent on overseas suppliers. Of course, this is not always easy to achieve in a short time. Structures that have been built up over many years are a hindrance, such as the practice of no longer planning storage areas in companies. The just-in-time logic shifts the storage of goods to the delivery route. This immediately may become a tricky concept in the case of the blockade of the Suez Canal or the closure of a major Chinese container port as we have experienced during the past months.

Another example is the at least partial self-supply of food by urban gardening or urban farming, which for many people represents much more than a romantic hobby. Famous is the case of the former Motor City Detroit, Michigan, which lost 30% of its inhabitants within one and a half decennium caused by the crisis of the automobile industry. What may be seen as progress from an ecological perspective deprived many people of work and income. High unemployment and manifest poverty prevail among the remaining population of the city. Especially in the poorer neighbourhoods, which are largely inhabited by African Americans, there is hardly any access to healthy food, and the consumption of fruits and vegetables declines with disposable income. Activities of urban agriculture practised in Detroit can meet the needs of the local community as well as environmental objectives.

The transformation of vacant land into community gardens can be observed " . . . as a strategy to exercise political agency and bring about community transformation and, in the process, alleviate the food crisis and demonstrate social and political change" (White 2011, p. 15). This kind of initiative is often carried out by black women shaping

spaces which "operate as a safe space where they are able to define their behaviour as a form of resistance, one in which their resistance is against the social structures that have perpetuated inequality in terms of healthy food access, and one where they are able to create outdoor, living, learning, and healing spaces for themselves and for members of the community" (White 2011, p. 18).

As the third example, the activities of Vandana Shiva should be mentioned, who coined the term *Earth Democracy* (Shiva 2016). One of the many initiatives launched by the ecofeminist Shiva is *Navdanya*, which in English signifies nine seeds. The primary aim of *Navdanya* is the preservation of traditional crops. Seeds are collected, archived, and made available to smallholders together with the necessary knowledge for cultivation. By that biological and cultural diversity should be maintained. Such initiatives try to create spaces of freedom from factual constraint which is imposed on us by what we ourselves have produced, may it be technical tools or economic structures particularly enslaving the poor. Thus, Shiva says: "For us, not cooperating in the monopoly regimes of intellectual property rights and patents and biodiversity—saying "no" to patents on life, and developing intellectual ideas of resistance—is very much a continuation of Gandhian *satyagraha*. It is, for me, keeping life free in its diversity. That is the *satyagraha* for the next millennium" (Shiva 2021). Even if one will hardly find explicit references to Gandhi in her publications Shiva in an Interview with S. London stated that she had two big role models. The one was Albert Einstein the other one was Gandhi. She said: "I believe Gandhi is the only person who knew about real democracy—not democracy as the right to go and buy what you want, but democracy as the responsibility to be accountable to everyone around you" (Shiva 2021).

In all the examples mentioned, both aspects are always present: the awareness of nature that has become vulnerable and our responsibility for it on the one hand and the commitment to reshape social coexistence based on personal responsibility and constructive cooperation on the other. Thus, such grassroots activities show a high affinity to a huge variety of sustainable development goals as formulated in the *Agenda 2030*. However, at the same time, they can also be understood in the spirit of Gandhi as creative, non-violent resistance by rediscovering self-rule to overcome prevalent structures violating the common good. Village-*swaraj* should therefore probably not be read as an economic instruction manual for the present, but as a critical inspiration, that subsidiary alternatives to an all too often destructive global economy are conceivable and realisable.

4. Conclusions

I would like to conclude my essay with this thought and thus also summarise that an in-depth look at Gandhi's ideas on the one hand and at the importance of sustainability on the other certainly justifies bringing the two realms together. In the end, it is not so much the details of organizing an economic system or deciding about the usefulness and appropriateness of specific technologies we may gain from Gandhi, rather it is the impulses and guidelines for a re-cultivation of our innermost convictions and habits. Since they are the very roots and sources of each engagement in favour of social transformation including a new appreciation of nature. The effort toward a universal uplift in solidarity and the attitude of nonviolence remains highly topical and presumably an unavoidable precondition to realize such transformation. Such transformation, in turn, is the central element of sustainable development, provided it does not want to exhaust itself in political lip service and the promotion of a few new technical instruments. Therefore, sustainable development and Gandhian thought are not only compatible with each other but different versions of the same agenda.

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Article

Australian Christian Conscientious Objectors during the Vietnam War Years 1964–72

Geoffrey A Sandy

Independent Researcher, Melbourne 3084, Australia; geoff@sandy.com.au

Abstract: Many young Christian men faced a moral dilemma when selective military conscription was introduced in Australia during the Vietnam War from 1964–72. The legislation was the National Service Act in 1964 (NSA). Some believed that their Christian conscience did not allow them to kill or serve in the army. Most of them sought exemption as a conscientious objector decided at a court hearing. Others chose non-compliance with the NSA. All exercised nonviolent Holy Disobedience in their individual opposition to war and conscription for it. Holy disobedience stresses the importance of nonviolent individual action, which was an idea of A.J. Muste, a great Christian pacifist. The research reported here is strongly influenced by his approach. It is believed to be the first study which explicitly considers Christian conscientious objectors. A data set was compiled of known Christian conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War years from authoritative sources. Analysis allowed identification of these men, the grounds on which their conscientious beliefs were based and formed and how they personally responded to their moral dilemma. Many of their personal stories are told in their own words. Their Holy Disobedience contributed to ending Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and military conscription for it.

Keywords: conscientious objection; Christianity; conscription; nonviolence; pacifism; holy disobedience

1. Introduction

1.1. A Moral Dilemma

The Australian government introduced selective military conscription for twenty-year old men during 1964, with amendments to the National Service Act (NSA). Soon after, it integrated conscripts with the regular army and units were sent to fight in the Vietnam War. The introduction of military conscription created a moral dilemma for many young men. Did their conscience allow them to participate in the violence that is war?

A Christian man who was conscripted had a number of choices in resolving his moral dilemma. First, he could accept the call-up to the army and serve in both combatant and non-combatant roles, judging they were compatible with his conscience. Second, he could apply to be registered as a conscientious objector based on his Christian pacifism, and argue he be exempted from both combatant and non-combatant duties. Third, he could apply to be registered as a conscientious objector based on his Christian pacifism, and argue he be exempted from combatant duties only. Fourth, he could refuse to comply with the NSA and become a conscientious non-complier (CNC). The government did not offer a fifth choice by refusing to offer a civilian alternative to military service. There was another choice, to become a draft evader. It is assumed that no man of conscience chose that option.

The research reported here concerns known Christian conscientious objectors who resolved their moral dilemma by choosing the second, third, or fourth option. It was a choice in favour of non-violence because they believed that this was what their Christian faith demanded. Intentionally or unintentionally their individual actions affected social change. Relevant here was the end of military conscription and an end to Australia's participation in the Vietnam War.

1.2. The National Service Act

On 24 November 1964, the Australian government amended the NSA to provide for the selective conscription of young men turning twenty years old during 1965 (Parliament of Australia 1964). A ballot was conducted, which involved the drawing out of a number of birthdates. This was subsequently undertaken every six months. If a man's birthdate was selected, he was liable for call-up and subject to a satisfactory medical examination. The number of birthdates selected each six months depended on the required number of conscripts desired by the army. The government also amended the Defence Act 1903 during May 1965 to allow for conscripts to be integrated with regular army personnel (Parliament of Australia 2016). On 8 March 1966, it announced that military units, which involved conscripts, were to be sent to fight in Vietnam. (Australian Government. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 1966). This was euphemistically called "special service overseas" (Langford 1997). Australia had not declared war on anyone (Parliament of Australia 2010).

With the introduction of selective conscription, a young Christian man of nineteen or twenty years was faced with the same moral dilemma as any other. Does he register for National Service with the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), as mandated by the government? If he does, then he has complied with the NSA and now waits for the results of a lottery ballot to see if his birthdate marble is selected. If it is he now has to decide whether he continues his compliance by reporting for the mandatory medical examination, and if passed, to obey the call-up notice and be conscripted into the army. Alternatively, he can apply to be registered as a conscientious objector and be granted exemption from combatant and non-combatant military duties, or exemption from combatant duties only (Parliament of Australia 1964, s.29A).

If a man did not register under the Act, he breached it and was liable to sanctions. If this was intentional, it was an act of non-compliance. If it was a matter of conscience, religious or humanist, he was a CNC. The strength of his conscience was often demonstrated by repeated acts of non-compliance, which under the NSA attracted more severe sanctions.

The NSA made provision for "automatic" exemption from military service for a number of categories. One of these was theological students, ministers of religion, and members of religious orders. This had been the case since the passing of the Defence Act 1903 (Parliament of Australia 1903, s.61A). The justification for this is difficult to discover. This has also been acknowledged for America. It has the same exemption and it has been discussed within its legal framework (Smith 1970). It acknowledged that the legislative purpose of the exemption was not clear. It was suggested it probably involved deference to both the spiritual needs of the people and the inherently peaceful nature of religious ministry. This probably also applies for Australia. The question of whether the exemption is an aid to religion at a personal and institutional level, and therefore unconstitutional, has never been tested in Australia. Smith concluded that the exemption was unfair and unconstitutional (Smith 1970, p. 1003). During the Vietnam War years, 553 eligible men were granted this exemption in Australia (Langford 1997).

Graham Jensen from Sydney was a theological student at Wesley College, Sydney University. As such, he would have been "automatically" exempted upon registration under the NSA. Graham refused to register for the July 1968 intake because he believed the Act to be immoral. He informed Minister Bury of the DLNS of his non-compliance (Peacemaker 1969a, p. 5). He said he "was a Christian pacifist and that the law was immoral as is anything which mandates that a man must fight and possibly kill another. This is against the will of God". On 29 January 1969, Graham was convicted and fined with the prospect of twenty-five days imprisonment if he failed to pay the fine. He decided not to pay the fine. He was arrested on 30 July 1969 and taken to Long Bay Jail in Sydney to serve twenty-five days.

Obviously, Graham was opposed to the Vietnam War and stated that, "I am concerned that we celebrate Anzac Day and forget what our soldiers believed they were dying for—peace; we talk about our fight for peace and yet we are not willing to give it to the

Vietnamese" (Peacemaker 1969c, p. 6). On 6 May 1970, he was again convicted under the NSA for refusing to attend a medical examination and was fined. He was also imprisoned for seven days because of his refusal to give an assurance that he would obey a future notice to take the medical examination. Graham remained a peace activist and non-complier until the suspension of the Act in 1972.

The original Defence Act of 1903 allowed for conscientious objection to be based on religious pacifism only, and it was confined to those churches doctrinally opposed to war and military service (Parliament of Australia 1903, s.63A). Interestingly, it allowed for conscientious objection to a particular war. Just prior to WWII, it was amended to disallow this. It was also amended to allow pacifist conscientious beliefs that were non-religious. Again, it was amended so that religious pacifism was no longer confined to those religious institutions doctrinally opposed to war (Parliament of Australia 1939). The NSA of 1964 incorporated these amendments. Obviously, the Act did not permit a conscientious objection to itself, but that military conscription was unjust and constituted a violation of human liberty.

Despite the amended provision about a particular war, there were a few Christian conscientious objectors who applied for exemption from military service on the grounds that the Vietnam War was unjust. A prominent case from that time was John Zarb, a Catholic from Pascoe Vale South, Victoria (Peacemaker 1968e, p. 1). John was a postman. He registered under the NSA and then made application to be exempted from all military duties as a conscientious objector. Magistrate Elvish heard his application on 2 November 1967. The magistrate stated he was satisfied that John was sincere in his beliefs and that he was a conscientious objector. He dismissed the application because the NSA did not permit him to grant an exemption based on an objection to a particular war. John then appealed and adopted non-compliance. He was convicted on 14 October 1968 at the City Court, Melbourne for failure to obey a call-up notice and was sentenced to two years imprisonment at Pentridge, a civil prison in Melbourne. During the prosecution John repeated what he had stated at his original court hearing. He had a conscientious objection to aiding and abetting what he regarded as an unjust and immoral war, the Vietnam War. He indicated that he was not a pacifist and was prepared to undertake military training. This was tested in the High Court of Australia but it unanimously dismissed all grounds of John's appeal. He was released early from his sentence on 21 August 1969. The government portrayed this as an act of compassion given his parents' poor health. A close reading of the cabinet minutes suggests that it was undertaken for political reasons (National Archives of Australia 1969). John had become an embarrassment to the government.

1.3. Christianity and War Violence

Table 1 shows the number of adherents for each Christian denomination in Australia according to the 1966 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1966). The population of Australia in 1966 was 11.6 million. It reveals that an overwhelming number of Australians claimed affiliation with a Christian denomination. Less than 1% of the population belonged to a non-Christian religion, and less than 1% claimed no religion.

If a large denomination is defined as having 10% or more adherents, then four denominations dominated in 1966. They were the Church of England at 37.99%, Catholic at 29.75%, Methodist at 11.01%, and Presbyterian at 10.22%.

A review of important "official" statements from the denominations reveals their teaching about war and under what circumstances a Christian may participate. A Christian man in responding to military conscription is likely to have sought from his denomination guidance and support. It is supposed he had an advantage if he belonged to an historic peace church, which usually includes The Society of Friends (Quakers), Brethren, and Mennonites. In contemporary Australia, they represented a tiny proportion of Christian adherents. Only the Brethren were considered important enough for census purposes to be identified as a denomination, even then they only accounted for 0.15% of Australian Christians.

Table 1. Australian Christian Adherents 1966.

Denomination	Number	Percentage
Baptist	165,487	1.62
Brethren	15,516	0.15
Catholic	3,036,130	29.75
Church of Christ	102,545	1.00
Church of England	3,877,473	37.99
Congregational	76,588	0.75
Lutheran	177,324	1.73
Methodist	1,124,310	11.01
Orthodox	255,493	2.50
Presbyterian	1,043,570	10.22
Salvation Army	56,501	0.55
Seventh Day Adventist	37,617	0.36
Protestant (undefined)	105,233	1.03
Other	131,261	1.28
Total	10,205,038	100.00

The Quakers in Australia explain their position on war and violence, "the Quakers believe that there is a spirit within each of us that joins us all together—some call it 'that of God'. It follows that we cannot deliberately harm or kill another person without damaging that spirit. That was as obvious to 17th Century Quakers as it is to us today" (Quakers 2021). They also make the point that "pacifism is not just *thou shalt not kill*. It is an active process of removing situations where violence and war may occur. It is also a complex process of understanding how different forms of violence are related and of accepting that peace does not come overnight". The Brethren (Brethren 2021) and Mennonites (Mennonites 2021) share this view, but express it more strongly in their doctrinal statements and expect it be accepted and followed by their adherents. Christadelphians have sometimes been described as a peace church. This is consistent with its official Statement of Faith, which "forbid its members to participate in war in any form" (Christadelphians 2021).

Jehovah's Witnesses teach "that as Jesus disciples they obey his command to be no part of the world (John 17:16) by being strictly neutral in political matters, including participation in the military". It shares with other Christians "the imperatives to beat their swords into ploughshares (Isa. 2:4), to not take up weapons of warfare (Matt. 26:52) and by accepting that in the early church being a Christian and a soldier was irreconcilable" (Jehovah's Witnesses 2021).

The Church of God was strongly pacifist at its beginnings but has gone through much iteration over the following decades. This waned over the years. There is now little official reference to war and military service except in general terms. For others, they remain strongly pacifist. It observes that "God alone confers life (Gen. 1:1–31); therefore, we are responsible to God to care for our physical life and that of others. If the circumstances require, we must be prepared to risk our life in the service of our neighbour (John 15:13); but the general rule is that we must respect our physical life and employ every worthy means to maintain it" (Church of God 2021a, 2021b).

The Seventh Day Adventist church is unusual in that it opposes a combatant role for its adherents but finds a non-combatant role consistent with Christianity. It states that, "this partnership with God through Jesus Christ who came into this world not to destroy men's lives but to save them causes Seventh Day Adventists to advocate a non-combatant position, following their divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it" (Seventh Day Adventist 2021).

All the denominations referred to above represented a very small proportion of Australian Christian adherents during the Vietnam War years.

Authoritative statements from the large denominations on war and Christian participation usually affirm the desirability of peace and non-violence for the Christian. The statements usually move to qualifications and exceptions to that affirmation. The theory of

a just war or similar construct are common in this discussion on exceptionalism. They ultimately conclude that whether an adherent participates in war is a matter of their individual conscience with God.

The Lambeth Conference is an opportunity for the world-wide member churches of the Anglican Communion to present their thinking on Christian life. The 1930 conference passed resolution twenty-five which stated strongly that, "the conference affirms that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Lambeth 1930). However, resolution twenty-six acknowledged that peace will never be achieved until international relations are controlled by religious and ethical standards, presumably after the manner of Jesus Christ.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference made a number of points on war, including abhorrence of the evil of war but did not commit to pacifism (Lambeth 1998). Article thirty-seven of *The Articles of Religion* found in the 1662 Prayer Book, which is affirmed by all ordained clergy of the church, makes one short statement about Christian participation in war. It states "it is lawful for Christian men, at the command of the Magistrate to wear weapons and serve in the wars". It is may, not must, wear weapons. Ultimately it is a matter of conscience.

The Catholic Catechism of 1965 discussed the moral question of war when dealing with the Ten Commandments. (Catechism 1965, 4, 2, 5). Article five of that section examines the fifth commandment *You should not kill*. War is not prohibited so long as it is defense against an aggressor. The authorities have the right to impose obligations on citizens to participate in that defense and they must fight honorably. The catechism makes explicit reference to Just War Theory.

It also expressly states that "public authorities should make equitable provision for those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms; these are nonetheless obliged to serve the human community in some other way". In a separate area of the catechism, it deals with moral conscience where it teaches "a human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience" (Catechism 1965, 3, 1, 1, 6).

Other denominations share a similar view that war is contrary to the life and teaching of Jesus, but in an imperfect world lacking the necessary moral and ethical standards, it is often the lesser of two evils. The decision to participate is left to the individual's conscience. Such ambiguity was likely to generate anxiety for the Christian man attempting to come to terms with his conscience during the Vietnam War years.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Research Purposes

The primary purposes of the research are to: first, identify Australian Christian conscientious objectors to war during the Vietnam War years; second, examine the grounds for their conscientious beliefs; third, describe how these conscientious beliefs were acted upon; and fourth, assess what impact, if any, their actions had on societal change.

Specifically, the research was guided by a series of questions which included: what do we know about these Christian conscientious objectors as individuals? How numerous was this group? Are any denominations over-represented or under-represented amongst the group? Who complied and who adopted non-compliance with the NSA? What were the specific grounds justifying their conscientious objection? What denomination did each identify with and is there any evidence they referenced denominational teachings in explaining their position? Were their arguments different from those not identifying as Christian? Were Christians treated differently under the Act than non-Christians, and if so, did it impact their response to it? How did the Christian objectors impact on societal change, specifically the end of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and the end of military conscription?

2.2. Research Scope

The scope of the research is narrow and is confined to known Australian Christian conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War years. The term "Christian conscientious

objector" means eligible young men under the NSA who self-identified as a Christian. It includes those who complied with the Act by registering and, at a later time, made an application for exemption from military service by a court. These are conscientious objectors by decision of a court (CODC). It also includes those who refused to comply with the Act for their Christian conscience sake, the CNC.

The focus is on individuals, their personal stories, and their non-violent response to conscription for it. It does not report on the non-violent movement of churches and other groups. These existed, and it became more important over time. Many Christian conscientious objectors were part of this. It is an area in need of greater research.

2.3. Research Method

A data set of known Australian conscientious objectors was prepared (Sandy 2021). It summarizes personal details for each man on the list. It records his conscientious beliefs, how they were formed, and how he acted upon them. The data set consists of two major subsets, CODC and CNC. Those who self-identified as a Christian form a further sub-set for the each of the two major sub-sets.

An official DLNS list of the names of CODC has not been located. Langford (1997) suggests a number of 1242 for CODC, of which about 66% were granted full exemption, and 17% exemption from combatant duties. The data set of known COCD number 426, which represents 34.29% of 1242. Christian CODC number 122, which is 28.63% of 426. This is a good-size sample as a basis for making sound generalizations. Information is more difficult to locate for the CNC. If a total of 1000 is assumed, then the data set contains 283 names which represent 28.29%. Known Christian non-compliers total 17, which is 6% of 283.

The data set was prepared from a number of authoritative sources. The most important source was The Peacemaker newspaper of the Federal Pacifist Council of Australia. The Canberra Times newspaper was also important. These were supplemented by other records including the National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, State Libraries, Cabinet Papers, Private Papers, Proceedings of the Australian Parliament, Australian Security Intelligence Organization files, the media, and personal interview. The transcripts of court hearings have largely been destroyed.

The issues of The Peacemaker span vol.1, no.1 from September 1930 to vol. 33, nos. 9–12 ending September/December 1971. A full set is available from the National Library of Australia or the State Library of Victoria. The value of this research is that many conscientious objectors are identified together with their personal stories, and often a summary of the court hearing interchanges is provided.

An analysis of the data set was conducted in accordance with the research purposes and questions within the specified scope. The findings and their significance are discussed in the next major section.

The research approach is strongly influenced by the writings of the Christian pacifist Abraham Johannes Muste, especially his pamphlet titled *Of Holy Disobedience.* He was born in Holland in 1885 and came to the United States in 1901, the year that the Commonwealth of Australia was created. He was ordained in the Reformed Church in 1909. During 1918, he resigned under pressure because of a refusal to keep silent or abandon his Christian pacifist convictions (Peacemaker 1967c, p. 1). His emphasis was on the individual Christian. In another of his pamphlets, (Muste 1942, p. 24) he stated, "If gods peaceable Kingdom is ever to come to earth it must, as Isaac Pennington wrote in 1661, 'have a beginning before it can grow and be perfected'. And where should it begin but in some particulars (individuals) in a nation and so spread by degrees".

Muste talks of non-conformity as Holy Disobedience. This is "not to substitute Resistance for Reconciliation. It is to practice both Reconciliation and Resistance . . . it is of crucial importance that we should understand that for the individual to put himself in Holy Disobedience against the war making and conscripting state, wherever it or he be located, is not an act of despair or defeatism. Rather I think we may say that precisely this individual

to go along is now the beginning and the core of any realistic and practical movement against war and for a more peaceful and brotherly world" (Muste 1966, pp. 350–57). He died 11 February 1967 when peace and brotherly love was absent from Vietnam.

2.4. Research Importance

No known previous research explicitly focusses on Christian conscientious objectors during the Vietnam period. Many were included in the pioneering work of Oliver (Oliver 2014). This research builds on her work with an explicit focus on Christians. Four Australian works which proved useful for this research were (Langford 1997; Hamel-Green 1989; Jordens 1989; Forward and Reece 1968). Langford, in particular, provides a detailed description of how the NSA operated with meticulous use of dates and statistics. Tollefson (1993) discusses conscientious objection and the Vietnam War as it related to the United States. Most conscientious objectors were Christians because religious pacifism was the only permitted ground for registration as a conscientious objector at this time. Another useful American work is by (Fox 1982).

This research is important, not only to Australian religious history, but also to Australian history generally. There exists an imbalance in Australian history, with research and publications about war and conflict dwarfing that of peace and non-violence (Lake et al. 2010; Stocking 2010). An examination of a select bibliography of the Vietnam War in 1991 attests to this (Grey and Doyle 1991). Much has been published since. This research is a modest attempt to correct this imbalance.

There is a growing international literature on conscientious objection during previous conflicts, especially WWI. Important for Australia is the excellent work of Oliver (1997). She discusses the period of 1911 to 1945. Many of the personal stories and experiences are for Christian men, and the parents from the boy soldier period. Kramer has documented many of the stories from WWI and WWII for the United Kingdom (Kramer 2013a, 2013b). Also, Burnham (2014) has documented stories from WWI for the UK. These and other authors document a past where conscientious objectors were often accused of cowardice and shirking. They were ostracized and vilified. Some lost their job. Some were maltreated. Some were jailed. Some were forcibly handed over to the army and sent to the front. A classic case was the brutal treatment of Archibald Baxter and other conscientious objectors in New Zealand which has been told by Archibald himself and Grant (Baxter 2021; Grant 2008). The conscientious beliefs of many of these men were grounded in their Christian faith. Baxter was a Christian socialist. By the time of Vietnam the negative attitudes and poor treatment towards conscientious objectors had moderated in Australia. Nevertheless conscientious objectors still faced a difficult and often hostile environment as illustrated by some of the personal stories to come. This research adds to this growing literature.

The Vietnam War was as divisive to Australian society as the 1916 and 1917 conscription plebiscites (Forward and Reece 1968, pp. 30–45). The plebiscites were the first attempts to conscript for military service outside of Australia. They failed and historians even today remain at a loss to explain why (Archer et al. 2016). This divisiveness remains to the present time, although it has somewhat abated. It was the first "television" war of a brutal guerilla conflict where millions were killed and maimed (Hastings 2018, p. 639). The Christian young men who acted on their conscience, together with non-Christian conscientious objectors, were important in turning Australian opinion against the Vietnam War and conscription for it (Hall 2020; Department of Veteran Affairs 2020). They should be remembered and celebrated as part of Australian history, including its religious history, as are the militarists. For many in contemporary Australian society, the Vietnam War was never just and the legislation that introduced selective conscription was an unjust law.

3. Findings and their Significance

An analysis of the data set (Sandy 2021) of known conscientious objectors who self-identified as Christian was undertaken. As much as possible the words of these men are heard unedited. A discussion of the major findings and their significance is now provided.

3.1. Finding 1

Apart from their Christianity, they share characteristics with the non-Christians objectors. They were young men in their early twenties. This is to be expected as the NSA aimed to conscript when a man turned twenty years of age. The majority were from the states of New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria (VIC). Again, this is not surprising because these were and remain the two most populous states of Australia. All were contributing to society through employment or being educated for a profession or trade. The spread of occupations was similar. They were no shirkers.

3.2. Finding 2

Christian and non-Christian CODC represented a small percentage of those who were balloted-in during 1964–72. According to Langford (1997), 804,286 eligible men registered under the NSA. Of these 567,238 were balloted-out. This left 237,048 men potentially available as conscripts. Of these 63,735 (26.88%) entered the army. It has been estimated that approximately 50% of those balloted-in failed the medical (Langford 1997; Parliament of Australia 1968a). CODC numbered 1242, which is 0.52% of those balloted-in. As such, they represent a tiny group of contemporary Australian society. CNC commonly refused to register under the Act. Assuming they may have numbered 1000, their numbers are also very small compared to those who registered.

Despite being tiny in numbers the government was concerned about conscientious objectors, especially the CNC. On the surface, its concerns were their refusal to fight and/or their refusal to comply. In the government's view, they violated their social contract they had with society. Over the period it strengthened the legislation and increased penalties for non-compliance (Parliament of Australia 1968b; Peacemaker 1968b, p. 1), yet the government and military were not concerned that conscription would not meet the army's required numbers, despite the high medical failure rate. Often, an army prefers that soldiers be volunteers rather than conscripts, or if conscripts are used, that they be willing rather than unwilling. This preference is motivated by good morale and combat effectiveness. Judge Amsberg gave expression to this view after granting full exemption to Stanley Lewry, "he didn't understand the Army's attitude towards conscientious objectors; they probably made rotten soldiers anyway" (Peacemaker 1968a, p. 3).

The governments concern was invariably politically motivated. They wished to be seen as strong on national security and avoid losing face. Over the period there was substantial shift in public opinion towards opposition to the Vietnam War and conscription for it. The spectacle of fining and jailing young men acting on their conscience contributed to this shift in public opinion. The government reversed its authoritarian approach to combat the political damage. Three examples are usually mentioned. First, it ensured that troublemakers, including men who had already been declared medically fit for service, failed a medical. These included Peter Hill, Roger Kelly, Desmond Phillipson and John Poole-Johnson.

Second, it displayed a growing reluctance to enforce the mandatory jail sentence for repeated non-compliance offences. Dozens of young men being jailed was perceived to be politically damaging to the government (Peacemaker 1970d, p. 7). Third, in 1970 Minister Snedden introduced an amendment (reg. 32A) to the NSA which allowed the Government to refer a person to a court to determine if they had conscientious beliefs as prescribed by the Act (Peacemaker 1970c, p. 1). If so, the Minister could remove men from the non-complier list who were to be fined or jailed to the conscientious objector register. This looked better for the government. The referral to a court was often undertaken without the person's consent.

3.3. Finding 3

Out of the 63,735 conscripts who served in the military, it is safe to speculate that a large number of Christians served and found it compatible with their Christian conscience.

This is an important area for future research, which would probably necessitate a large number of personal interviews.

3.4. Finding 4

Christian CODC were pacifists to all war which is not surprising because s.29A of the NSA only allowed a court to grant exemption from military duties if the applicant could convince the court of his pacifism, whether it be religious or humanist based. What may be surprising is the larger number of persons (208) whose pacifism was not grounded in religion, but in some other ethical system.

Graham Roberts's conscientious beliefs were grounded in Christianity. He was a Quaker from Hobart, Tasmania. His hearing was before Magistrate Bingham 20 April 1966. In his written statement he said, "My conscience does not allow me to take up arms against any person, no matter to what country, class or creed the other may belong. I therefore cannot participate in preparation for war in any way for it is essentially the training of young men to take the lives or cause suffering to their fellow human beings" (Peacemaker 1966a, p. 3). This is a classic exposition of Quaker beliefs.

3.5. Finding 5

Some Christian pacifists who would have had a strong case in gaining exemption from military service chose instead non-compliance. A common theme in their communications is that making application under the NSA for exemption was seen as tacit approval to the government that it had the moral right to conscript. Non-compliance was seen as a stronger conscientious response. The experience of the Mowbray triplets from Sydney, NSW is a good example.

The triplets David, Graham and Robert, all refused to register for national service during 1967. All were Christians and active in the Methodist Church. As such they had a good chance of gaining full exemption from military service as conscientious objectors. However, they all chose non-compliance. (Peacemaker 1968c, p. 1; 1969a, p. 6; Australian War Memorial 2014). This is evident in a statement made by Robert which was shared by his brothers, "I believe that conscription for military service is immoral. I recognize that I have an opportunity to place my beliefs before a court and gain exemption. However, I do not consider this sufficient. I must reject the right of a government to conscript anyone to kill".

He stated further that, "Christian discipleship challenges me to resist an Act which crushes basic human rights and sends young men off to a war which world opinion condemns. By my own university experience training and the experience gained in everyday life I am seeking to equip myself to give the kind of service to mankind which will promote justice and help remove the causes of war" (Peacemaker 1968c, p. 1; 1969a, p. 7). Graham made a similar statement (Peacemaker 1969d, p. 7).

Robert was sentenced to seven days imprisonment in Long Bay Jail on 24 March 1969 for refusing to undertake a medical examination. His brother, Robert, shared the same fate (Peacemaker 1969b, p. 6). The response of the authorities to David's resistance bordered on the farcical (Peacemaker 1970a, p. 1; 1970c, p. 4; 1970e, p. 7). David described himself as a Christian, pacifist, ecologist, and revolutionary. He was required by the order of the NSW Supreme Court to report to Phillip Street Police Station in Sydney. He with his girlfriend and parents were stopped by media people as they approached the station. David started answering their questions about why he was going to jail for seven days as had his two brothers before him. Three plain clothes policeman who said excuse me to the media persons pulled David's arm behind his back and dragged him into the station. Brian Mowbray, David's father, entered the station and requested an interview with a senior police officer. After fifteen minutes this was granted. Brian complained of the unnecessarily and unwarranted coercion used upon his son who was quietly and peacefully complying with the Supreme Court order.

The Mowbray triplets were deemed, during 1971, by Minister Snedden to be conscientious objectors under reg.32A, and were not proceeded against for their non-compliance. The Mowbray's was one of a number of cases that was causing unwelcome political pressure on the government.

Kevin Booker wrote to the Minister DLNS on 5 April 1970 informing him of his refusal to register for national service and saying, "I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe his teachings condemn militarism in any form. Hence, in my opinion the Government has no moral right to conscript myself, or anybody else for military duties" (Peacemaker 1970b, p. 6).

John Jedryka, a Christian, wrote a letter not only to the Minister but it was addressed also to the citizens of Australia. He informed all that he refused to register and the reasons why. He ended on a very personal note saying, "I have a nauseating horror at the thought of killing, and to me the highest ideal that I can reach is that I would prepare to die than kill. I am therefore totally and absolutely opposed to any organization, system or whatever that requires a man to kill" (Peacemaker 1970b, p. 6).

It was common for those who intentionally broke the law to view any sanctions that followed as a means of strengthening their non-violent opposition to the NSA. Many expressed the view that they "welcomed" imprisonment as a means of embarrassing the government and testing its will to continue with conscription.

3.6. Finding 6

A number of serving soldiers, conscripts already inducted into the army and those in the Citizen Military Force (CMF) made application for exemption from military service. These include Darrell Nolan, a Catholic who was already conscripted in the army, and Colin Park a Christadelphian who was a serving soldier. With all these men conscientious beliefs had developed after induction, or had matured during their time, in the military. Evidence from the applicant's statements at court hearings, including court martial, was that their military training was often an important factor.

William Rodgers of Dandenong, VIC was aged twenty-three years and married. He had been a member of the Citizen Military Force but had resigned and made application to be registered as a conscientious objector. His case was reported in the (Peacemaker 1970b, p. 3). He explained to Magistrate Foley hearing his application that the CMF training was important in the development of his conscientious beliefs. He stated that "we went on a training camp to Williamstown and the targets for target practice were shaped like human beings, some lying down and some standing up. We were to shoot at them". He told the court that he believed it was immoral to kill another human being and that he had become a conscientious objector during the past two years when he had become a Christian. He was a member of the Church of Christ. As a result he said that "he would not kill a human being or take part in the military machine". William was granted exemption from all military duties by the magistrate on 27 March 1970.

For some men their Christian faith became important after they joined the military and that experience was the catalyst for their conscientious objection. For others, like Rodgers, the military experience led to an awakening of a Christian conscience.

3.7. Finding 7

Not all Christian conscientious objectors were pacifists to all war. Some were selective pacifists and refused to serve in the Vietnam War. The personal story of John Zarb was told earlier. Another was Darrell Nolan a Catholic from VIC, aged twenty-three years (Peacemaker 1968e, p. 3). He was an accountant. He had registered under the Act, passed the medical and was duly inducted into the army during February 1968. He applied for exemption from military service based on his objection to the immoral Vietnam War. His application was dismissed by the magistrate 28 November 1968 saying the NSA did not recognize conscientious objection to a particular war.

Little explicit mention is made by applicants to Just War Theory but it undoubtedly informed the conscience of a number, as the terms 'unjust war' and 'immoral war' are common in their statements.

3.8. Finding 8

Invariably Christian conscientious objectors argued that killing others was incompatible with Christianity and so could not perform combatant duties. They also usually held that they could not serve in any capacity with an organization dedicated to killing human beings. This ruled out non-combatant military duties. However, there were some that held that a non-combatant role was compatible with their Christian conscience. Graham Edser was one of these. The (Peacemaker 1968b, p. 3) reported that Graham was from Toowoomba, Queensland and by trade a pattern-maker. He was a Seventh Day Adventist. He applied for exemption from combatant military duties only, as was common for adherents of his denomination. Graham said this was based on his understanding of the 6th commandment *Thou shalt not kill*. Magistrate Peacock granted his application 26 April 1968.

Bruce French was from Lower Barrington, Tasmania (Peacemaker 1970b, p. 3). He was a Baptist and a school teacher. He applied for and was granted exemption from combatant duties by Magistrate Crisp at Devonport 7 February 1970. Bruce told the magistrate that "my Christian beliefs convince me that life is sacred and therefore the only acceptable form of defence is in terms of constructive aid and mutual understanding". The magistrate asked Bruce "how do you meet aggression". He started to answer by saying "I am prepared to prevent aggression starting". Crisp interjected "If our shores were attacked what would you do". Bruce responded "Diplomacy would be a more effective means of defence. I would not kill. I can say that categorically". Bruce explained that his beliefs had crystallized in study groups at the Hobart Baptist Church and at the University in Hobart. He was asked on what authority he based his antipathy to war. Bruce responded by saying his beliefs were based on the Old and New Testaments.

3.9. Finding 9

Despite the fact that some Christian conscientious objectors applicants were clear in their statement to the court that their conscientious beliefs were based on the teachings of Jesus and the bible, their application was dismissed, and often also dismissed on appeal.

Gavin Goudie of Moama, NSW was aged twenty and a welder by trade. He told the magistrate he had applied for full exemption from military duties based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. He could not convince Magistrate Murray of the Court of Petty Sessions in Melbourne of the sincerity of his conscientious views. His application was dismissed 30 May 1968. The Minister's legal counsel attacked Gavin verbally and called him selfish. Gavin made a second application and was granted a full exemption (Peacemaker 1968b, p. 3; 1968d, p. 3; 1970a, p. 3).

Appearing before a court was formidable for these young men. Often the magistrate and the state's legal counsel were hostile to conscientious objection and sometimes to Christianity itself.

3.10. Finding 10

Christian conscientious objectors were opposed to all war or a particular war, but many were opposed to conscription itself. It was viewed as unconscionable. This was something strongly shared with other objectors.

Sometimes Christian objectors to conscription expressed their opposition to it in terms of their Christian faith citing violation of their Christian freedom as they only answered to God. Also, secular life (the military) was seen as ungodly. This view was common amongst Jehovah's Witnesses and Brethren, but not only them.

Roy Scott, aged twenty-three years was a Jehovah's Witnesses from Gordon Park, Queensland (Peacemaker 1968b, p. 3). Magistrate Martin granted him full exemption from military service on 3 April 1968. This came after he had an application refused, and had

been committed to the army. In terms of his faith tradition he stated, "He had refused to answer to the term 'private' and to wear an army uniform, and had been jailed by the Army for refusing to co-operate". He further stated that "he would not bear arms or indulge in violence and his sect was opposed to violence or participation by members in any other organization". In other words, he belonged exclusively to the faith community of Jehovah's Witnesses who only answered (took orders) from God.

3.11. Finding 11

Over 50% of known CODC are those who did not identify as Christian. One of the most celebrated cases during the Vietnam War years was that of William White (Bill) a primary school teacher from Gladesville, NSW (National Archives of Australia 1966a; Peacemaker 1966a, p. 3; 1966b, p. 3; 1967a, p. 3; 1968e, p. 3). After having his application for full exemption dismissed he appealed to a higher court. In a written statement to the court he reiterated that, "man's chief purpose is to live-therefore the taking of a human life is wrong and unjustifiable. I cannot, with a clear conscience, kill a person, or be part of any organization that is able or willing to kill or make war, no matter how disconnected from actual killing that part may be seem to be, for any individual part may seem to be, for any individual part of such an organization must be such as to increase the efficiency of the whole towards its end-that is to kill". For Bill the grounds of his conscientious beliefs and the words that express them are very similar to that of a Christian.

Despite his clear statement of his long-held conscientious beliefs Judge Cameron-Smith dismissed his appeal. William was sacked from his school teaching position and dragged from his home by four policemen in front of family, neighbors and friends. He was forcibly committed to the army and then jailed for non-compliance. He was finally granted full exemption after a second application was heard. He was not reinstated to his former teaching position by the NSW Education Department.

Many non-Christian conscientious objectors were pacifists, with their pacifism was usually grounded in humanism. An examination of their letters to the Minister or their court hearing statements, where available, often read very similar to those of the Christian pacifists. They of course do not mention God, Jesus or the Bible. They express the same abhorrence to killing other persons, the immorality of war and the Vietnam War in particular.

3.12. Finding 12

The large denominations were under-represented in per capita terms amongst Christian CODC. Conversely the small denominations were over-represented. This is shown in Table 2 Known Australian Conscientious Objectors by-decision-of-a-court 1965–72 by Denomination. Column 3 shows the percentage of known objectors by denomination. Column 4 shows the percentage of total Christians according to the 1966 census by denomination as shown in Table 1.

Table 2. Known Australian Christian Conscientious Objectors by-Decision-of-a-Court 1965–72. By denomination.

Denomination	Number	Percentage	Percentage of Total Christians by Denomination: 1966 Census
Jehovah's Witnesses	31	25.40	na
Christian	30	24.59	na
Church of England	11	9.01	37.99
Catholic	10	8.19	29.75
Christadelphian	10	8.19	na
Society of Friends	7	5.73	na
Church of God	7	5.73	na
Church of Christ	5	4.09	1.00
Baptist	5	4.09	1.62
Seventh Day Adventist	4	3.27	0.36

The Church of England accounted for 37.99% of total Christians but only 9.01% of known objectors. The Catholic Church accounted for 29.75% of total Christians but only 8.19% of known objectors. The largest group of known Christian conscientious objectors simply referred to themselves as "Christian" and did not disclose a denominational affiliation.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were too small to be of interest to the census but accounted for 25.40% of objectors, and similarly for the Christadelphians (8.19%), The Society of Friends (5.73%) and the Church of God (5.73%). All of these denominations had a strong tradition of opposition to war and participation in the military. Findings 13 to18 discuss what is behind these statistics. There were no known Christian conscientious objectors from the Congregational, Lutheran, Orthodox or Salvation Army denominations. All these were identified for 1966 census purposes.

Peter Graf referred to himself in court as a Christian pacifist and refused to register for the 1969 intake. Peter was born in Swatow, China where his Dutch parents were missionaries. He wrote a long letter to the Minister Snedden which was published (Peacemaker 1970a, p. 6). He informed him, "that I am in conscience not able to register or comply with the National Service Act in any way". He continued, "As a Christian I am committed to an allegiance to Jesus Christ, which constrains me to live according to this God-given moral law as interpreted by individual informed conscience, and my attitude to all other laws is governed by this same guidance". Peter referenced Dr Martin Luther King, St Thomas Aquinas, the Apostle Peter (Acts. 5:29) and St Augustine concerning unjust laws. He stated that "this makes disobedience to an unjust law not only a moral act but also a moral imperative".

Peter stressed that "while I am opposed to all war Conscientious Objection as understood in the NSA is unacceptable to me because strictly speaking, the Conscientious Objector expresses nothing more than an objection to war alone". He further stated that an objector by complying endorses the Act. Further he strongly opposes conscription and the sanctions it imposes on law abiding citizens who are treated like criminals. He concludes his letter by declaring that "the ultimate criterion is obedience to God rather than man (Government). It is interesting to note in this regard that the apostle who wrote the injunction to obey the Government in Rom. 13 was on many occasions jailed for disobedience to laws judged on such criteria. As I have explained above this is the position I have reached in regard to the National Service Act". At 11 p.m. on 11 June 1971, whilst at home in bed, Peter was arrested and jailed for eight days (Peacemaker 1971, p. 12).

3.13. Finding 13

There were a number of Church of England men who applied for exemption from military service. There is some evidence that magistrates hearing their case presumed their views were markedly differed from their denomination's teaching on war, namely that its tradition was not strongly opposed to war. This is exampled in the two personal stories to follow. This presumption proved an additional obstacle for a Church of England applicant to overcome in order to achieve a successful court outcome.

Geoffrey and Peter Whale were identical twin brothers from Roseville, NSW. They both applied for full exemption from military duties on the grounds of Christian pacifism (Peacemaker 1968c, p. 3). Magistrate Rogers dismissed their applications March 1968. He ruled that their Church's religious beliefs did not prevent them from taking part in non-combatant duties. This was beyond his expertise and an error under the NSA. The twins appealed the decision. It was heard by Judge Hicks in the Sydney District Court. The judge gave a reserved judgement and within it he stated that the applicant's beliefs differed from that of their denomination. He made two errors. First, the judge was required to determine if the beliefs were genuinely held and not whether their beliefs differed from the denomination they belonged too. Both he and Rogers presumed this. Second the Judge was apparently unaware of article thirty-seven which has been mentioned previously. Fortunately, Hicks granted a full exemption to both men on 25 June 1968.

Geoffrey Sandy from VIC sought a full exemption based on his Christian pacifism (National Archives of Australia 1970; Certified Court Extract 2018; Sandy 2018). Like many other conscientious objectors he was also opposed to the Vietnam War, which he considered to be immoral, and conscription which he believed was a violation of individual liberty. However, his application could not be based on the latter two grounds. His birthdate was selected in the first ballot on 10 March 1965. He applied successfully on 27 May 1965 for deferment whilst he completed his University studies. During 1966 Geoff travelled overseas to India and then in 1967 to New Zealand. He successfully sought permission from the government for both trips as was required under the NSA. Upon successful completion of his university studies he was required to attend a medical examination 16 October 1968. He attended and passed the medical examination. On 21 November 1968 the government notified him he would be called-up on 29 January 1969.

He made application for registration as a conscientious objector 30 November 1968. Geoff stated in his application that, "taking part in war (combatant) or support of war (non-combatant) was immoral for the Christian". His hearing was at the Court of Petty Sessions in Melbourne on 23 January 1969. Geoff's father, who served in the Royal Australian Air Force during WWII, gave testimony that his son's pacifism was of long-standing. Magistrate Smith was hostile to conscientious objectors and Christianity. He expressed surprise that teaching Sunday school did not require formal training. He asked Geoff's other supporter the Revd. Stephen Cherry a Church of England minister, about church beliefs concerning war. The Revd. Cherry replied that, "he disagreed with Geoff's view but ultimately the church believed it was a matter of personal conscience". Magistrate Smith initially dismissed the application. Both the applicant's legal counsel, Alf O'Connor, and the state's legal counsel N Gregory, remonstrated with the magistrate stating that the case had been proved. The magistrate responded there and then by changing his mind and granted the applicant full exemption.

3.14. Finding 14

There were a number of Catholic men who applied for exemption from military service. Benedict Chu was from Sydney, NSW (Peacemaker 1966a, p. 3). He was previously a Chinese subject from Canton and was naturalized two days before the introduction of conscription. He registered and was balloted in. He made application for full exemption from military service. His court hearing was 18 August 1965 before Magistrate Rogers who refused his application. It seems that Benedict was one of many to receive an unsuccessful outcome from NSW magistrates. In the early years some concern was expressed about the disparity of application "success rates" between NSW in particular, and other jurisdictions. (Langford 1997; Parliament of Australia 1968c). Benedict appealed Rogers's decision and this was heard by Judge Head on 24 February 1966. The Judge delivered his reserved decision on 1 June 1966. He noted that the applicant "believes that he should not engage in any form of military service and that such is binding on his conscience". He granted full exemption.

John Kobelke aged twenty-one years was studying at St. Thomas More College, Crawley, Western Australia (Peacemaker 1970e, p. 3). He was granted full exemption from military service by Magistrate Malley on 27 October 1970. John said "that his objections to war were based mainly on his Roman Catholic beliefs. The essence of the Christian message was that we must try to love. Violence completely contradicted this. All violence was wrong. He could not justify any wars". The magistrate responded and said "that although Kobelke's reasoning was not always logical and was confused in places, he was convinced that his views were sincere and arrived at by a careful process of thought, Evidence from Kobelke and corroborating evidence from the Roman Catholic chaplain of the University, Father John Harte, convinced him of Kobelke's sincerity".

It was often difficult for men from the two largest denominations to convince a magistrate that they were sincere in their conscientious beliefs because of the perceived 'support' for war and the military by their denomination.

3.15. Finding 15

There were a few objectors from large Protestants churches who applied for exemption from military service. They include Wettenhall and Smalley.

Simon Wettenhall was a twenty year old from Armadale, VIC and a member of the Presbyterian Church (Peacemaker 1970a, p. 3). He probably startled the court when he offered an abstract symbolic oil painting as evidence of his Christian beliefs and his concern for moral issues. He was appealing the magistrate's decision granting him exemption from combatant duties only. In the County Court 6 November 1969, Simon told Judge Southwell that "his beliefs were based on the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ taught *thou shalt not kill.* The judge upheld his appeal and granted him full exemption.

Douglas Smalley was also a Presbyterian from VIC. His was the first conscientious objector hearing 3 June 1965. Magistrate Murray asked Douglas about the beliefs of the Presbyterian Church rather that his own personal beliefs, casting doubt on his sincerity. Despite that he granted full exemption (Peacemaker 1965, p. 1; Daily News 1966b, p. 5).

3.16. Finding 16

Quakers were well represented amongst the Christian objectors but the Brethren, also a "peace church", were not.

David Jones was a Quaker from Glebe, NSW. He expressed a strong pacifist view of most Quakers in a letter to Minister Snedden February 1970 (Peacemaker 1970b, p. 7; 1970d, p. 2; 1971, p. 10). He gave his reasons for his non-compliance in not registering under the Act. He stated he had strong pacifist beliefs and that they were greatly influenced by the Quakers. He stated that he objected to military service of any kind which took human life and the use of war as a solution to misunderstandings and conflict between nations. He stated "these objections stem from belief both in the uniqueness of every individual and in a spirit or inner self which is part of every person-often spoken of by Quakers as *that of God in every man.* To take the life of another person denies the existence of this common spirit and prevents any possibility of creating understanding through this spirit, between persons on opposing sides of the conflict".

David also believed that the government did not have the right to conscript. He also made the point, common to non-compliers, when he said "were I to register as a conscientious objector I would be tacitly acknowledging the Governments right to conscript 20-year-old men for military service. For this same reason I would not be willing to accept alternative civilian service under the Act". That opportunity was not open to anyone at the time as the government refused on two occasions to introduce it, as was previously mentioned.

Noel Collett was a member of the Order of the Exclusive Brethren and had a difficult time in convincing three courts that he had a conscientious objection to killing (Peacemaker 1967a, p. 3). He was a farm labourer from Nambour, Queensland. His application for exemption from combatant duties was dismissed in the Court of Petty Sessions, and also the District Court in Brisbane. He appealed again to the Court of Petty Sessions but Magistrate Loane said he had no jurisdiction to hear a further application. Noel appealed to the High Court of Australia in August 1966 and in a split decision they decided Noel's beliefs at the time of the hearing was the relevant question for the court to consider (National Archives of Australia 1966b). Noel said his attitude had not changed but with further study of the scriptures it had strengthened his views. Magistrate Loan who now had jurisdiction to hear the case again granted Noel exemption from combatant duties.

3.17. Finding 17

Christadelphians and Church of God were also well represented among the Christian objectors.

Paul Schipper of Thebarton, South Australia was a Christadelphian (Peacemaker 1968b, p. 3). In a reserved judgement Magistrate Beerworth granted him full exemption from military service in Adelaide on 22 May 1968. Rodney Payton, also a Christadelphian,

was from Western Australia (West Australian 1966, p. 16; Daily News 1966a, p. 18). Magistrate Blackwood granted him full exemption in the Perth court 31 May 1966. George Domazetis who belonged to the Church of God was also granted full exemption from Magistrate Bennett on 15 December 1966 (Peacemaker 1967a, p. 3). All had argued on the grounds of Christian pacifism.

It appears less difficult for men from the small denominations to convince a magistrate that they were sincere in their conscientious beliefs because of their strong pacifist teachings. Historically legal precedents had been established by the time of Vietnam

3.18. Finding 18

The strong doctrinal teaching of separateness from society and exclusivity of belonging only to God's kingdom largely explains why Jehovah's Witnesses caught up in the ballot sought no participation with the army. Adherents are significantly over-represented in per capita terms.

Robert Lacars of Blacktown NSW was a minister and bookbinder. He was granted full exemption. He told the magistrate at his court hearing that "as an ambassador of Christ he had immunity from the laws of the country. He was already serving in a spiritual army and could not serve in any other" (Canberra Times 1967, p. 3). Christopher Nelms of Mordialloc, VIC was also granted full exemption on appeal. He told Judge Nelson, "only God can tell me I must go and kill" (Canberra Times 1966, p. 17; Peacemaker 1966c, p. 3).

Richard Pettit was a Jehovah Witness from Corrimal, NSW who lived and worked on the Watchtower Society's Kingdom farm at Ingleburn (Peacemaker 1968a, p. 3; 1968b, p. 3). He informed the magistrate that every night was spent on some religious activity. He was granted exemption from combatant duties only. He appealed and stated to Judge Brennan in the Wollongong District Court 11 March 1968 that "he would go to jail if forced into the army either as a combatant or non-combatant". The judge granted him a full exemption.

Michael Cutrapi and Bill Perry had a different outcome and experience than Robert, Christopher and Richard. They were from New South Wales and their story was told in Peacemaker (Peacemaker 1967b, p. 3; 1967c, p. 3). They could have expected to have received a full exemption from military service given their church's strong neutrality to all war. Instead they were exempted from combatant duties only. They became non-compliers when they refused to obey a call-up for non-combatant duties. They were summoned before the Special Commonwealth Court in Philip Street Sydney. They were then forcibly drafted into the army and sent to 1st Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka. Both men refused to obey any orders, in particular signing for their army issue and putting-on their army uniform. They stated that they refused to obey orders because they were contrary to their Christian beliefs. As a result the army responded with a court martial on 1 March 1967 and sent them to Holsworthy Correctional Facility. Michael and Bill both stated they were placed in solitary confinement on bread and water. The cell contained no furniture and the men were forced to sleep on a concrete floor with just three blankets issued to them. It is unknown what their ultimate fate was.

Again historically over time legal precedents had been established that led magistrates to usually acknowledge the strong doctrinal beliefs of this denomination, which usually resulted in granting full exemption from military service.

4. Conclusions

Four important aspects should be noted in concluding. First, the influence on a Christian man's conscientious objection was strongest if they were an adherent of a denomination with a strong pacifist tradition or one that viewed secular organisation, like the military, as "ungodly". In respect to the former this is particularly so for the Quakers and Christadelphians, and for the latter the Jehovah's Witnesses. The contrast is stark with the large and dominant denominations of the Church of England and Catholic.

Second, the study confirms the expectation that for Christian conscientious objectors their conscientious beliefs were related to their strict interpretation of the sixth commandment, and in following the example of the non-violent life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Third, during the Vietnam War years Australians overwhelmingly claimed allegiance to Christianity. The study reveals that for all CODC, about 50% did not identify as Christian. Also Christians were a small proportion of the CNC. There exists a disconnection. Conscientious beliefs grounded in humanist ethical systems were at least as important as Christianity.

Finally, Australian Christian conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War years were individuals who adopted non-violent opposition to war and conscription for it. As A.J. Muste would describe it they engaged in holy disobedience. This is attested by their personal stories just related.

Most complied with the law as it allowed a Christian pacifist the opportunity to convince a magistrate of his sincerity. Nevertheless this was an act of disobedience. It was an act of non-conformity and therefore a challenge to the powerful forces in contemporary Australia. They rejected war violence as a means of achieving societal change. Specifically they rejected killing other human beings viewed as enemies of the state. The rejected military conscription, which was justified by those in power, as being necessary to defend Australia from the godless forces of world communism. They argued if Vietnam fell to communism then Australia would be at risk.

Each of these young Christian men said no to killing other human beings. In doing so they challenged and embarrassed the government and other powerful forces. These young men could also be an embarrassment to their own denomination, especially those that were ambiguous in their teaching about the participation of the Christian in war. A small number adopted conscientious non-compliance with the law which they viewed as unconscionable. They considered that a stronger "holy disobedience" was required to effect societal change. The immediate change or goal was the end of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War and conscription for it.

As the Vietnam War progressed individual Christians together with non-Christian objectors became part of a wider protest and change movement. This wider movement was largely non-violent. No known Christian conscientious objector was involved in violence. This wider movement, especially the role played by religious organisations, requires more research.

Many of the personal stories demonstrate how the powerful forces arrayed against them increasingly adopted more severe sanctions to quell the holy disobedience. As an indication of the success of these non-violent actions the government turned to "face-saving" measures to save it loss of political support, and from having to defend the indefensible. Sanctions were softened or not enforced.

The individual Christian conscientious objectors who have been the subject of this study contributed through their non-violent actions, to the considerable loss of support for the Vietnam War, and conscription for it. This culminated in the defeat of the (Conservative) Coalition Party in December 1972 by the (Democratic Socialist) Labour Party. One of the first acts of the incoming government was to suspend the NSA by administrative fiat, thus ending military conscription. The hope was "for a more peaceful and brotherly world".

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Article

Gandhi's View on Judaism and Zionism in Light of an Interreligious Theology

Ephraim Meir [1,2]

1   Department of Jewish Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan 5290002, Israel; meir_ephraim@yahoo.com
2   Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: This article describes Gandhi's view on Judaism and Zionism and places it in the framework of an interreligious theology. In such a theology, the notion of "trans-difference" appreciates the differences between cultures and religions with the aim of building bridges between them. It is argued that Gandhi's understanding of Judaism was limited, mainly because he looked at Judaism through Christian lenses. He reduced Judaism to a religion without considering its peoplehood dimension. This reduction, together with his political endeavors in favor of the Hindu–Muslim unity and with his advice of *satyagraha* to the Jews in the 1930s determined his view on Zionism. Notwithstanding Gandhi's problematic views on Judaism and Zionism, his *satyagraha* opens a wide-open window to possibilities and challenges in the Near East. In the spirit of an interreligious theology, bridges are built between Gandhi's *satyagraha* and Jewish transformational dialogical thinking.

Keywords: Gandhi; interreligious theology; Judaism; Zionism; *satyagraha*

This article situates Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's *satyagraha* in the perspective of a Jewish dialogical philosophy and theology. I focus upon the question to what extent Gandhi's religious outlook and *satyagraha*, initiated during his period in South Africa, contribute to intercultural and interreligious understanding and communication. I investigate his view on Judaism and Zionism, with the aim of creating an interface between his thought and Jewish transformational dialogical thinking. To the best of my knowledge, a rereading of Gandhi through the lenses of an interreligious philosophy and theology from a Jewish point of view showing the possibilities and limits of Gandhi's non-violent heritage has not been undertaken until today.[1]

In what I call "trans-difference", one recognizes the differences between cultures and religions and builds bridges between them. Trans-difference brings diversity and unity together. It implies respect for particularity as well as readiness to communicate and change. It strives for unity without uniformity. In interreligious theology, religious "trans-difference" is not a mere possibility, it is rather a must in the construction of a relational identity that is intrinsically linked to others. As such, it is a civilizing force that promotes interaction between different individuals and groups and counters existing intercultural violence. (Meir 2013a, 2015, 2017, 2019)

One preliminary remark has to be made. Gandhi gave priority to works and deeds. He was not interested in a theoretical, pluralist theology of religions or in the exchange of religious opinions. Speculative theology was for him even a source of untruth. (*Harijan*, 23 March 1940) Yet, without an interreligious praxis as that of Gandhi, the attempt to construct an interreligious theology is doomed to fail. The study of Gandhi's praxis appears to be highly relevant for a dialogical theology, in which the question of unity and diversity is central. His use of the term *dharma*, which involves duties such as non-violence and service to others and which is as much religion as ethics, fits an interreligious theology that has peace as its method and aim.

The first part of this article discusses Gandhi's religiosity and his extraordinary attitude towards other religions. Part 2 deals with his view on Judaism and Zionism and shows

the limits of his ideology.[2] In the third part, I evaluate the humanizing power in Gandhi's active non-violence and turn to the situation in the Near East and to the question whether his position has relevance in Israel and Palestine.

1. Gandhi's Religiosity and His View on Other Religions

Gandhi was born as a Vaishnava. Vaishnavism venerates Vishnu as the supreme God. Rama and Krishna are amongst his incarnations. Vaishnavas are vegetarians and fast during festivals. They focus on personal devotion and non-harming. Gujarat, where Gandhi was born, was a place with many religions. Putali Bai, his mother, belonged to *Pranami*, the sect that combines Hindu and Muslim religions. Young Gandhi visited the Vaishnava temple, but also the temples of the Pranamis. Jains and Muslims frequently visited his parental home. Gandhi also followed the devotional, emotional religion of the bhakti, in which *ahimsa* (non-violence or non-killing) is central. Deeply influenced by Jainism, he practiced the doctrine of *ahimsa* (although less extreme and more positive; Chatterjee 1983, p. 58) and searched in selfless service for *satya*, the ultimate Truth. He accepted their theory of the "many-sidedness of reality" (*anekantavada*) and of the fragmentary character of Truth perceptions. Gandhi called himself a *sanatanist*, a traditionalist Hindu, although he was a reformist.

Gandhi scholars have noted that there is a gradual evolution in Gandhi's life, where he remade himself at several stages, also and foremost on the spiritual level (Markovits 2000, pp. 253–54). In his student years in London, the study of holy texts and vegetarianism that relates food to spiritual life brought him closer to God. In South Africa, where he arrived in 1893, he connected to his Indian identity, praised celibacy and became a *satyagrahi*. In contact with Christians and theosophists in London and in South Africa, Gandhi rediscovered his Hindu roots and started reading the Bhagavad Gita. With time, he focused upon the Bhagavad Gita and Tulsidas' Ramayana. He developed a keen interest in Christianity. Tolstoy's ethical interpretation of Christianity and his non-violence were close to his heart. The motto of the theosophist movement "There is no religion higher than Truth" as well as the attention of this movement to Hinduism and Buddhism appealed to Gandhi. He did not act primarily in conformity to religious norms, but rather according to morality and truth. In his non-dual religiosity (*advaita*), Truth is God, and a matter of experience.[3] As the British historian Judith Brown has remarked, *satyagraha* was a "science" of ethics; Gandhi "was an experimental scientist, trying out different strategies of resisting and using particular symbolic issues in different contexts". (Brown 2009, p. 53) In accordance with *ahimsa*, the battle of Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the Baghavad Gita received an allegorical interpretation: it was not about a just war, but about one's inner struggles.

With his highly personal religiosity, Gandhi's non-violent attitude was independent of the sanctions of scriptures, although his main principles were grounded in the *yama-niyama* of the yoga tradition. He supported hereditary occupations in the caste system, but rejected untouchability. In that sense, he was—like Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786)—conservative, but at the same time renovating.[4] His religiosity was ethical, universal and focused upon spiritual development, of which *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *satya* (Truth), *asteya* (non-stealing) and *aparigraha* (non-attachment) were essential ingredients.[5]

Gandhi's view on religions is fascinating in that it embraces other religions.[6] However, as mentioned, one has to recognize an evolution in his thought. During his time in London, from 1888 until 1891, he became a member of the Esoteric Christian Union, which reduced Christianity to a minimum and combined it with elements of other religions. Later, he thought that Hinduism was higher than other religions: Hinduism was superior to Christianity, it was more inclusive and believed that all have souls, not only human beings. From 1930 on, he developed a concept of religious equality, without superiority of Hinduism.[7] He came to such a conclusion because, first, "Truth" (*satya*)—as the consciousness that the Divine is in all—was above imperfect words. Second, because true religion was only realizable by means of a praxis, available to all. (Schmidt-Leukel 2019, pp. 113–14) Gandhi himself testifies to the fact that he moved from tolerance to equal respect for all religions.

He first regarded Hinduism as the most tolerant and inclusive of all religions. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were even part of Hinduism. Later, he spoke of the equality of all religions (Sugirtharajah 2012, p. 126).

Religion in Gandhi's sense transcended all religions, it did not supersede all religions, but harmonized them. (*Harijan*, 10 February 1940) Religion with a capital letter was present in all religions, it pervaded the entire existence and was relevant also and foremost for politics. It expressed itself in non-attachment and permitted to see the equality of all. Education was first of all religious, i.e., ethical. (*Hind Swaraj*, p. 103) Truth was not a dogmatic possession—it was never to be reached completely. It was a non-violent praxis, universal love: truth-force or love-force that brings about social changes. Already in his South-African period, from 1893 to 1914, Gandhi used different prayers in order to celebrate religious unity. Krishna, the Buddha and Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount belonged together. For Gandhi, pluralism was natural and this came into expression in his interfaith mass gatherings. After a fast in 1924, for instance, he wanted a ceremony expressing religious unity. Imam Sahib had to sing the opening verses of the Qur'an. Andrews had to sing a Christian hymn. Vinoba Bahve had to recite from the Upanishads and Balkrishna had to sing the Vaishnava hymn. (Fischer 1984, p. 284) In the prayers in his ashram, verses from different religious books were recited. The prayers from different traditions were a celebration of the unity, to which Gandhi strove. Gandhi was a critical participant in his religion. He held, for instance, a large intercommunity dinner with Hindus, Muslims and untouchables sitting shoulder to shoulder. Such interdining was far from self-evident, given for example the Hindu custom of purification by fire of the cutlery used by Muslims. The Sanskrit sentence *tat tvam asi* ("you are that") from the Chandogya Upanishad, in which the Self is identical with the ultimate reality, allowed Gandhi to see in every other human being a friend. As written in the Bhagavad Gita (18:61), God abided in the heart of all beings. Gandhi did not detach himself from others, even from the most wicked ones, since there was only one soul. Service to others was serving God.

Gandhi believed in the coexistence of different religions in the Indian nation (*praja*). He opposed divisions on the basis of religion. In the Indian cultural tapestry, a multitude of religions was lived as a blessing. Gandhi found the core of non-violence in different religious source: in the Gita, in the Qur'an and the New Testament.

Gandhi precedes what is today called interreligious theology, in which all religions are leading to spiritual perfection. To his mind, religions were aspects of the Divine, fragmentary visions of the Higher Reality. He was open to Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Asked if one God did not require one religion, he said: "a tree has a million leaves" and all are rooted in God. A particular religion was only "one mode of presentation of the same eternal truth". (CWMG (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* 1999) 1, p. 139; *Natal Mercury*, 2 December 1894)[8] This pluralist standpoint anticipates the position of John Hick, the great pioneer of interreligious theology, who distinguished between the *noumenon* of God and the phenomenal perceptions of Him/Her/They/It.[9] Truth was more than the notions of it. But Gandhi went further in understanding the religious other, reaching out to her, learning from her and striving for mutual enrichment. Gandhi lived religion interreligiously and looked for the ethical quality in religious others. To the journalist and biographer Louis Fischer (1896–1970), he said: "I am a Moslem, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Christian, a Jew, a Parsi". (Fischer 1984, p. 544) His religiosity is marvelously described in Yann Martel's novel *Life of Pi*, where the main character Piscine stays before a pundit, an imam and a priest. Asked to make a choice and decide for one religion, he declares: "Bapu Gandhi said, 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God". (Martel 2001, p. 69) Gandhi's religious thinking was not only personal, it was amazingly inclusive. Frictions between religions were not allowed: "In Hinduism, in Islam, in any religion for that matter, a quarrel with another religion is *haram*". (Chatterjee 1983, p. 128) Different religions were complementary to each other, they inspired each other.

Gandhi also knew about the necessity of "translating" in interreligious contexts. In intercultural situations, one may transmit one's own message by entering into the

world of the dialogue partner and using his words. Gandhi passed to the language of a religious other in order to reach his heart. This happened in the case of Hermann Kallenbach (1871–1945), Gandhi's closest Jewish friend, who was hurt and angry because his plans for a new synagogue were copied by a concurrent, who received the commission. (Sarid and Bartolf 1997; Lev 2012) In October 1913, Gandhi wrote to his Jewish friend a letter, reminding him of the duty before Yom Kippur to reconcile oneself with one's fellow as precondition for reconciliation with God. In order to plant his own peaceful thoughts into Kallenbach's mind, Gandhi entered into the world of his friend, reminding him of Yom Kippur. (Chatterjee 1992, p. 55)[10].

Gandhi was not interested in the conversion of his disciples, probably also because of his bad experiences with Christian missionaries. At their first meeting, he declared that Madeleine Slade (1892–1982) would be his "daughter". (Mirabehn 1960, p. 66) He gave her an Indian, not a Hindu name: Mirabehn. She had to remain a good Christian. Gandhi wanted people from different religions to convert only to non-violence. He disbelieved in the religious conversion of one person by another. He wanted people to be better followers of their own faith. He urged the English rulers in India to become better Christians. (*Hind Swaraj*, p. 113) The German Jewess Dr. Margaret Spiegel (1897–1967) fled Berlin in 1932 and joined Gandhi's ashram a year later. When she wanted to become a Hindu, Gandhi discouraged her to do so, since another faith would not satisfy her and she had nothing to fear in India.

Further in tune with interreligious theology, Gandhi was conscious that no religion was absolutely perfect: all had flaws. Selfish religious teachers made it worse. (*Hind Swaraj*, p. 104) Critical of religions, he knew about problematic readings of religious sources. He was aware that one may become violent by referring to sacred texts.[11] In this sense, he recognized what José Casanova calls the Janus face of the religions. In his view, divisiveness was not compatible with religion, which was understood as "that which acts as a link between religions and realizes their essential unity" (Gandhi 1955, p. 4).

Gandhi characterized certain customs as *adharma*, "irreligion" or "false religion"—for instance, in his condemnation of the slaughtering of goats in the Kali temple in Calcutta in 1901. (Chatterjee 1983, p. 28) Irreligion was also present when a Muslim refuses to sit with a Hindu on the same carpet and does not share his meal. (Fischer 1984, p. 540) Gandhi opposed the Muslim segregation of women (*purda*). When a woman came to him with her face hidden, he said: "No purdah before your brother". (Id., p. 289) He maintained the caste system, but without hierarchy between the four caste groups. He adopted the classical division in *varnas*: *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* and the hereditary principle. However, untouchables should be absorbed in the *shudra varna*. In the caste-ridden Indian society, he declared: "If it were proved to me that this [untouchability] is an essential part of Hinduism, I, for one, would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself". (Gandhi 2011, pp. 231–32) Claude Markovits rightly remarks that Gandhi was a social and religious reformer, as were Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. (Markovits 2000, pp. 55–56)

According to Mahadev Desai (1892–1942), Gandhi's secretary, Gandhi was "toning down differences by creating a climate of understanding between men of varying views and thus increasing amity all around. "(Desai's *Diary*, vol. vi, pp. 235–36) Gandhi claimed that the religions were "rivers that meet in the same ocean" and that "if we look to the aim, there is no difference among religions". (CWMG 7, p. 338; Jordens 1987, pp. 7–8) Later, he used the metaphor of the tree, which even more emphasized the essential unity of all religions: the religions were one, and equal because of their common root. (CWMG 57, p. 17; Jordens 1987, pp. 11–12) Mingling traditions, Gandhi had the tendency to play down differences in view of bringing people together with a common task. Chatterjee writes: "[. . .] Gandhi seems to me to go beyond both encounter and dialogue, envisaging and showing which is but natural, since God dwells in every man" (Chatterjee 1983, p. 134).

Gandhi's Jewish friends Herman Kallenbach, Sonya Schlesin (1888–1956), Henry Salomon Leon Polak (1882–1959), Lewis Walter Ritch (1868–1952) and Gabriel Isaac (1874–1914)

were all universalists and theosophists. They were unfamiliar with the post-Biblical tradition, expressed in multiple ways, including philosophy, mysticism, rituals, laws and customs. Yet, since they had their own remembrance of oppression, persecution and racism, they could easily identify with Gandhi and the Indians in racist South Africa. Not as the wider Jewish community, these individuals courageously decided that they could not longer be onlookers. They became engaged and stood up for the rights of the Indian minority, in the name of universal, ethical brotherhood. Although they lacked a Jewish education, they expressed their Judaism by engaging themselves in the struggle of Indians against discrimination.

Gandhi, from his side, distinguished between "organized" religion and religion of the heart or spiritual self-development. In *Hind Swaraj* he wrote: "I am not thinking of the Hindu, the Mahomedan, or Zoroastrian religion, but of religion which underlies all religions".[12] This comes close to Abraham Joshua Heschel's distinction between depth-theology, which unites all, and theology *tout court*, which separates. (Heschel 1967) For Gandhi, all seek the Truth. Peace is indeed the result of the humility of people, who recognize that their own truth is relative and that it grows "between" them in interconnectedness. Cognitive humility and recognition of the other are pillars of present-day interreligious theology.

2. Satyagraha and Its Limits

Gandhi's thoughts exhibit many affinities with Jewish dialogical thinkers as Buber (1886–1965), Heschel (1907–1972) and Levinas (1906–1995). Relatedness is focal in Jewish dialogical philosophy as well as in Gandhi's worldview. In the following, I explore Gandhi's view on Judaism and Zionism as a test-case of his attitude towards a specific religious tradition. I put his religious views in the framework of an interreligious theology in order to shed new and refreshing light on his thoughts. I situate Gandhi's ideas on Judaism and Zionism in his time, but go beyond that in valuing "trans-difference", which promotes communication and unity without uniformity.

2.1. Gandhi and Judaism

Against his own conviction that one has to judge a religious other from his or her own standpoint (Chatterjee 1983, p. 34), Gandhi looked at Judaism through Christian eyes and did not understand it on its own terms. His understanding of Judaism was informed by Christian supersessionist thoughts. The Old Testament put him to sleep, the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, was different. (Gandhi 2011, p. 52; Palaver 2020a) He started reading the Old Testament, and got as far as the book of Exodus. (Chatterjee 1983, p. 53) The ancient Jews saw themselves as exclusively elected, which was parallel with Hindus, who saw themselves as Aryas against Anaryas or untouchables. Gandhi invoked the "stigma" against the Jews that their ancestors were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. (*Harijan*, 17 December 1938) Adopting a traditional Christian anti-Jewish bias, he once wrote that the Jews believed in an eye for an eye[13] and did not have an idea of loving the enemy. (*Harijan*, 18 February 1939) He added that the Boers read the Old Testament, accepted the eye for the eye and acted accordingly. (Gandhi 1968, p. 16) With the principle of an eye for an eye, one would end up with the whole world becoming blind. Gandhi maintained that many Jews do not know about forgiveness. (*Harijan*, 18 February 1939)[14].

Gandhi further reduced Judaism to religion, without paying attention to its peoplehood dimension. In a much discussed article on the Jews, published in the newspaper *Harijan* on 26 November 1938 (CWMG 68, pp. 137–41)[15], Gandhi argues against Jewish presence in Palestine and considers Judaism to be a mere religion. However, Jews did and do not view themselves as a mere religion, but as a people. As I will explain more broadly, Gandhi was not supportive of Zionism and underestimated the spiritual power in it. He rightly states that "[t]he Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French". Yet, he excludes Zionism from the Jewish identity.

Gandhi knew that Jews were a religious community as well as a people and that they based their request for the land upon the Bible. Practically, he rejected the Jewish claim upon the land and did not regard it as constitutive for Judaism.

2.2. Gandhi and Zionism

Maurice Shertok (later Moshe Sharett; 1894–1965) of the Jewish Agency took the initiative to ask Gandhi to raise his authoritative voice in favor of the Jews in the Middle East. Gandhi took upon him the task of a counsellor and mediator, with the help of Hermann Kallenbach and the Anglican priest Charles (Charlie) Freer Andrews (1871–1940). His recommendations were not followed, not by Jews in Germany nor by Jews in Palestine. The diatribe in the late 1930s between Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber brings to light their differences. Both linked politics and ethics, but whereas the former did not support Zionism, the latter embraced it. Both deemed that the challenge of a sincere moral life had to be brought to the public square. Gandhi could not separate active non-violence from social justice; unjust laws had to be disobeyed. Peace was impossible without justice. Through self-suffering and self-purification, one had to melt or transform the heart of the oppressor. Avoiding passive submission as well as violent retaliation, Gandhi pleaded for the third way of active non-violent resistance. Both Buber and Gandhi dreamed about awakening. (Gandhi 2009, pp. 9, 23; Buber 1901) But when Gandhi published his aforementioned long article on the Jews, Buber, a lover of peace and great admirer of Gandhi, rebuked the article and wrote a letter to Gandhi, that was never answered.[16]

Gandhi had written in his statement that Palestine belonged to the Arabs "in the same way that England belongs to the English or France to the French". It would be "wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs". He rejected political Zionism. Jews were a religious community, "the untouchables of Christianity", who could reside in Palestine "only by the goodwill of Arabs".[17] Their home was rather in the country of their birth or residence. In Germany, they had to see themselves as full citizens. If he were a German Jew, Gandhi would claim Germany as his home and challenge the Germans to shoot him. A "double home" for Jews would provide a justification for the Nazis to expel them. It would be "a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home". Before the Arabs—he further stated in his *Harijan* article—Jews had to offer themselves to be shot or to be thrown in the Dead Sea. Gandhi wanted the Jews to love the enemy and, by doing so, save their "self respect" by avoiding helplessness and forlornness. They could rely on God, to whom they attribute personality and who—according to their belief—rules every action. To the Arabs, he did not propose *ahimsa*, clearly for his own political reasons favoring the Hindu–Muslim unity. Gandhi did everything in order to preserve the Hindu–Muslim unity in India. His pro-Arab position in the Palestine question was helpful in maintaining this unity.[18] Gandhi himself was not entirely satisfied with what he had written. To his close friend Hermann Kallenbach, a universalist and a Zionist, he wrote that he had "made a plunge into unknown waters".[19] Already in 1913, Kallenbach was a Zionist and part of the administration of the South African Zionist Federation. In the 1930s of the preceding century, he became an active Zionist. Gandhi had written the article in absence of his Zionist friend.

In his reaction to Gandhi's statement, Buber pointed to the ineffectiveness of *satyagraha* for German Jews in that time. He wrote that Jews did not proclaim the teaching of non-violence, as did Jesus and Gandhi: sometimes one had to use force to save oneself and one's family. (Buber and Magnes 1939, p. 19) He further pointed to the quite different situation of Indians in South Africa and of Jews in Nazi Germany. Gandhi had overlooked the differences, by demanding *ahimsa* from Jews in Germany. One could not compare between the Jews and the untouchables, whom Gandhi called *Harijans*, "sons of God". The Jewish situation in the 1930s was radically different from that of the *dalit*.

From Gandhi's article and Buber's reaction, it follows that, in the perspective of a dialogical philosophy, Gandhi failed to adopt a "trans-different" perspective, in which

respect for the situatedness and historical circumstances of others is focal. Could he demand from other people in completely different circumstances what he demanded from his own people? Was he right in recommending to and even demanding from cultural others in very different circumstances what he demanded from the people belonging to his own Indian culture?

Gandhi was well informed about the special Jewish relation to the land of Israel, he read inter alia informational brochures brought to him by Kallenbach, but in his pro-Arab bias and fight against British colonialism and imperialism, he choose to disregard this Jewish particularity. Because of his political interests in India, he had adopted an Arab perspective on Zionism. Buber rhetorically asked if India is also only in the hearts of the Indians. Gandhi's position on Palestine as belonging to the Arabs was one-sided and understandable within his political stance that favored a Hindu–Muslim unity in India. His political interests with the Indian Muslims influenced his Near East policy. On a more fundamental level, his opposition to a Zionism that used violence was the result of his *satyagraha*.

In a dialogical perspective, the question arises whether lofty ideas of one culture can be easily pasted into another political, social and cultural situation and whether one's own view is not necessarily relativized by another one. To my mind, intercultural dialogue is successful to the degree that differences are taken into account, which is the precondition for "trans-different" communication, bridging and mediation.

Gandhi's desire to keep Hindus and (70 million) Muslims united in India colored his attitude towards Zionism. He opposed partition in India as well as in Palestine. He was careful in avoiding discomfort to Muslims.[20] Noteworthy is that, in the period between 1919 and 1922, he had supported the Khilafat (Pan-Islamist) movement against English imperialism, and in the 1930s, he opposed the so-called dispossession of Palestine. His was a double standard: one for the Jews, who were judged by the highest spiritual standards and one for the "proud Arabs", who were judged by the "accepted canons of right and wrong".[21] Again, this stance is understandable in the framework of Gandhi's political struggle for a unified India, but it was unfavorable to the Jews in Palestine.

The Jews had no right in a place "which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest". (*Young India*, 6 April 1921) In the late 1930s, Gandhi's opinion was challenged: the cruel Turkish regime killed one million Armenians. But he suspected that these reports were much exaggerated. He did not criticize the Ottomans for the treatment of the Armenians, blaming instead the victims. (Kumaraswamy 2018, p. 150) He insisted on Muslim religious sentiment and the Khilafat "ideal", the Muslims had "the right of religious conquest", but Jews had "to revise their ideal about Palestine".

Gandhi expected from German Jews to proudly present themselves as Germans, whatever the outcome would be. He advised the Jews to adopt *satyagraha*. For Jews in Germany and in Palestine, however, *satyagraha* was utopic and, in fact, dangerous, since it did not consider the real Nazi threat. Gandhi knew the art of the possible; he often made compromises with his opponents. He would agree with Vittorio Hösle's theory on the importance of the institutional, strategic rationality. Hösle remarked that this rationality is frequently seen as the evil in the world, but it is needed in order to minimize humanity's problematic natural state. (Hösle 1992, pp. 59–86)[22] Yet, dissimilar to Hösle, Gandhi trusted that man's nature was good in the end and he expected that friendly communication was the remedy *par excellence* for political and social problems. The means determined the end; means and end were one.[23] Gandhi lacked political realism in his judgement of the Jewish situation in the 1930s and his advice to the Jews was the result of his profound belief in universal friendliness. He distanced himself from the evil acts of a person, but befriended everyone. He had no foes. He declared that he had no hatred, even for Adolf Hitler. (CWMG 75, p. 272) On 24 December 1938, he wrote in *Harijan* that "human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love".

Gandhi was a staunch believer in the changeability of the human being. In his campaigns, he had the common good of oppressors and oppressed in mind. He wanted

to change the minds of people with unethical behavior and to influence the opponent. Was it realistic by any means to try to melt Hitler's heart? From a Gandhian perspective, however, "realism" was rather the product of a non-violent attitude. Gandhi failed to understand the depth of Nazi evil, when he compared Nazism with the British evil. He did not assess rightly the situation. On 23 July 1939 and 24 December 1940, he even wrote letters to Hitler.[24] He reminded him of Poland, Denmark, the Czechs; no word on the Jews. He wanted to melt the stony hearts of people and turned to them, including to Hitler, as "friends". He hated the sin and loved the sinner.[25] Hitlerism could not be defeated by anti-Hitlerism. *Ahimsa* was the answer to *himsa*. (*Harijan*, 22 May 1939) Gandhi proposed his life-long friend Kallenbach to pray for Hitler, and he understood that the latter could not. He wrote that Kallenbach and thousands of Jews "have no thought even of 'loving the enemy'", for them "revenge is sweet, to forgive is divine". (*Harijan*, 18 February 1939) But he admitted that a Jewish Gandhi in Germany would be killed within five minutes. (*Harijan*, 22 May 1939)

Gandhi wrote about a possible "justifiable war" of the Jews against Hitler, but he did not believe in war.[26] Palestine did not belong to the Jews. Regrettably, he wrote, Zionists made their national home "under the shadow of the British gun".[27] His vantage point greatly differed from that of Buber, who wanted to reconcile the Arab and the Jewish claim: the Jewish-Arab coexistence was at the heart of his dialogical Zionism. Buber belonged to the peace movement *Brit Shalom*, which aimed to create cooperation between Jews and Arabs. (Ratsabi 2002) The land was large enough for both peoples.

After the war, Gandhi remained to a great extent silent on the Shoa.[28] In a conversation with the journalist Louis Fischer, he repeated his position: the Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife. (Fischer 1984, p. 435) This would have been heroic, it would have aroused the world and the people of Germany. They died anyway in their millions. It would have been a victory of non-violence to perish unarmed.

It is well known that Gandhi himself was not a radical pacifist. As a member of the Indian Ambulance Corps, he participated in the Boer war (1899–1902) and the Zulu war (1906). He supported Indian recruitment for the British army in WWI and counted upon the British protection in case of a Japanese attack. He did not oppose the military defense of Kashmir in 1947. Military actions were sometimes required in certain cases. In extreme conditions, violent resistance was better than cowardly inaction. (Brown 2009, p. 49) But he noted that the Jews wanted to punish Germany and to bring England and America to fight Germany. (*Harijan*, 17 December 1938; 24 December 1938) For Jewish ears, this was outrageous language. Henry Polak asked Gandhi to retract his words, which he did. He emphasized that his opinion was "based purely on ethical considerations, and is independent of results".[29] One did not have to expect immediate effects of *satyagraha*; in the end—he trusted—there would be results.

As mentioned, Gandhi's approach to Zionism was biased because of his political support for the Hindu–Muslim amity. Publicly, he rejected the Jewish claim of a homeland in Palestine, privately he was prone to recognize its validity. (Shimoni 1977, p. 60) For Gandhi, the Jews had a vision, but do not realize it. Zionism as reoccupation of Palestine had no attraction for him. The real Jerusalem was the spiritual one. Consequently, Jews could realize Zionism everywhere in the world. Gandhi's words on praying for Hitler, on "saving self-respect" and setting "an example, which would save the whole of Jewry", left the Jews baffled.

With his non-violent approach that did not completely exclude proportionate use of force, Gandhi avoided the extremes of military power-balance as well as radical pacifism. *Satyagraha* was universal love. Peace was the result of a change of hearts. In his negotiation with the powerful, Gandhi considered the non-violent struggle as an alternative for violence. In the extreme case of a lunatic murderer, the killing of such an individual was justifiable. (*Young India*, 4 November 1926) In the case of Hitler, however, Gandhi still believed in his transformability. He did not stop trying to believe in the possible return of an evildoer. Yet, was Hitler not so entangled with evil that melting his heart was impossible? Is non-

violence "an over-riding obligation"?[30] Buber, a champion of dialogue, admitted in 1953 that Hitler was so intensively immersed in the sphere of monstrous inhumanity that an unbridgeable rift separated this man from others: no dialogue was possible (Buber 1957, p. 232; Meir 2013b, p. xxix). Gandhi persisted in trying to disarm the enemy by arousing in him humanity. He did not believe in a violent intervention in order to end a tragedy. He insisted that violence was not a way to fight violence. When it came to the Jews in Nazi Germany or to the war of the British and the Americans against Germany, the use of violence was not his option. He remained inflexible in his position, which worked well in South Africa, where he opposed British colonialism, but which was a failure in his understanding of the Jewish situation in Germany and Europe in the 1930s of the preceding century and during the Holocaust.

Martin Arnold argues that Buber misunderstood Gandhi's article on the Jews, since Gandhi did not propose a concrete strategy. (Arnold 2011, pp. 323–42) In a letter to Hayim Greenberg (1889–1953) of the American Zionist journal *Jewish Frontier*, Gandhi writes indeed that he was not disillusioned that his article did not "convert" one Jew to satyagraha. (*Harijan*, 22 May 1939) The example of one single Jew in *satyagraha* could have influenced others. Gandhi trusted that God is potentially present in all human beings, including the perpetrators. *Satyagraha* aimed at redeeming the enemy from his animosity and appealed to the opponent's deeper self. The Jews too—he claimed—believed in the presence of God in all they do. He did not believe that physical survival was the most important thing. The hardest metal would melt under sufficient heat of non-violence. (*Harijan*, 7 January 1939) Through non-violence, one would save one's dignity. Gandhi was convinced that, in the end, *satyagraha* would be efficient. In Jewish eyes, however, the first task for Jews in Germany of the 1930s and the forties was: to save lives as much as possible. Was it Buber who misunderstood Gandhi—as Arnold argues—or was it Gandhi, who did not grasp that Jews act differently than Hindus?

On the basis of the above, I conclude that there are limits to Gandhi's *satyagraha*. Zionism was born as a solution for a people that was persecuted and humiliated during ages. For Gandhi, Zionism was essentially a violent, intruding, colonial movement. He did not see all sides involved in the conflict. He abhorred violence and, during the Shoa, did not imagine enough the necessity of the limitation of the infinite demand of love. Moreover, he believed that the Jews wanted to punish the Germans, whereas he himself was against punishment. He opposed sending Englishmen to jail and wrote about the wickedness of the trial of the Nazi war criminals. Here is the moment where Jewish realistic thoughts on saving lives, justice and the right of necessary self-defense inevitably clash with Gandhi's *ahimsa*. From a Jewish vantage point, the Nazi rage asked for "realism" and "self-defense", which is not to be relativized by pointing to the relatedness of all by all and by a radical deconstruction of the words "self" and "defense". I agree with Judith Butler that aggression frequently hides beyond self-defense. (Butler 2020) Gandhi himself deemed that legitimate self-defense was consistent with non-violence. (Gandhi 2009, p. lxvii) Recognizing that non-violence was not possible for the Polish people in 1939, he praised their violent resistance to Hitler. Yet, he did not think, in the case of Nazi Germany, that Jewish self-defense against the state terror was a necessity. He did not think sufficiently of Jews in terms of a peoplehood, in dare need for help.

Gandhi's active, non-violent method allowed for exceptions and always went step by step. Gandhi himself hesitated whether he could bring his *ahimsa* to others. Nevertheless, he believed others could perform that task. He persisted in his way and demanded from others to follow him.[31] As Adam Roberts, an expert on international relations, writes: "Any approach that sees one form of action, or one political destination, as universally applicable risks suffering from what might be termed the 'Comintern fallacy'—the mistake of appearing to know best what is good for all other societies". (Roberts 2009, p. 21) Also Claude Markovits deems that Gandhi's actions were so firmly embedded in the cultural Indian and even the Hindu context, that one cannot directly transpose it into different cultural contexts. In the same vein, Margaret Chatterjee wrote: "Gandhi was never able to

see that *satyagraha* was non-universalizable". (Chatterjee 1992, p. 165) Consequently, one should refrain from prescribing to other societies in different contexts and times what is practiced at one time in one society. Local conditions and circumstances have always to be taken into account (Roberts 2009, pp. 20, 23). In Gandhi's unique blending of religion, ethics and politics, he sincerely thought that *satyagraha* was a panacea, the path by excellence, to be followed by all. *Satyagraha* was for him a universal way, which grew out of his interpretation of the particular, Hindu situation.

3. The Challenge of Gandhi's Satyagraha

3.1. Inspiration

Notwithstanding the clear limitations of Gandhi's *satyagraha*, described above, an empathic study of Gandhi's worldview opens a wide-open window to much needed und unforeseen possibilities and challenges. Gandhi's transformative activities, his talents as negotiator and organizer of mass demonstrations contain a huge potential for peace activists across the globe. Although his *satyagraha* had its limits, also in India (Brown 2009, p. 56), his creative opposition to any form of violence and his attempt to influence the oppressor and transform him, remain highly inspirational.

In the postscript of her book *The Force of Nonviolence*, Butler greatly values Gandhi's soul-force against state violence. Gandhi's power of non-violence as expressed in fasts, civil disobedience and boycotts is a protest against unjust legal systems. In her analysis of violence and non-violence, Butler escapes a war logics that distinguish between grievable and ungrievable lives. She remarks that the egalitarian struggle is often characterized as "unrealistic", but that, in fact, this is its strength. All human beings are in unequal embodied social relations. The relevance of Butler's argument lies in the insight that only a supported life can persist as a life. Self-preservation depends on others, on social relations that contribute to flourishing or not. These relations can express detrimental warmongering, or transformational alliances. Gandhi's *satyagraha* contributes to a more equal relationship between people, in which all lives are grievable.

Of special importance for a more equal society is Gandhi's ethical and deed-centered approach to religions. His religious practices keep at bay a dogmatic fanaticism and lead to a dialogical reality. As such, it has huge dialogical potential. Gandhi contributed to the positive use of religions in conflict management.

A dialogical theology, as I perceive it, follows a dialogical praxis.[32] It involves deep listening and perfecting society by getting involved with religious others. Recognizing the religious other in her uniqueness, being present to her, and listening to her without hidden agenda is a "testimony" to the Ineffable, which the Vedas describe as "*neti, neti*" (not this, not that). Gandhi did not always see the religious other in her uniqueness, but he felt the Divine present in everybody and everything. In the binomial unity-diversity, his emphasis was on unity rather than on diversity.

Moreover, Gandhi's concept of truth as practical and relational is a remedy to religious absolute truth claims. The idea of a relational truth as service to others was even more fundamental than the concept of God. (Chatterjee 1983, p. 13) The great temptation of religions lies in their absolute truth claims. Countering this negative inclination, Gandhi contributed to an interreligious theology that has interconnectedness as its method and aim. The truth of religions was not absolute; Truth with a capital letter was above religions. Here, the influence of Jainism upon Gandhi is manifest. In Jain doctrine, it follows from the doctrine of "many sidedness" or "non-absolutism" that truth is necessarily complex. (Howard 2018, p. 82)

The science of *satyagraha*, discovered by Gandhi in 1906, was experimental. His community was a laboratory, where he experimented with social relations. The way to the Divine was through deeds and self-discipline, through purification and control of the passions. Gandhi championed *satyagraha*, in which Truth implied love and firmness; it was "the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence". (Gandhi 1968, pp. 106–7) *Satyagraha* was firmness (*agraha*) in truth and love (*satya*): truth-force or love-force. (Fischer 1984, p. 102)

Satya, truth, derives from *sat*, which denotes "to be" but also "God".[33] Truth is God.[34] Everything is illusion, only God is. (Fischer 1984, pp. 377–78)[35] Gandhi's detection of this ultimate reality became possible in relationship with others. His *satyagraha*, based upon truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*), was profoundly relational.

Gandhi sought the Truth in ortho-praxis, more especially in the renouncement of ego-attachment. In a practical, experimental way, one discovered the *Atman*, the non-egotistic, deeper Self. The Gandhian notion of Truth as approachable in proximity to others contains, therefore, a formidable potential for peace activists. When religious truths are all perspectives on the Infinite, which escapes the grasp, interreligious peace with its characteristics of humble openness, learning from and extending hospitality to religious others, shines at the horizon. In liberation theology as in Gandhi's religious thoughts, Truth and peace belong together. What counts is the daily work for peace, not abstract, sophisticated thought. Truth or love had to be realized in view of the liberation of all.

From Gandhi, one may learn that truth sprouts from the earth (Ps. 85:12a): it is born in communication and grows between people in peaceful interconnection. The aim of truth is to bring peace, which is established as the result of the humility of people who recognize that their own truth is relative. In a dialogical theology, which has interlocution as its aim and method, cross-bordering values unite people who belong to diverse religions.

Along this article, I insisted upon what Jonathan Sacks called "the dignity of difference". For Gandhi, truth appeared differently to different persons: "There is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights". (Fischer 1984, p. 381)[36] This Gandhian saying on Truth from a wide range of perspectives makes religions somewhat relative and prepares the way for a more reflective openness to other religious narratives in an interreligious or dialogical theology. Such a theology does respect singularity, without forgetting communication and complementarity.

I have shown how Gandhi's way and the Buberian way differed. Different cultures and religions develop in certain circumstances different ways of decreasing suffering. Yet, in a dialogical theology, complementarity, interaction and mutual influence of different lifestyles are basic. Hence, being a prophetic "sign" is not necessarily incompatible with putting limits to evil by using proportionate and reasonable violence. In this manner, a virtual meeting between the Jewish Moses and the Indian Moses may open new and unexpected horizons.

Communication between Gandhi's *satyagraha* and Jewish thought remains a fascinating possibility. Similar to Gandhi, the prophets did not trust in physical force, but in moral strength. Gandhi's universalist Jews developed prophetic solidarity with Indian immigrants in South Africa. Gideon Shimoni calls them, in reference to Deutscher, "non-Jewish Jews". (Shimoni 1977, p. 12) Objecting this view, Shimon Lev suggests that they supported Gandhi because they considered that the battle for social justice was a Jewish value. They reminded their own history of humiliation and discrimination.[37] In Egypt, the midwives Shifra and Pua offered civil obedience when Pharao instructed to kill Jewish boys (Ex. 1: 15–21). They preceded Gandhi and his Jewish followers.

In an interreligious perspective, one may learn from Gandhi's amazing attitude towards opponents. He opposed Mohammed Ali Jinna (1876–1948), the future founder of Pakistan, who accused him of wanting an all Hindu rule. But Gandhi wanted diversity in India and called Jinna "brother Jinnah". He disliked the idea of Islamic brotherhood, widening it in a theosophist way to the "brotherhood of man". All were brothers and sisters. Love as the law of life and the aim of humankind would lead to all-encompassing sister—and brotherhood. In Gandhi's sublime worldview as in a Jewish dialogical philosophy, belonging is belonging to all. (Meir 2018, pp. 17–33) The word "belonging" relates to two realms: it indicates pertaining to a particular group, and also designates relatedness to universal humankind. In a Gandhian perspective, the copula "and" is reevaluated. As against religious fanaticism that mushrooms today, Gandhi lived with religious others and worked with them. He valued the humanizing force in different religious sources, but did not accept them when they conflicted with non-violence. Gandhi belonged to the

Hindu tradition as well as to the world. He searched the Truth in a multiplicity of religions. As in today's interreligious theology, he knew that belonging to a specific group is not contradictory to belonging to the world as such.

Religious peace activists are inspired by Gandhi, who interpreted religion as a non-dividing, uniting force. Sacred books received a multiplicity of interpretations, but in a Gandhian viewpoint, those interpretations that led to violence could never be legitimate. He said: "Error, no matter however immemorial it may be, cannot derive sanctity, and even a Vedic text if it is inconsistent with morality, with injustice, will have to go by the board". (Chatterjee 1983, p. 29) Like Buber (Buber 1962), he did not accept scriptural passages when they conflicted with his moral conviction. Morality was above scriptural authority, as deeds were above doctrines. Moral deeds made up a religious person: one recognized the tree at its fruits. The action of non-violence was the criterion of the religious person.

3.2. Gandhi, Israel and Palestine

I showed the limits to Gandhi's *satyagraha* when it comes to the situation of Jews in Palestine and in Germany in the 1930s, but *satyagraha* contains positive challenges for the present. What would Gandhi say today in the situation of Israel and Palestine, in a time of new anti-Semitism? Anti-Semitism reappears today in the form of radical anti-Zionism that makes an equation between Israeli Jews and Nazis and inverts the Holocaust. Gandhi would not have supported the idea of the creation of a Jewish State, but it is questionable whether, in his pragmatic approach, he would agree with the dismantling of such a state, once established. He would perhaps have pled for the coexistence of a Palestinian state alongside the Israeli one, or for a binational state that cares for the welfare of all. In India, he opposed partition and pleaded for unity, regardless race or creed. Would he think today, like Buber, that the land was large enough for Jews and Arabs?

Sure, we live in quite different times than Gandhi. Gandhi's view on Zionism in 1938 was much influenced by the situation in India, a situation that changed with the establishment of Pakistan. Moreover, Israel is not Great Britain and the Palestinians are not Indians. However, the answer to the question on the relevance of Gandhi's thought in Israel/Palestine is not without importance. As Margaret Chatterjee writes, Gandhi believed "that the most urgent struggles against injustice can be humanized, so to say, by the persuasive and creative power which is released when men of goodwill band together, with enmity to none, in order to better their lives and those of their neighbours". (Chatterjee 1983, p. 6).

Jews are back in Israel and the Jewish state is a fact. At the same time, demonization, delegitimization, double standard thinking and black-white morality concerning the state of Israel are very much present, also and foremost in the BDS movement. The Star of David is compared with the swastika and Israel is compared with Nazism and South African apartheid. I think that it is questionable whether Gandhi would continue to say that Palestine belongs to the Arabs. I guess he would rather adopt a pragmatic standpoint and suggest what he calls "the beauty of compromise" in order to advance the peace process and to create a more peaceful situation. (Gandhi 2011, p. 178) He would oppose the Israeli occupation of the West Bank as well as the Palestinian armed resistance and the recourse to terrorism. In line with his peaceful thinking, he would disapprove of any form of fanatic nationalism, hatred and demonization, in an attempt to create a more peaceful society by melting the hearts of people from both sides.

Gandhi's voice continues to be heard and interpreted in different ways. Revisiting Gandhi, the Australian scholar John Docker, for instance, presents the historian Flavius Josephus as a Jew, who resisted armed rebellion of Jewish nationalists and became a prolific diasporic writer and author of the historical tract *The Jewish War* (75–79). Docker links Josephus's position to that of Daniel Boyarin, who contrasts the "masculine" Zionism with the "femminized" (sic) Talmudic narrative about Johanan ben Zakkai, a Tanna of the first century CE, who escaped besieged Jerusalem in a coffin, pretending to be dead. Johanan ben Zakkai negotiated with Vespasianus, saving Yavne and its sages. (Talmud Bavli Gittin

56a–b) Boyarin opposes the non-violent diasporic Jewish culture to a patriarchal Zionism. Docker concludes that Boyarin comes close to Josephus' vision of the importance of non-violence in the Jewish tradition: "In a world still marked by national and religious violence, nonviolence as argued for by Josephus in antiquity and Gandhi in the first part of the twentieth century—and by Daniel Boyarin in his musings on rabbinic Judaism, Josephus, and the Zionist myth of Masada—remains the only hope for humanity in a disastrous world". (Docker 2007, p. 217) Following Daniel Boyarin and identifying Zionism with mere violence, Docker himself became an anti-Zionist Gandhi *redivivus*, who was unable to see Zionism as a legitimate expression of Judaism.

For Shamir Hassan of the Aligarh Muslim University, Gandhi's disapproval of Zionism was the result of some basic attitudes. First of all, Gandhi could not conceive a state of European migrants in Asia. Second, he disagreed with "the Zionists' demand that the whole world must share in, and pay for, the guilt of Nazi Germany's persecution of the Jews". Finally, he rejected the almost total dependence of the Zionists on political and financial aid from Europe and America. Hassan concludes: "To these attitudes the Zionists did not, and still do not have an answer". (Hassan 1993, p. 751) In Hassan's rereading of Gandhi, there is no place for Zionism; it is fundamentally rebuffed.

In contrast, P.R. Kumaraswamy of Nehru University, author of a book on Gandhi and Israel (Kumaraswamy 2017), contests the assumption that the lack of normalization of relations between Israel and India was Gandhian, whereas normalization in 1992 was un-Gandhian. (Kumaraswamy 2018, p. 147) He writes that those who venerate Gandhi's "consistent" opposition to Zionism "carefully avoid not only Gandhi's duality over Arab violence but also do not contextualize Bose's Nazi-imperial linkages". (Id., p. 162)[38].

Apparently, other re-readings of Gandhi than that of Docker and Hassan belong to the possibilities. Gandhi is more than the traffic circle in Kiryat Gat that bears his name. His counsel to the Jews in Palestine to contribute to the creation of a peaceful society is congruent with the profoundly Jewish idea that the land of Israel remains always "promised" in a Holy History. In the Hebrew Bible it is written that the land belongs to God (Lev. 24:23).[39] Several Gandhian steps in Israel/Palestine are imaginable. Jews and Arabs could say, as Gandhi said against the landowners in India that "the land belongs to the Lord of us all". (Fischer 1984, p. 563) Jews and Arabs could take care of securing buildings, just as Gandhi who decided in 1946,—when violence between Hindus and Muslims erupted,—that one had to choose one Moslem and one Hindu in each village in order to guarantee the safety of all. (Id., p. 559) Like Gandhi we could fast when iniquities are committed or as a means for social action. We could step in Gandhi's path, who desired not only to liberate his own people, but others as well. Israelis and Palestinians could march together in peaceful marches. One of Gandhi's profound insights was that *moksha* was not purely individual, it had to be interpreted in a collective way: liberation was liberation of all. (Chatterjee 1983, pp. 155–73) One does not have to wait for leaders to act; one may start from the bottom, even with very few lovers of peace. Gandhi himself started the famous Salt-March in 1930 against the British Empire's salt monopole with less than one hundred people.

The Mahatma influenced peace activists globally, among the most famous Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Albert Luthuli, Vaclav Havel and Martin Luther King Jr. In Israel and Palestine, we should not stop to envision a better future, given the present situation in which violence frequently turns lethal. One does not have to necessarily suspect all peace initiatives as unacceptable foreign influence and undermining the existing social fabric. Dissidents, who protest against an unjust regime are the ones who most care for social cohesion. The parties involved could stop seeing themselves as victims and blaming the other and, instead, approach the other as a real partner, with whom coexistence is possible and necessary. Self-interest may be transcended in view of the liberation of all. Douglas Allen of Maine University writes that we can learn from the action-oriented *karma yoga* of Gandhi. (Allen 1997, p. 10) In his interpretation of the Gita, Gandhi sees a way of overcoming attachment, ego-desires and cravings. The selfless action, which treat friend

and foe alike, was a path to become one with the Divine. Following Gandhi's will to communicate, notwithstanding everything, could be dangerous. Gandhi himself paid with his life, as did Martin Luther King and Yitschaq Rabin, another "soldier of peace". But it is a courageous alternative to the existing violence.

Gandhi's lofty position implies that violence and injustice have to be actively resisted. Conscious of modern man's and modern states' temptation of violence, he proposed a way that one can still adopt progressively, if the situation allows. Violence as relational reality could be diminished in a positive, non-violent way. Justice always has to be pursued by just means. The biblical command: "Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deut. 16:20) implies that justice has to be realized justly. In Gandhi's parlance: the relation between means and end is like the seed and the tree. However, religions have been hospitable as well as hostile. In the name of religions, unholy wars have been waged. (Sacks 2005) We could become neighbor religions, in positive interaction with others. Religious reconciliation could bring about a hoped for more peaceful coexistence. Hans Küng has said that there will be no world peace without the peace between religions. (Küng 2005, p. 890) If religions start relating to each other, violence can be reduced.

The Norwegian founder of peace studies Johan Galtung wrote about different forms of violence: direct violence, but also structural and cultural violence. (Palaver 2020b, pp. 3–4) The newest form of violence is frequently cultural. (Strømmen and Schmiedel 2020). "Trans-difference" in which distinctiveness, mutual influence and communication go together, could avoid cultural isolation and cultural relativism and promote interculturality. It could bridge between religions and at the same time emphasize the specificity and embeddedness of the religious other.

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Notes

1 Margaret Chatterjee did basic work on Gandhi and religion (Chatterjee 1983, 2005). For an older short study on Gandhi and religious pluralism: (Jordens 1987). On Gandhi's religious quest: (Nanda 2002); on Gandhi and Hick: (Sugirtharajah 2012). For a study of Gandhi's religious pluralism: (Jolly 2012).

2 For Gandhi's relationship to Jewry and Zionism: (Shimoni 1977; Chatterjee 1992; Lev 2016; Kumaraswamy 2017). See also (Hunt 1983).

3 This insight comes close to the saying "If you are my witness, I am God" in the Midrash Psiqta de-rav Kahana (Mandelbaum 1962, p. 208).

4 In *Hind Swaraj*, he defends the idea of *varna* and writes that "[e]ach followed his own occupation or trade, and charged a regulation wage" (Gandhi 2009, p. 66). Like Gandhi, who combined a conservative and a novel attitude, Mendelssohn was a traditional Jew as well as an enlightened man, who rejected dogmatic thinking (Meir 1997, pp. 148–49).

5 Gandhi took his celibacy vow in 1906, in the same year of the establishment of his *satyagraha* movement.

6 In his introduction to *Hind Swaraj*, Parel notes the great influence of Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta (1868–1901), a Gujarati Jain and diamond merchant, who helped Gandhi to overcome an intellectual crisis in 1894.(Gandhi 2009, p. lx)

7 On 23 September 1930 he wrote to Narandas Gandhi that there is an equality of the religions. (CWMG 44, p. 166; Jordens 1987, pp. 10–11).

8 Elsewhere, he compares the different religions to beautiful flowers from the same garden or to branches of the same majestic tree; *Harijan*, 30 January 1937.

9 Hick once said: "Had I been born in India, I would have been a follower of Gandhi". (Sugirtharajah 2012, p. 131, n. 5).

10 For the importance of translation as an act of peace, in which the target language is changed, transformed and renewed because the source language is conveyed in the target language, see (Rosenzweig n.d., pp. 154–55). Rosenzweig believed that there was only one language behind and in all the languages, there was only one world with many differences, which made communication possible.

11 Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's murderer, who came from the group Mahasabha that favored Hindu nationalism, referred to the Gita.

12 *Hind Swaraj*, p. 41.

13 Ed Noort draws my attention Gandhi's saying: "[. . .] I do think that in an age when people were unrestrained in their appetite for the enemy's blood, Moses restricted retaliation to equal measure and no more". M. K. Gandhi, "Notes,' *Young India*, 9 February 1922.

14 In *Harijan* on 17 December 1938, he wrote that Jews sought revenge against the Nazis by appealing for a war against Germany.

[15] The article was written on the 11th, after the *Reichskristallnacht* in the night of 9–10 November (Panter-Brick 2008, p. 110).

[16] Gideon Shimoni assumes that Gandhi did not read the letter at all. In a conversation with Louis Fischer, who reminded him of the letter, Gandhi did not remember it. (Shimoni 1977, p. 47; Fischer 1984, pp. 431–36; Buber and Magnes 1939).

[17] In a letter d.d. 1 July 1937 to Chaim Weizmann, Kallenbach doubted the wisdom of leaving the Jews "at the mercy of the goodwill of the Arabs". (Panter-Brick 2008, p. 96).

[18] The Indian Nation as Gandhi understood it as driven by morality of the ancient Indian civilization was above religions. Muslims and Hindus had the "same ancestors". (Gandhi 2009, pp. 48, 50–51) In his Quit India speech on 8 August 1942, he repeated that to be Indian is above all religious differences.

[19] Sic in a letter sent to Kallenbach from Segaon (Wardha), Sevagram Ashram, on 26 November 1938.

[20] Parel notes that, compared with the original Gujarati text of *Hind Swaraj*, the English translation is careful not to hurt Muslim sensibilities. Sentences were omitted in order not to cause discomfort to Muslims. (Gandhi 2009, p. 48, note 81)

[21] Following Shimoni, Chatterjee writes on "double standards" (Chatterjee 1992, p. 157). This view is contested by Nanda (Nanda 2002, p. 221), who writes that Gandhi had more hopes for *satyagraha* of Jews than of Arabs: his dilemma was that of a prophet, who is also a political leader: "he knew his idealism was the realism of tomorrow". (ibid.) For Nanda (2002, p. 220) Gandhi was neither pro-Arab or pro-Jew: he saw the problem from a moral viewpoint. See also Shohet's reaction in his newspaper *Jewish Advocate*, 2 December 1938. Avraham E. Shohet was an Indian Jew from the Bagdhadi community in Bombay and the head of the Bombay Zionist Association. In a letter d.d. 7 March 1939 he wrote that Gandhi viewed the Palestine question as a purely Muslim question. (Shimoni 1977, p. 49)

[22] (Hösle 1992) Answering a letter of Hayim Greenberg, Gandhi deemed that it is true that a Jewish Gandhi would be taken promptly to the guillotine, but that *ahimsa* remained efficacious in the long run. *Harijan*, 22 May 1939.

[23] See (Gandhi 2009, p. 79): " The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree".

[24] In the letter of 1940, Gandhi did not directly address the situation of the Jews.

[25] In a parallel way, he hated the "Western civilization" of the British, which was based upon power and lust, but he did not hate the British. To the "reader" in *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi 2009, p. 72), the "editor" says: "Your hatred against them [the British] ought to be transferred to their civilization". On the last page he writes: "I bear no enmity towards the English, but I do towards their civilization". (Id., p. 117).

[26] In his letter to Gandhi, Judah L. Magnes retorted that a war against something evil would not become a righteous war,—in Gandhi's wording, a justifiable war—, but a necessary one. (Buber and Magnes 1939, pp. 30–33).

[27] True, Gandhi proposed *satyagraha* also to the Czechs, the Abyssinians, the British and the Indians, but in the case of the Jews, the result was particularly catastrophic.

[28] Gandhi said to Fischer: "I told Silverman [Sidney Silverman, a British member of Parliament, visited Gandhi 8 March 1946] that the Jews have a good case in Palestine. If the Arabs have claim in Palestine, the Jews have prior claim". Fischer added in a later version "a prior claim, because they were the first". Simone Panter-Brick, however, deems that Gandhi,—as lawyer,—meant: "a claim which is self-evident in the absence of evidence to the contrary". That the Jews had "a good case" meant that there was sufficient evidence to support a legal position (Panter-Brick 2008, p. 147). However, against this interpretation *ad meliorem partem* pleads Gandhi's article entitled "Jews and Palestine", published in *Harijan* 21 July 1946, in which he complains that the Jews depended upon American money and upon the British arms "for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land".

[29] In a statement given to Kallenbach in July 1937, Central Zionist Archives, S. 25.3587.

[30] This is a question of M. Chatterjee, who further asks if the duty to save life was not a compelling duty for somebody as influenced by Jainism as Gandhi. (Chatterjee 1992, p. 116)

[31] Hardiman (2003, p. 59) notes that, for Gandhi, no human being was without some form of human conscience. He copes with the objection that in a cruel regime as Nazi Germany there was no chance for civil resistance (he coins the felicitous term "dialogical resistance") to succeed. He counters the argument by describing what happened in February 1943 in Berlin when non-Jewish spouses protested against the arrest of their Jewish husbands. In the end, the Nazis released their Jewish husbands. (id, pp. 60–61) But these Jewish men were detained for registration, not for deportation; for the Nazis, their status was different from that of other Jews. See (Meyer n.d., pp. 63–64).

[32] For Alan Race (Race 2001), theology and dialogue are twin tracks.

[33] Rabindranath Tagore translates *sat* as "Reality" (Tagore 1931, p. 85).

[34] In 1931, he reversed the formulation "God is Truth" to "Truth is God". In *Harijan*, 16 February 1934, pp. 4–5, he wrote: "He [God] and His Law are one. The Law is God. […] He is Truth, Love, Law and a million things that human ingenuity can name". (Chatterjee 1983, p. 103).

[35] This line of thinking is almost like that in the pious Jewish movement of Hasidism, which proclaims that only God really exists. The mystical idea that all is God is already present in the medieval *Tikkunei Zohar* 81b: "no place is empty of Him" (*lét 'atar panuy miné*). The discussion of the different Hasidic explanations of this utterance would exceed the scope of this footnote.

36   See also the saying of Gandhi in January 1928: "Our prayer for others ought never to be: 'God give them the light Thou hast given to me.' But 'give them all the light and truth they need for their higher development.'" (Chatterjee 1983, p. 129).

37   S. Lev, "Gabriel Isaac, Gandhi's Forgotten Lieutenant", p. 34 quotes Isaac who, "[l]ike Ritch, Polak and Kallenbach, [. . .] also emphasized that 'as a Jew, he could not rest while another people was being subjected to persecution of a type with which he was familiar'".

38   The Indian nationalist Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose sided with Japanese imperialism and Nazis, in order to overthrow the British in India. When he was elected President of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi intervened and prompted his demission. Kumaraswamy (2018, p. 160) notes that those, who quote Gandhi's disapproval of Jewish collaboration with imperialism, rarely comment on Bose's track record. Chatterjee (1992, p. 123) notes that in today's India, Bose is still seen by some people as a hero.

39   Buber referred to this biblical verse in his reaction to Gandhi's article on the Jews.

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Saving Nation, Faith and Family. Yoram Hazony's National Conservativism and Its Theo-Political Mission

Michaela Quast-Neulinger

Department of Systematic Theology, University of Innsbruck, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria;
Michaela.neulinger@uibk.ac.at

Abstract: Particularly pushed by the Edmund Burke Foundation and its president Yoram Hazony, the political movement of National Conservativism is largely based on specific concepts of nation, faith and family. Driven by the mission to overcome the violence of liberalism, identified with imperialism, national conservatives shape potent international and interreligious alliances for a religiously based system of independent national states. The article gives an outline of the main programmatic pillars of National Conservativism at the example of Yoram Hazony's The Virtue of Nationalism, one of the current ideological key works of the movement. It will show how its political framework is based on a binary frame of liberalism (identified with imperialism) versus nationalism, the latter supported as the way forward towards protecting freedom, faith and family. The analytic part will focus on the use of religious motifs and the construction of a specific kind of Judaeo-Christianity as a means of exclusivist theo-political nationalism. It will be shown that Hazony's nationalism is no way to overcome violence, but a political theory close to theo-political authoritarianism, based on abridged readings of Scripture, history and philosophy. It severely endangers the foundations of democracies, especially with regard to minority and women's rights, and delegitimizes liberal democracy and religious traditions positively contributing to it.

Keywords: nationalism; conservativism; political theology; Yoram Hazony; Christianity; Judaism; family; liberal democracy

1. Introduction

It is the beginning of February 2020, the first Coronavirus cases in Europe become known. At the Grand Hotel Plaza on Via del Corso in Rome, however, people are less concerned about the virus than about God, honor and fatherland. From 3–4 February, the who's who of "National Conservativism" met here under the title "God, Honor, Country: President Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II and the Freedom Nations". It was the 3rd international conference. Particularly pushed by the Edmund Burke Foundation and its president Yoram Hazony, the political movement of National Conservativism is largely based on specific concepts of nation, faith and family. Driven by the mission to overcome the violence of liberalism, identified with imperialism, National Conservatives shape growing international and interreligious alliances for a religiously based system of independent national states.

In the following, I will outline the basic framework of National Conservativism at the example of Yoram Hazony's *The Virtue of Nationalism* (Hazony 2018), which can be considered the current political vademecum of the movement. The focus will be on its binary construction of liberating nationalism and violent liberal imperialism as the ideological framework of its own political theory, developed on the pillars of nation, faith and family.

The analytical section will discuss how far Hazony shows a sense for current theo-political challenges, but also displays severe short-comings in its theological, philosophical, historical and political dimensions. The final part will discuss if Hazony's concept

of National Conservativism is a religiously based traditionalist, patriarchal ethnocentrism that holds strong tendencies towards anti-democratic authoritarianism, as suggested by Linden (2020). I will argue that National Conservativism does not overcome the definitely existing aspects of violence in some versions of liberalism, but religiously legitimates political authoritarianism at the expense of minority rights, individual freedom and particularly women's rights.

1.1. The Edmund Burke Foundation and National Conservativism

Before moving into the details of Hazony's political theory, we must have a short glimpse at the Edmund Burke Foundation and its enterprise of "National Conservativism". Founded in 2019, the Edmund Burke Foundation has one goal in particular, i.e., "strengthening the principles of national conservatism in Western and other democratic countries" (The Edmund Burke Foundation 2021). A conference series in London, Washington, Rome and Florida aims at bringing together academics, lobbyists and political leaders in a transatlantic network and developing further the theoretical and practical foundations of National Conservativism. They postulate nation, faith and family as the salvific means in an increasingly fragmented world, suffering from the nightmare of an "open society" and the danger of liberalism.

German political scientist Markus Linden analyzes National Conservativism in a warning voice. For Linden (2020, p. 87, transl. MQN), it "[. . .] is no longer just a vanguard, but has long since become part of the radical New Right. It appears staid and distinguished and thus fulfills a hinge function between the democratic and the undemocratic camps". National Conservativism appears as a "redemptive counterforce" to "destructive liberalism," which in particular destroys faith and the family as the nucleus of society. For Linden, these new conservatives show an "ethno-pluralist chauvinism without any positive relation to democracy" (Linden 2020, p. 87). They are ready for "blatant anti-pluralist and anti-democratic alliances" (Linden 2020, p. 94). What is striking here is the central role that religion—more explicitly, what is identified as "Judeo-Christian religion"—is ascribed by key actors for the formation and shaping of the political community.

The Edmund Burke Foundation serves as the main institutional actor within the more diverse network of National Conservativism as a political movement and intended coherent political theory. National Conservativism as an openly visible theo-political network is relatively new, but its paths have been prepared for years. Currently, it is one of the most active international and interreligious movements that tries to melt together religion and politics. What makes it particularly interesting is its ability to network and to be more and more present in public debates and the academia, especially in the English-speaking world.

Thus, one has to pay special attention to its leading figures. For Linden (2020) these are especially R.R. Reno, Viktor Orbán and Yoram Hazony. This list must not be considered exclusive, but it represents three important dimensions of National Conservativism, namely the Christian–traditionalist axis that has close connections to evangelicalism, the practical political dimension, and the intellectual strand that has intentions to turn National Conservativism into a more academic enterprise[1].

Russel R. Reno, a Catholic theologian and Chief Editor of First Things, is the hinge to Christian conservative groups, especially within the Evangelical sphere and Catholic traditionalism. His most recent monograph *"Return of the Strong Gods"* (Reno 2019) followed *"Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society"* (Reno 2016). Viktor Orbán, who has been Hungarian Prime Minister since 2010, is the inventor of "illiberal democracy" as the ideal of Christian democracy. He has been repeatedly celebrated within the Edmund Burke Foundation and its network as a prominent speaker and political leader who has already managed to implement National Conservativism into political reality[2]. However, in order to understand the intellectual dimension of the intersection of religion and politics within National Conservativism, one has to pay attention to Yoram Hazony, the president of the Edmund Burke Foundation, a lobbyist and scholar, and to his theoretical work, in particular

The Virtue of Nationalism (Hazony 2018), and in some aspects *The Jewish State* (Hazony 2000) as its forerunner.

1.2. Introducing Yoram Hazony

Born in 1964 in Rehovot (Israel), Yoram Hazony was raised in the USA, where he completed a BA in East Asian Studies (1986) and a PhD in Political Theory (1993). Already during his university studies in the U.S., Hazony advocated political conservativism with a nationalist impetus. After returning to Israel, Hazony established himself as an intellectual leader of religious nationalism in Israel. From 1991 until 1994, he served Benjamin Netanyahu as an adviser. After leaving politics, he founded the Shalem Center, now Shalem College, and currently serves as the President of the Herzl Institute, both located in Jerusalem, where he is married with nine children. In 2019, he founded the Edmund Burke Foundation, a public affairs institute that has the agenda of spreading National Conservativism in the academia and real politics (see Hazony 2021). Hazony declares himself "a Jewish nationalist, a Zionist, all my life" (Hazony 2018, p. 2). This becomes visible both in his engagement for the Shalem Center (now: Shalem College), and in his list of publications, including *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (Hazony 2000), *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Hazony 2012) and *God and Politics in Esther* (Hazony 2016).

Although previous publications such as *The Jewish State* (Hazony 2000) mainly focused on Israel as a distinct Jewish nation state and served as a severe critique of academia and political culture as "post-Zionism", *The Virtue of Nationalism* (Hazony 2018) broadens his argument for nationalism on an international and more theoretical level. It goes far beyond Israeli politics and offers the ideological program of a revised, religiously based conservativism, particularly dedicated at reshaping Western politics as a whole.

Hazony is not the exclusive representative of the more diverse political movement of National Conservativism, but as president of the Edmund Burke Foundation, international lobbyist and proclaimed theo-political scholar, he is an important hub in the network. Understanding Hazony helps to better understand the basic ideological framework of National Conservativism and its theo-political challenges, although not every actor within the movement will share the whole ideology as outlined by Hazony (2018). Thus, the following chapter introduces the severe critique brought forward against liberalism in general and Europe in particular, a critique shared by most actors of the movement[3]. Subsequently, Hazony's programmatic triadic answer based on nation, faith and family is presented and contextualized within his previous focus on Israeli politics.

2. "The Best Political Order": Nationalism Overcoming Liberal Imperialism

2.1. Nationalism versus (Liberal) Imperialism: The Binary Framework

At the core of Hazony's concept of nationalism, identified with national conservativism, is the idea of a homogenous nation. It is "a number of tribes with a common language or religion, and a past history of acting as a body for the common defense and other large-scale enterprises" (Hazony 2018, p. 18). The prototype of a nation is realized in biblical Israel as documented in the writings of the Hebrew Bible from Genesis to the Kings, i.e., the Tanakh. This Israel shares one language, one religion, one destiny in its fight against external enemies and the permanent danger of extinction. The biblical Israel is imagined as a unified community of fate, which predates any other nation. When the nation is united "under a single standing government, independent of all other governments", Hazony (2018, p. 100) speaks of a national state.

On a historical level, Hazony sees this model implemented in what he identifies as the Protestant world order of the 17th century after the Peace of Westphalia. This order is characterized by two basic rules that simultaneously frame nationalism until today as the "best political order–that is, to an anti-imperialist theory that seeks to establish a world of free and independent nations" (Hazony 2018, p. 6). The first one is the moral minimum rooted in a natural order that is itself traced back to the Bible and the Ten Commandments.

Any ruler is subject to the moral minimum that is required for any legitimate government (Hazony 2018, p. 24). Second, it is the right to national self-determination, particularly visible in an own constitution and an own church (sic) (Hazony 2018, p. 25).

Hazony also offers several concrete examples of historical and contemporary nationalisms, including Gandhi, Ben Gurion and Roosevelt as celebrated nationalists who fought for the freedom of their people (see Hazony 2018, p. 2)[4]. The Protestant order of independent, homogeneous national states, based on Biblical nationalism, is the great opponent of Catholic imperialism and its ally, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation[5]. However, even within the Catholic sphere there developed national churches, such as in France, which is appreciated by Hazony. Consequently, the Thirty Years' War was no religious war, but a war of independent national states against German and Spanish imperialists (Hazony 2018, pp. 22–23).

Nationalism has one great opponent, i.e., imperialism, which promises peace and prosperity in a united humanity under one political regime. Here, too, historical antecedents are noted. Biblical empires striving for universal world domination are Babylon and Egypt. As a later world-historical triumvirate, Hazony mentions the Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the British Empire, which would still serve today's imperialists as inspirations (see Hazony 2018, pp. 3–4). Especially since the 1990s, i.e., after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the E.U. and the U.S.A. have been developing as "twin-empire building projects" (Hazony 2018, p. 4).

Today's most dangerous imperialism is liberalism—notice already that Hazony does not differentiate between different varieties of liberal thought and practice—and its endeavor to establish a global regime of international institutions and to abolish the independent national regimes. In the following, two main ideological roots of these current empires are identified, namely John Locke and Immanuel Kant, resulting in the "liberal construction of the West" (Hazony 2018, p. 30).

Hazony offers a specific reading of Locke's philosophy, interpreting him as a rationalist who propagates social cohesion on a mere contractual basis, the mere consent of the individual. This, however, would completely lack an anthropological basis without which, however, no political theory can be legitimate. If the nation state, community, family and religious tradition are missing as core elements, then a political theory—such as Locke's—is a complete bloodless illusion. A family, the core of any political community, is not based on rational consent; similarly, a state cannot survive when it is merely the result of a consent (see Hazony 2018, pp. 30–32). National state, community, family and religious tradition make up the political institutions of the Jewish and Christian world (Hazony 2018, p. 33), while liberalists in the Lockean tradition reject these basic categories of human and political life.

Kant, in this context, is read as the anti-nationalist par excellence, especially if one follows his writing *Über den ewigen Frieden* (Kant 1796), which envisages an international-imperial state as the highest fulfilment of reason. Only in such a state can moral maturity come to its full expression. Now, after the catastrophe of World War II, the Kantian paradigm of supranational liberal rule gains power and replaces the nationalist paradigm.

Let us have a closer look at this paradigm shift of post-World-War II. The old nationalist paradigm as realized in England, the Netherlands or France, was based on the order of 1648 and supported a Europe in freedom and self-determination, against the imperialist claims of the Holy Roman Empire. Zionism and the State of Israel were the late results of this nationalist paradigm (Hazony 2018, pp. 196–97).

However, after 1945, Europe moved to a different paradigm, imperialist liberalism, which identified nationalism and independent national states as the root of violence, especially World War II and the horrors of Auschwitz. Kant's cosmopolitanism and the vision of a unified empire, ideally realized in the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation and a unified church, serve as inspirations for this liberal paradigm, which ought to guarantee peace and prosperity without borders (see Hazony 2018, pp. 197–99). In Hazony's perspective, national-socialists, Marxists and liberals have one and the same goal:

the destruction of the national state, today prominently pursued by Habermas, the "leading theoretician of a postnational Europe" (Hazony 2018, p. 201) and the European Union.

2.2. Europe—Kantian Hypocrites

In Hazony's view, the imperialist–liberal paradigm shift that began in 1945 and intensified in 1989 has left Europe increasingly trapped in the Kantian paradigm, which provides Europe, identified with "the West" and "liberalism", with the normative glasses by which other states are judged—or condemned. Here Hazony imagines a Kantian three-step of barbarism-nation state-cosmopolitanism, with the help of which liberal Europe categorizes the rest of the world.[6]

The primary target of this liberal European process of judgment is Israel, which is measured against the yardstick of Kantian cosmopolitanism. In Hazony's imagination of liberal Europeans, these judge "Israel is Auschwitz", because the survivors of the Nazi horrors follow the seemingly violent nationalism of their persecutors and found a national state themselves, they take "the path of Hitler" (Hazony 2018, p. 206). If you found a national state after 1945, there is something wrong, especially when you are mostly migrants from Europe and should actually know about the horrors of nationalism. In this regard, contemporary European liberals judge Israel as having left the path of enlightenment and moral maturity, while its Muslim neighbors are granted compassion.[7] They are similar to little children caught on a lower civilizational level. They still need to overcome barbarianism and move towards the national state until cosmopolitanism is an option, while Israel would actually be capable for cosmopolitanism, but deliberately chooses nationalism (see Hazony 2018, pp. 209–13).

However, it is not only Israel that is a victim of European liberal hypocrisy, but also South Africa during the Apartheid regime, and Serbia in the 1990s, that suffered from delegitimizing liberal campaigns (see Hazony 2018, pp. 214, 217–18). Today, primarily the U.S.A., the U.K. and Eastern European countries striving for national sovereignty against the European Union are under liberal scrutiny. The U.S. rejects international institutions and organizations, the U.K., Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are judged as fascists or even Nazis because of their striving for national independence, the core dogma of National Conservatives (see Hazony 2018, pp. 216–17). However, for Hazony this is only the expression of a deep European liberal hypocrisy; some countries need to follow higher standards than others, especially Muslim majority countries. However, what is the actual problem of liberal Europeans? It is the "Kantian renunciation of a national right to independent judgment and action, especially with regard to the use of force" (Hazony 2018, p. 218). This is precisely what liberalism wants to deny national states of—independence, freedom, and the use of force to implement these.

2.3. A First Sum: Framing a Polarized World

Building on a biblically founded distinction into empire (Babylon and Egypt) and nation (Israel), Hazony outlines a continuing duel between imperialism and nationalism. At the beginning of modern times, biblical nationalism becomes what he calls the Protestant order, which gains its counterpart in the Enlightenment in the form of the theories of John Locke and Immanuel Kant.

After the Second World War, there is a paradigm shift in Europe. Nationalism in the form of the Protestant nation-state order is held responsible for the atrocities of Auschwitz. Liberalism as a hegemonic world order is supposed to bring peace and prosperity. Systems that continue to be nation-state oriented—such as the newly founded State of Israel, Brexit-U.K., Orbán's Hungary or PIS-Poland—are discredited by liberal actors and condemned as fascists, yet from Hazony's perspective they are merely the victims of liberal imperialism, especially the European Union and liberals such as Habermas.

Thus, we have sketched the framework—but where lies the ideological core of the political theory that Hazony develops as the basis of National Conservativism? This can be summarized into a triad: nation, faith and family—the last one being the foundational pillar.

3. Nation, Faith and Family: The Programmatic Triad

3.1. No Political Theory without the Hebrew Bible

Hazony's understanding of political theory is deeply rooted in religious thought. It distinguishes two levels of political philosophy (Hazony 2018, pp. 58–60). Philosophy of Government presupposes the state as a self-evident anthropological constant, but discusses how it should actually look, and which form of government would be the best. Philosophy of Political Order, in contrast, is interested in deeper anthropological questions and wants to know how people become organized in the first place. How and why do individuals join, and are there alternatives to the state as a form of socio-political organization?

For Hazony, there can be no reflection on the appropriate form of government without a prior examination of the foundations of human order, i.e., no Philosophy of Government without Philosophy of the Political Order. However, where do the foundations of this Philosophy of the Political Order come from? It is the Hebrew Bible as an unequivocal political book, which in the end demands nationalism.

Already in 2006, Hazony states in an essay that the Hebrew Bible, especially in its "central historical narrative" from Genesis to the Books of Kings, offers a self-contained political theory: "[. . .] the central historical narrative of the Hebrew Bible (beginning in Genesis and ending with the book of Kings) was composed with an eye to advancing a consistent political theory. The biblical narrative issues biting criticism of both the imperial state familiar to the ancient Near East; and of its opposite, political anarchy. In place of these, the Bible advocates a new and intermediate form of political association: the unification of all Israel under a limited state, to be ruled by an Israelite 'whose heart is not lifted above his brothers.'" (Hazony 2006, p. 137).

Martin Yaffe (2021, p. 11) perfectly sums up: "Hazony looks to the Hebrew Bible as a guiding precedent for modern (including Israeli) nationalism." What is the biblical author's goal in this regard? It is "to provide an account of why the Israelite state rose and why it declined". (Hazony 2006, p. 139). For Hazony, the Hebrew Bible in its narrative core provides the model for anti-imperialist nationalism. It offers the foundations of natural law, without which any form of human coexistence is lost. Yaffe (2021, p. 12) summarizes: "Hazony acknowledges as much by asserting that the Bible teaches 'natural law' or 'laws of nature' (he elides the two) as its 'political philosophy'". This law is the background for any legitimate order, starting with the family and resulting in the nation.

3.2. Family

Framing "family" as the basic political unit is deeply rooted in political philosophy. In particular, Aristotle outlined the parallel structure between the oikos (house) and the polis (city). However, one has to be aware that the ancient concept of a "house", both in Greek political philosophy and the Hebrew Scripture, was far beyond the modern idea of a nuclear family. Klauck (2020, pp. 379–82) highlights the focus of ancient political philosophy on the authoritarian role of the head of the house (or Roman *pater familias*) and the increasing importance of the house within Jewish life as the basic unit of socio-religious life, particularly in times of hardship and oppression.

Hazony (2018, p. 66) takes up the idea of the family as the basic socio-political unit, defining it as the "strongest and most resilient of all small institutions known to human politics", but gives it a specific turn. Family is the nuclear family, structured analogously to a military unit led by a junior officer or sergeant. It is a strictly patriarchal organization where the heads of the family form a clan, whose heads form a tribe, while the heads of the tribe form the nation. The cohesion of each level is shaped by a common fight against external dangers, shared suffering and shared success. Families are "little fortresses to shelter its own special inheritance, its own treasured culture, in a garden in which it can flourish unmolested". (Hazony 2018, p. 75)[8]

The common struggle creates "mutual loyalty", the strongest political force (see Hazony 2018, pp. 66, 69). This is a recurring key term in Hazony's work (see Yaffe 2021,

p. 11), but also for National Conservativism in general. Loyalty has to be grown and maintained at each level, starting from the family [9].

Taking Hazony's theory seriously, there can be no functioning political community without the hierarchically structured nuclear family. This family is bound by absolute mutual loyalty, rooted in a common fight against external enemies. As I shall point out later, the focus on antagonism as the origin of the political clearly draws inspiration from Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, but this affinity with the contested "father of political theology" is not openly visible [10]. The basic task is to strengthen and protect the collective, namely "health and prosperity", of the family, on three levels (Hazony 2018, p. 71). First of all, the physical and material well-being of the family has to be ensured. This means, above all, the bearing and nursing of children. Family means reproduction. Second, the internal integrity of the family has to be guaranteed, i.e., the cohesion of the family based on respect for its hierarchical structures (age and status) and harmonious conflict resolution. Finally, the cultural heritage must be transmitted to the next generation. Similar to a fractal hierarchy, each following unit—clan, tribe and nation—has to care for its well-being, integrity and the transmission of heritage.

3.3. Faith and Public Religion

Hazony's National Conservativism is built strictly on a specific reading of the Hebrew Bible as a political book; to be more precise, as a programmatic guide to nationalism. There can be no legitimate political theory without an anthropological foundation, which, according to Hazony, only exists within the Hebrew Bible. This has three concrete consequences. First, National Conservativism as an anthropologically based and thus legitimate political theory demands for independent national states on the basis of a uniform language, religion and history. Second, it distances itself from the imperial, universalist projects of Babylon, Egypt and their ideological successors. Third, the alternative national states must be organized according to the schematic fractal hierarchy of family, clan, tribe and nation.

Hazony does not only regard his theory as rooted in the Hebrew Bible, but also makes extensive use of the tradition of public religion, which is strongly represented in Anglo-American thought and which he considers essential for "Anglo-American Conservativism", a school of thought he wants to revive as "National Conservativism" (Hazony 2018, pp. 53–54; for a detailed discussion of National Conservativsm as legitimate realization of Anglo-American Conservativism see Haivry and Hazony 2017). It includes a "public religion based on the Bible" (ibid., p. 54), which concretely results in three convictions. First, the biblical God and religious practice are indispensable for justice and public morality. Second, other faiths may be tolerated as long as their practitioners are no danger for the integrity and well-being of the nation. Third, the Bible is the basis for national independence, justice and public morality.

Hazony recalls the old tradition of public religion in the U.S., but he gives his own interpretation of what is included in a legitimate public religion. Whereas for public religion in the sense of Robert Bellah's "American Civil Religion" the institutional separation of state and religion (church) is essential (see Bellah 1967), Hazony wants to abolish it. For him, the institutional separation of state and religion is a mere product of post-WW-II liberalism. "The liberal doctrine requiring a 'wall of separation between church and state' at all levels of government is, as has been said, a product of the post-World War II period, and not an inherent feature of American political tradition" (Hazony 2019).

The wall destroys the national state, the traditional family and (Judaeo-Christian) religion, and thus has to be torn down: "But liberal principles provide no resources for maintaining institutions such as the national state, the family, and Christian or Jewish religion. Having displaced the older biblical worldview that had given these institutions life, liberalism has, in the course of a few generations, severely damaged all of them. The current political reality of disintegrating national states, ruined families, and eviscerated religious traditions is the direct consequence of the embrace of liberal dogma as a kind of universal salvation creed throughout much of the West." (Hazony 2019).

Reflecting on the role of faith and religion in the political project of National Conservativism, we can observe that both are reduced to a specific kind of Judaeo-Christianism. It distances itself first of all from secularism and Islam in particular, but also draws a clear line to schools of thought and religious practices within the Jewish-Christian sphere that are identified as "liberal" or "progressive" and thus illegitimate interpretations of the respective faith tradition. Reflecting on the use of Scripture, we see an almost classical "quarry exegesis" where texts which could possibly contradict the national-conservative project are excluded. One might think of Jotam's fable (Judges 9: 8–15) or other recurring warnings against earthly kings.

For Hazony and his supporters, the institutional separation of state and church (religion) endangers the programmatic foundations of a functioning human society—namely, national state, traditional family and religion. There can be no legitimate political theory, no legitimate state without his reading of the (Hebrew) Bible. What Hazony suggests is, however, no public religion in the sense of an integrative framework which is open for different interpretations of what the Divine and human responsibility in relation to the world and the transcendent could mean. For him, a legitimate public religion is an institutionalized religion, deeply entangled with a homogeneous concept of the nation and based on a hierarchical account of the political community, itself rooted in a patriarchal traditional family. Freedom and conflictive-productive discourse are only possible insofar as the non-negotiable institutions of the Judaeo-Christian collective are not put into question.

3.4. Nation, National State and Nationalism

Already at the beginning of this section, we have seen that Hazony's idea of a nation is based on a common language or religion and common history of fighting an external enemy, a community of fate in a hostile world. If an independent state wants to really work well, it necessitates "the overwhelming dominance of a single nationality within a given state" (Hazony 2018, p. 159). There is one nationality within the state which consequently is described as a "national state", not a nation state (Hazony (2018, p. 109ff). For him, only this homogenous state respects the diverse loyalties of the individual within its family, clan and tribe (cf. Yaffe 2021, p. 10).

However, why is nationalism superior to any other political paradigm, especially liberalism? Hazony (2018, p. 10) points to several advantages. First, only nationalism guarantees collective self-determination and protects from wars of conquest. In contrast, independent national states based on faith and family will peacefully compete for their best development. They will tolerate different ways of life and the loyalties within every single social level from family to clan, tribe and nation, and this will guarantee for independent institutions and individual freedom. Not reason or contract, but loyalty within the collective will lead to peace and prosperity. However, in the same breath, Hazony is clear that not every stateless people can have its independent national state. One might ask which people Hazony is thinking about, but he does not give a word about it.

What is labelled as a sovereign political community actually transpires to be a Judaeo-Christian national state (not: nation-state) based on the greatest possible homogeneity of ethnicity and religion. Its basis is mutual loyalty within the collective, first and foremost fostered in the traditional family. The individual is subject to the given order, prescribed by a nationalist, hierarchical and patriarchal reading of chosen texts of the Hebrew Bible. Minorities may be tolerated, but Hazony does not speak about civil rights or any kind of equal participation in the political process, but instead of tolerance. This raises severe questions. Is Hazony's National Conservativism still within the sphere of democracy, especially with regard to the legal position of minorities and their right to equal participation in the process of political decision-making? Recently, Müller (2021) has pointed to the essential value of equality within the framework of democracy. Special attention also has to be paid to the role assigned to women and men. It is never outlined directly, but it nevertheless becomes very clear that only a male human being can be the head of the family, clan, tribe

or nation. Could a queen be head of the state, or just a "king (or president)" (Hazony 2019)? Is the capacity to lead and guide a privilege of men?

The nation and consequently the idea of a national state is presented as a quasi-divine institution and the privileged path to freedom, peace and plurality. However, freedom is first of all freedom of the collective; the individual has to arrange its freedom within the requested mutual loyalty of the community. Although Hazony polemicizes against liberal multiculturalism, he presents nationalism as the way to plurality in the sense of separated, homogenous communities. Plurality is identified using particularity and has to be protected from external blurring.

3.5. Tracing the Context: The Jewish State (Hazony 2000)

The nationalism presented by Hazony (2018) is not without forerunners in his own written work. Already in 2000, then still president of Jerusalem's Shalem Center, Hazony published *The Jewish State*, a harsh critique of the "Post-Jewish" character of Israel (Hazony 2000, p. xix), fostered by Israeli intellectuals, political and mainstream culture and their "Post-Zionism" (ibid., p. xxvi). Especially the Hebrew University, Martin Buber and his allies are depicted as the origins of Jewish intellectual opposition to a Jewish nation-state.

In several aspects, *The Virtue of Nationalism* is an attempt to universalize concepts already presented in *The Jewish State* and turn Zionism—in Hazony's version—into the prototype of National Conservativism. This is particularly visible in four points. First, Hazony now universalizes the unity of religion, nation and state. When he criticizes Israeli intellectuals for their call to separate religion and state, Jewish nationality and state (Hazony 2000, p. xxv), he now brings forward a very similar critique against liberalism and the concept of a secular nation state in general (cf. above 3.3.).

Second, already in 2000 Hazony rejects the concept of a state of citizens. Also in his recent work, citizenship as a guarantee of equality among people of differing (religious, ethnic etc.) backgrounds has no positive value.

However, probably most striking are two more characteristics. These are the focus on political and military force as the basis for a strong collective and the rejection of humanism and dialogue as fostered by Martin Buber and other intellectuals in the tradition of humanism and non-violence. Hazony (2000, p. 6ff) accuses Buber and his students of rejecting Israel as an illegitimate Jewish State longing for power. In the 1990s, it is particularly historian Moshe Zimmermann (pp. 10–11) that serves Hazony as a prolific representative of academic anti-Zionism in Israel. In particular, authors such as David Grossmann and Aharon Appelfeld are attacked for advocating a concept of strength through the experience of weakness (p. 28). As the Jewish State of Israel can only survive with political and military force, the same is true for any other legitimate state. Survival and sovereignty can never result from vulnerability and actually experienced pain. Hazony (2000) criticizes the rejection of force and military power in Israel's intellectual culture of the 1990s, and in (2018) he expands this critique to liberalism in general.

Hazony (2000, p. xxviii) accuses Buber of rejecting Zionism as morally illegitimate, whereas in (2018) he broadens this argument against liberals in general who reject nationalism as morally illegitimate and the origin of violence. Martin Buber, a devoted religious humanist who intended to overcome the vicious circles of violence, is depicted as the crucial internal enemy of the State of Israel. "It seems that for Buber, no horror was greater than the reality of Jewish power", Hazony (2000, p. 283) summarizes Buber's critique of the Eichmann process and the final death penalty. Although for Buber, violence could not be the answer to violence, Hazony focuses on the necessity of political and military force, including violence, in order to guarantee the sovereignty of the people—be it the Jewish people or any other homogeneous nation, as then outlined in *The Virtue of Nationalism*.

4. Analysis: On the Way to Religiously Based Authoritarianism

4.1. The Sense for Current Hot Issues

National Conservativism as theoretically outlined by Yoram Hazony raises serious questions on a theological, philosophical, historical and political level. However, it also shows a sincere sense for current hot issues within theo-political conflicts. It is no secret anymore that liberal democracies are in crisis, both on a theoretical and a practical level (see i.a., Crouch 2005; Manow 2020; Müller 2021). Although one might argue that "being in crisis" is an inherent feature of a working, developing deliberative democracy, the recent rise of populist actors, especially from the political right, but not exclusively, using more or less democratic instruments to undermine the basic principles of democracy and consciously instrumentalizing religious sentiments, has introduced a new level of escalation (see Applebaum 2020). The Peace of Westphalia (1648) has shaped Western understandings of the relation between state, nation and religion, but this relation has to be reflected anew, especially after 1989 and after 9/11[11].

In particular, the rise of social pluralism and migration have contributed to a rising desire for homogeneity. What is particularly interesting, however, is the specific attention Hazony and his allies pay to the family, or what is imagined as the "traditional family"; its endangerment and its necessity for any functioning legitimate political community. Gender and family orders have been shattered for 200 years, when the secular nation state and religious communities started fighting about the "legitimate" authority over family, reproduction, gender roles and thus crucial aspects of the future of a community (cf. Scott 2018).

Hazony and National Conservativism have a sense for the growing fragmentation of our societies, which long for a new solidarity. Their diagnosis has some credibility, but the suggested cure has to be regarded with great caution. There is the increasing danger of serious scenarios of religiously motivated violence, where one will again ask the question: Is religion the source of violence or is it instrumentalized by political actors for their specific power interests? Who serves whom and what can religion contribute to overcome the dead-end of violence, especially to the marginalized?

In the following, I will outline four dimensions of critique, which need to be deepened in further studies on Hazony, the Edmund Burke Foundation and the national conservativist movement and the future of nation, state and religion. After shortly introducing some philosophical and historical issues, I will focus on theological and political concerns. The article will conclude with a reflection on the possible theo-political consequences of National Conservativism, especially the danger of re-introducing a new dimension of religiously legitimated exclusivism, violence and authoritarianism.

4.2. Philosophical Concerns

There have already been some discussions about Hazony's interpretation of Locke as a strict rationalist and Kant as imperialist cosmopolitan and his use of Burke and other classical conservatives to construct National Conservativism (cf. in particular Yaffe 2021; Schaefer 2021). Especially with regard to Burke, one might bear in mind Onora O'Neill's (2014) warning that there is no consistent theory in Burke. He is used for many sides. This is particularly true for the human rights discourse in theory and practice. Applebaum (2020, p. 20) warns about the abuse of Burke for projects of the new right in Europe. These projects call themselves conservative, but have actually "broken with the old-fashioned, Burkean small-c conservatism that is suspicious of rapid change in all its forms", they would be "more Bolshevik than Burkean" in the sense of destroying existing political structures.

Within the project of National Conservativism, human rights are depicted as an imperialist strategy of liberalism, deeply connected to a Kantian cosmopolitan regime that destroys the sovereignty of national states. There is some legitimate concern in the secular-liberal abuse of human rights for imperialist projects of the West, as has been analyzed by postcolonial critics such as Talal Asad (2003). Liberalism and its too often hypocrit-

ical stance towards human rights need to be put under scrutiny. However, in the case of Hazony's concept of National Conservativism, human rights per se are delegitimized as a violent instrument of liberalism, destroying the sovereignty of closed communities. The arguments brought forward very much resemble Carl Schmitt's political theology without quoting the ideological father. For Schmitt (1991, esp. pp. 54–56), the concept of humanity excludes enmity and thus destroys the political. For both, "humanity" is nothing but an ideological instrument of imperialism without any political legitimacy. There is no humanity, only its liberal delusion. "Whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat" (Schmitt 1991, p. 55, transl. MQN), thus reads his famous dictum. For both Schmitt and Hazony, there is no political legitimacy of humanity and human rights, respectively. References to a universal humanity are declared to be imperialist, violent and in contradiction to the concept of the political, i.e., the fight of a homogenous collective against an exterior enemy.

4.3. Historical Misreadings

Hazony idealizes a Protestant post-1648 state order with homogenous national states that guarantee for peace and prosperity. This has to be put into question. Were the emerging states really religiously and ethnically homogenous and what was the prize for achieving this purported homogeneity? The process was accompanied by severe violence against the identified religious others, ranging from forced conversion to migration or even death. Many religiously persecuted communities found a new home in the Americas, where they had to arrange with practical pluralism and contributed to the emergence of the concept of an inclusive civil religion, while pushing the non-establishment of any institutional religion. The intention was to bring together diverse religious sentiments and foster an encompassing patriotism. Consequently, the de-institutionalization of religion became a key concept for the idea of a secular state that fosters religious pluralism and public religion. Currently, intellectuals such as Martha Nussbaum (2013) recall a religiously inspired, inclusive patriotism against the shortcomings of a too rationalist liberal tradition and the danger of exclusivist populism. Moreover, Pope Francis (2020) supports an inclusive, solidary patriotism that has to be in accordance with integral humanism and a global engagement for human rights, especially for the most vulnerable.

It is important to remember that even after 1648 and the famous "cuius region, eius religio", there were rarely any homogenous states in Europe. Especially the French Revolution was accompanied by massive waves of terror against particular communities within the territory, especially in the Vendée. Indeed, how homogenous was Europe before the atrocities and genocides of World War I and II?

However, according to Hazony, German National Socialism was not nationalist, but due to its war of conquest, was anti-nationalist and thus imperialist, such as liberalism, the European Union and Jürgen Habermas (Hazony 2018, p. 201). In this context, Hazony draws highly simplistic and dangerous comparisons, especially when he suggests that Europe depicts and thus delegitimizes the State of Israel as the continuation of "Auschwitz" (see above and Hazony 2018, p. 206). For Hazony, nationalism is the way to peace and non-violence, but "is it possible to sever nationalism from the tendencies to xenophobia and even aggressive imperialism as Hazony wishes to do?" (Schaefer 2021, p. 16). He completely ignores the problematic historical and contemporary use of the term "nationalism" and the entanglement of actual aggressive imperialism and nationalism: "On what ground can one distinguish the apparent imperial designs of contemporary Russia and China from purely 'nationalistic' policies, considering that each of those regimes relies heavily on appeals to nationalism?" (Schaefer 2021, p. 15)

4.4. Theological Concerns

Bearing in mind the conflictive and too often violent history of Jewish-Christian relations, one has to be careful as a Christian theologian to point to possible shortcomings of a distinct Jewish approach to theo-politics. There has been a long history of Christian

replacement theology towards Judaism, which in the case of the Catholic Church only started to be overcome in the course of the Second Vatican Council and Nostra Aetate in particular. Yoram Hazony speaks as a Jewish religious political theorist, but intends to establish a sound theoretical basis for National Conservativism, bringing together Jewish and Christian religious nationalists. Thus, it is essential to point to several critical issues from a Christian theological perspective[12].

National Conservativism intends to establish a Jewish–Christian axis against the imperialist shortcomings of liberalism it identifies. For Hazony as lead-theorist, only the Hebrew Bible, i.e., the Tanakh, can offer a legitimate anthropological basis for political theory. From a Christian theological point of view, this is difficult in several aspects. First of all, for Christians the canon of Scripture encompasses more books than the Tanakh. Both the books of the First and the Second (or: Old and New) Testament are canonical (although the exact number of books and some verses are disputed in between the different denominations). Hazony reads the Hebrew Bible as a political vademecum for nationalism and projects the idea of a nationalist, ethnically and religiously homogenous state, which is deeply enwoven with the nationalist romanticism of the 19th century, back into an imagined historical community. In many regards, this nationalist reading of the Bible is the result of a "choose and pick" exegesis, connected to the wish of religiously legitimating a political idea, i.e., exclusivist nationalism, dating back to recent modernity. One must ask, what actually happens to those texts that are seriously critical of immanent political rule, i.a., the parable of the bramble (Judges 9: 9–15). Or the continuous tension between Jesus' understanding of power, community and solidarity and those in his direct environment? (Neulinger 2018)

A serious problem within Hazony's theory is the depiction of those religious traditions that either do not fit into the concept of one religion—one nation, one state—or are not identified as "Judaeo-Christian", Islam in particular. In case of the Catholic Church, a line is drawn between imperialist-papalist Catholicism, which intends to go beyond borders, and projects of establishing Catholic national churches, such as French Gallicanism. The concept of a "catholic" church in its literal sense (on the whole, general oruniversal) strictly contradicts the idea of particular communities. However, in Hazony's National Conservativism, legitimate religion is identified with traditionalist, hierarchical and patriarchal Judaism and Christianity within clear territorial borders. Religious communities, such as families, are little fortresses next to each other, but without any integrating figure such as a "pontifex maximus", one of the traditional titles of the Roman bishop. Thus, particularly with regard to Catholicism and papacy, the ambiguity and ambivalence of National Conservativism becomes visible. We might point to the use of John Paul II as a symbolic figure, e.g., in the Rome Conference's title. On the one hand, specific aspects of a traditionalist and anti-communist Catholicism as fostered by Pope John Paul II are celebrated. The focus on the traditional reproductive family, the protection of traditional family values and the support of sovereign nation states against totalitarian ideologies and their regimes were of deep concern for John Paul II[13]. On the other hand, his support for international diplomacy, human rights and interreligious dialogue, especially with regard to Islam, clearly contradict the basics of Hazony's conservativism[14].

National Conservativism distinguishes between legitimate and non-legitimate interpretations of Jewish and Christian faith. The leading criterion is whether the respective interpretation supports the political pathway of National Conservativism or not. Other versions, especially those which question the identification of nation, state and religion and the traditional, patriarchally structured family, are delegitimized and rejected as violent, liberal imperialists. This has already been visible in Hazony (2000), where liberal or leftist Judaism is delegitimized as anti-Zionist and thus, for Hazony, anti-Jewish. Similarly, now, this split into legitimate and illegitimate religion and its political expression is introduced into Christianity and the Catholic Church. Hazony does not invent this Christian polarization, but it can easily accommodate with the already existing inner-Catholic polemics between "true" and "false" Catholics, particularly strong in North American Catholicism[15].

4.5. Political Dangers in Practice

Hazony is a binary thinker who presents the reader and political actor with monolithic ideological blocks. The construction of ideological enemies both on a religious and political level especially serves the goal to bring out one's own polarizing binary Weltanschauung. However, neither religious nor political traditions are monolithic buildings without any historical and social context. There are different schools and practices of liberalisms. These also necessitate critique, but there is no monolithic violent liberalism as such [16]. One highly dangerous result of rejecting liberalism as such is the nearly complete neglect of the individual and their rights within and against the collective. Hazony's National Conservativism presents us a divinely instituted, hierarchical and gendered structure of the political community. The individual only exists within the framework of the collective, identified with the majority. This is particularly dangerous for women's rights and minority rights, which have been in the center of the struggle for liberal democracies throughout decades.

5. Reflecting the Theo-Political Consequences

Let us finally reflect some theo-political consequences of National Conservativism as presented by Yoram Hazony. This school of thought and its related international movement are characterized by an entanglement of political and religious actors, which intend to delegitimize liberal democracy, human rights, international cooperation and pluralism in the name of a religiously based political doctrine. It reads the Hebrew Bible as a nationalist vademecum and history as a conflict between empires and national states, the former identified with any Weltanschauung showing universalist tendencies, and a monolithic liberalism in particular.

National Conservativism and Hazony in particular is a prominent example for the significance of debates around sex, gender and family in contemporary theo-political conflicts. Scott (2018) underlines the focus of political conflicts between the secular and the religious on this range of topics from the early 19th century onwards. Already during that era, the conflict line was not in between the secular and the religious, but in between progressive and traditionalist actors within the respective communities and Weltanschauungen. Similarly, this is true for contemporary theo-political conflicts. National Conservativism is not the single representative of a religiously motivated political ideology, but unites traditionalist Jewish and Christian, sometimes even secular, intellectuals against those who are identified as violent imperialists. The focus on the traditional, patriarchal family serves as an essential focal point for the movement.

Within National Conservativism, religion is not an open, inclusive concept, which could serve as an integrating factor for a pluralist society, as suggested by Bellah's civil religion, but the exclusivist marker of the homogenous community called "nation". Calling for the end of institutional separation between politics and religion, the central pillar of a secular-liberal democracy, we observe the return of an institutionalized state religion.

However, who serves whom in this doctrine? Do religious actors use the idea of National Conservativism in order to implement their religious worldview on a political level or do political actors use religious motives and invoke "Judaeo-Christianity" as a bulwark for protecting their power, without any sincere interest in faith?

For the Edmund Burke Foundation, whose founder and president is Hazony, National Conservativism is not a mere academic enterprise. It aims at bringing together political theory and political activism, particularly supporting figures such as Victor Orbán, who famously coined the term "illiberal democracy" (for a first impression see Vormann and Weinman 2020; the most comprehensive and systematic overview is currently given by Sajó et al. 2021)[17]. "Illiberal democracy" is the practical implementation of National Conservativism, and National Conservativism is the intellectualized version of "illiberal democracy". As Orbán (2018) points out in a speech at Bálványos Summer Open University, Christian democracy and liberal democracy are contradictions; Christian democracy can only be "illiberal democracy" based on a prioritization of "Christian culture", the rejection of immigration and the focus on the "Christian family model" of father, mother, child.

Applebaum (2020, part. pp. 15–17) critically discusses the role of intellectuals in Europe, supporting the rise of contemporary authoritarian politics, and calls them "clercs", a term coined by Julien Benda in the 1920s. Hazony and his co-fighters within the Edmund Burke Foundation can be summarized in this category. It is a group of Jewish, Christian and a few secular intellectuals who intend to offer a theologically and philosophically justified version of what they call "conservativism", but what is actually in many aspects an anti-democratic, authoritarian enterprise, which silently delegitimizes both liberal democracy as such and religion as a productive, peace-building political force within democratic processes.

National Conservativism does not overcome the definitely existing aspects of violence in some versions of liberalism, but religiously legitimates political authoritarianism at the expense of minority rights, individual freedom and particularly women's rights; women who are widely reduced to reproductive units beyond political power. Nevertheless, National Conservativism and his key thinker Hazony call for a reflection on the relation between nation, state and religion. Are there any inclusive, non-violent forms of nationalism, overcoming religious exclusivism? Palaver (2021), following Henri Bergson, has already suggested the helpful distinction between static and dynamic religions, and supports an open patriotism. This is an important task that both theology and political theory need to commence in an age of rising populism and religiously inspired political extremism. Interestingly, Palaver points to Hans Kohn's distinction between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism and his warnings of abusing essential Jewish concepts such as "chosen people" for a fierce nationalism, which is not tempered anymore by ethics and universalism. The same Buber-student Hans Kohn is criticized by Hazony (2000, pp. 212, 249) as representative of Jewish anti-Zionism.

National Conservativism is one voice within the rising front of theo-political networks fostering authoritarianism. They are attractive, because they touch hot issues within our current crises, i.a., the growth of pluralism, rising migration, the decline of traditional institutional religions, the shattering of established gender roles and family structures, and the loss of trust in liberal democracy. Theologians and political theorists are called to pay attention to the abyss that is re-opened again by National Conservativism and its fore-thinker Hazony. On a theoretical level, academia needs to reflect sincerely what a "good nationalism" in accordance with democracy could look like, especially with regard to the ever-present plurality in political communities and the quest for human flourishing in equality and freedom. Special attention has to be given to the role of religion and religious actors within this process. What is the persistent political contribution of religious actors in a fragmented world, resisting the seduction of identifying with one political doctrine? With exclusivist, ethnocentric schools showing anti-democratic, authoritarian sympathies?

Hazony's National Conservativism displays many serious problems of the contemporary entanglements of politics and religion, but can hardly serve as a solution. In contrast, as pointed out, in addition to its highly problematic (mis-)readings of religion, history and philosophy, it will lead to deeper struggles, theo-politically fostering new waves of exclusion and violence. Especially with regard to minority rights, women's rights and the role given to equality as an essential principle of democracy, National Conservativism raises serious questions whether it is still compatible with the basic outlines of a democratic political system.

Notes

[1] For the rise of traditionalism in the political and the religious sphere with particular regard to Eastern Europe, the U.S., Russian Orthodoxy and (Catholic) Evangelicalism, see i.a., Stoeckl and Uzlaner (2020).

[2] For the intensive relations between the American Political Right and Victor Orbán in most recent times, see Zerofsky (2021). Zerofsky critically engages with Rod Dreher, a traditionalist converted Orthodox writer and activist, widely read in the U.S. and

increasingly spreading his networks in Europe too. Dreher and the Danube Institute, which hosted him in Budapest, are closely affiliated with the Edmund Burke Foundation and National Conservativism. The Danube Institute was one of the sponsors of the 2020 National Conservativism Conference in Rome. Dreher himself is a regularly invited speaker at National Conservativism Conferences (as is Orbán), e.g., in Florida 2021, where he spoke on "What Conservatives Must Learn from Orbán's Hungary" (Dreher 2021).

[3] A prominent scholarly critique within the network of National Conservativism is offered by Deneen (2018), who also spoke at the 2021 conference in Florida (see Deneen 2021).

[4] Already these examples of nationalists show the readiness to pick and choose and reinterpret historical figures for one's own purposes. Roosevelt fought against fascist totalitarianism and their aggressiveness towards indendent nation states, but at the same time he supported international cooperation and human rights. For Gandhi's politics of non-violence and his political stance, see the multiple contributions in this Special Issue.

[5] For a recent discussion of the relation between nation and Catholic Church with particular regard to the German Empire and current developments, see Hoeres (2021).

[6] Following Haivry and Hazony (2017), 1989 caused a deeper shift than 1945. While till 1989, there was a common enemy—communism—from then on, there could no longer be an alliance between conservatives and liberals in the Lockean tradtion: "It is now evident that liberal principles contribute little or nothing to those institutions that were for centuries the bedrock of the Anglo-American political order: nationalism, religious tradition, the Bible as a source of political principles and wisdom, and the family. Indeed, as liberalism has emerged victorious from the battles of the last century, the logic of its doctrines has increasingly turned liberals against all of these conservative institutions. On both of these fronts, the conservative and liberal principles of the Anglo-American tradition are now painfully at cross-purposes. The twentieth-century alliance between conservatism and liberalism is proving increasingly difficult to maintain." The trias "nation—faith—family" (see the following chapter 3), here put at the heart of the Anglo-American tradition, will be identified in Hazony (2018) with the heart of National Conservativism, the true heir of the Anglo-American tradition.

[7] The issue of Islam and Muslims within the framework of National Conservativism cannot be deepened within this article. Already in a previous years, Hazony and Haivry pointed out that liberals were not capable of adequatly reacting to "radical Islam": "Radical Islam, to name one such challenge, is a menace that liberals, for reasons internal to their own view of the political world, find difficult to regard as a threat and especially difficult to oppose in an effective manner." (Haivry and Hazony 2017). On the one hand, liberalism is accused of being blind to "radical Islam" and the failures of Muslim majority countries, on the other hand, it seems to be doubtful, that National Conservativism attributes any positive value to Islam and Muslims and thus shows a specific blind spot itself.

[8] It is striking that Hannah Arendt (2020), whom Hazony (2000) is very critical of, underlines the clear distinction in ancient political philosophy between private, patriarchal family based on unequality and the public political space of the *polis* based on equality. Contrary to Klauck, Arendt (2020, p. 16) considers the parellelization of family and political community to be a modern invention which has to be overcome.

[9] It is striking that Hazony never speaks about solidarity, but always uses loyalty. This is also a key difference to Reno (2019).

[10] Schmitt is never quoted by Hazony, although his theoretical framework is deeply shaped by the friend–enemy distinction, the rejection of liberalism, universalism and humanity as non-political. I am inclined to suggest that this is on purpose, as Schmitt has a reputation for being one of the main theorists of national socialism.

[11] See also (Hösle and Sorondo 2020). Nation, State, Nation-State. The Proceedings of the 22nd Plenary Session 1–3 May 2019. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Casanova (2008) offers important insights on the violence of the emerging Westphalian system, especially the expulsion and persecution of "the religious other", however without rejecting the establishment of the modern political order as such. Especially in the past 20 years, the concept of the nation state as developed after the Peace of Westphalia has undergone severe critique, especially from a postcolonial perspective, see e.g., Asad (2003), who is not as balanced as Casanova. In current times, growing religious pluralization, especially with regard to global migration, challenges established concepts of governing religion, as suggested by the Westphalian system. The debate regarding how to move on is very diverse and often touches upon the question of how to deal with Islam, Muslims and the Muslim community on a legal, social and political level. Beyer (2013) summarizes some important aspects of the debate in the 1990s and 2000s. Cesari (2021) reconfigures the relation between religion and nation with regard to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism and discusses the spread of the ideas of "religion" and nation-state", both deeply entangled with the emergence of the Western Westphalian model, on a global level.

[12] For a specific American-Jewish critique, see i.a., Soloveichik (2018).

[13] Mannion (2008) is a valuable source for understanding the complexity of John Paul II's biography, his theology and papacy. Lintner (2018) offers a critical discussion of the development of Catholic moral teaching in the context of sexuality, marriage and reproduction. He particularly highlights the role of John Paul II during the Second Vatican Council and in the making of the encyclical letter Humanae Vitae, but also his contribution to a polarization within the Catholic Church around exactly these moral issues. Harris (2006) gives an overview of John Paul II's engagement for the democratic transformation in Eastern Europe.

[14] International literature on John Paul II's engagement for human rights and interreligious dialogue is vast. Christiansen (2006) gives a concise overview of his involvement in peace making during the second half of his pontificate. Recently, Gabriel (2020)

has contextualized the social teaching of John Paul II within the historical context of his pontificate. Admirand (2012) summarizes his legacy in intra- and interreligious dialogue.

[15] The split between "traditional" and "progressive" Catholics in the U.S. is particularly visible in issues of sexuality and reproduction. Especially the personal stance towards abortion increasingly serves as a litmus test for "true" faith. Cf. also the recent conflicts about the eucharist in the U.S.-Bishops' Conference.

[16] For a concise critique of liberalism with a specific regard to religion, see Stoeckl (2017).

[17] Vormann and Weinman (2020) offer a collection of essays on selected aspects of illiberalism. Within this volume, Krastev (2020) particularly discusses the Hungarian case. Sajó et al. (2021) give the first systematic and comprehensive overview of illiberalism as a global phenomenon ranging across the continents. It goes far beyond the political framework and includes social, cultural, legal, and mental aspects of illiberalism including contributions on the relation between illiberalism and Christianity and Islam, respectively.

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Gandhi's Use of Scriptures: A Hermeneutic of Nonviolence against Letters That Kill

Ed Noort [1,2]

1 Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen, 9712 GK Groningen, The Netherlands; e.noort@rug.nl
2 Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Wallenberg Research Centre, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: Against the background of differing opinions about Gandhi's views on the relationship between political action and religious inspiration, this paper examines his use of scriptures, if he made hermeneutical decisions and if so, what they were. The starting point is a letter from Gandhi in which he pleaded against reading the scriptures literally and named truth, ahiṃsā, and a living faith as criteria. Reason is most important, but with limitations; ahiṃsā, nonviolence, is never at stake, but the definition of what may be called hiṃsā, or ahiṃsā, is dependent on place, time, and situation. Faith-based truth as Faith = God enabled the use of religious language and definitively bridged the religious and the secular. For an understanding of Gandhi's personal faith, his statements on Rama and Ramarajya as the Kingdom of God *on earth* are important. Gandhi found a leading principle in 2 Cor 3:6: "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life," comparing it often with a literal vs. figurative reading. The connecting factor between Gandhi and Paul was their situation, which is more fully explained for Paul. Both tried from a different perspective to reformulate their religious heritages in a new way by claiming that their now-defended truth was already present in the scriptures. Both needed a hermeneutical key and found it in the killing letter and the life-giving Spirit. For Gandhi, it meant the right to expand the original meaning of texts to realise ahiṃsā hic et nunc. The last section of this paper offers examples of Gandhi's use of this principle in changing contexts: the opening of the temples of Travancore, his approaches to the Gita, his exegesis of Galatians, and his readings of the Hebrew Bible.

Keywords: Gandhi; religion; nonviolence; hermeneutics; scriptures; Bhagavad Gita; Bible; Paul; history of reception

1. Introduction

Veena Howard's complaint that many studies tend to compartmentalise Gandhi's life and work by describing him as either an excellent politician, a nonviolent revolutionary, or a spiritual leader (Howard 2007, pp. 380, 394) is still relevant today. In recent years, however, even the more detailed Gandhi studies increasingly show a broader picture. On the chronological level, the decades-long failure to integrate the "African" and "Indian" Gandhi has opened new perspectives (Hofmeyr 2014; Guha 2013, 2019). In comparative studies, the weighing of possibilities and limitations of Gandhi's legacy and those of scholars from other traditions have proven fruitful for current issues concerning violence and political change (Du Toit and Vosloo 2021; Meir 2021a, 2021b; Palaver 2020, 2021). Nevertheless, the most controversial link between Howard's compartments is that of the relation between religion and politics or between faith and nonviolence. The often-used private (religion)/public (politics) or spiritual/temporal distinction is not sufficient. The search for the predominant factor in Gandhi's characterization as a hybrid thinker between East and West has admittedly resulted in the highlighting of important aspects (Parekh 1989; Parel 2006, 2009), but this question is still open to debate (Gray and Hughes 2015).

There is a need for approaches that do not frame Gandhi in advance, thereby strengthening the above-mentioned compartmentalisation.

These discussions underlie this paper's focus on Gandhi's use of religious scriptures, that is, his hermeneutics reading authoritative texts. Although this scriptural use is a relatively minor part in the literature on his life and work, authoritative texts play a major role in defining religious identity in *bonam* and in *malem partem*. In most religions, they function as "'Holy Writ', as sacred books, as spoken word, in public ritual, in devotional and spiritual life" (Graham 2005, pp. 8197–200). They serve to bring legitimation, continuation, and actualisation. However, their use as instruments for determining the validity of beliefs tends to produce a dark side of othering, drawing boundaries, and excluding people even within their own group-tied belief systems. This Janus-head-like character of scriptural use makes the focus on Gandhi's hermeneutics a magnifying glass for illuminating Cox's conclusion that Gandhi's "formation of religious identity is part of the formation of the ethico-political identity—and vice versa" (Cox 2010, p. 18). Religion is understood here as a process, not as an object separated from time and place, and references to scriptures will be made by considering together their origins and reception histories, which demands a contextual reading. This contextual reading means that the real question is not whether Gandhi's allegorical reading of the Gita is "right," but *why and in which situation* Gandhi preferred the allegorical meaning rather than the literal or historical one.

2. Reading Scriptures

Although "Gandhi did not set out to evolve a philosophy of life or formulate a system of beliefs or ideals" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 1, p. V), he used the scriptures of Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the writings of Plato, Goethe, Bunyan and others in several ways. In the biblical examples (Emilsen 2001; Smith-Christopher 1993), Daniel can be paired with Socrates; Jesus can be compared not only with Tolstoy, but also with the Oxford martyrs Cranmer and Latimer, when English readers were addressed; in the Indian context, Harischandra, Prahlad, and Mirabai, among others, came together. Gandhi advocated a Hinduism that is "no narrow creed," but that embraces the inspirations of Zoroaster, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, Nanak, and others. This colourful bunch of names reveals, in the first place, that Gandhi communicated very carefully with his audience or readers. He adjusted his views and examples, in many cases, according to situation, time, and place.

At the root of Gandhi's use of scriptures is his basic idea that "all religions [are] not only true, but equal." In his discussion with the American missionary Keithahn, he refined this thesis. Comparing religions by negative points does not make sense, because it is easy to ridicule another religion: "They are equally true and equally imperfect." All the prophets are equal; therefore, Moses (Law) and Jesus (Gospel) have to be held equal. For handling the scriptures, this means that "if you read the Koran, you must read it with the eye of the Muslim; if you read the Bible, you must read it with the eye of the Christian, if you read the Gita, you must read it with the eye of a Hindu" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 420). When asked which helpful readings were part of his spiritual life, Gandhi mentioned the Qur'an, the New Testament, Tulsidas' *Ramayana*, and the "pure religious discourse" of the Gita, which describes the progress of the pilgrim soul towards the Supreme Goal.

Scriptures served Gandhi as comforts in extreme situations, as examples for *satyagraha*, as a mirror for believers to be reminded of the true nature of their own religion, and as references to a universal truth behind the current religions.

The aim of the study of scriptures should to put them into practice. What Gandhi formulated in his discourses on the Gita also applied de facto for all authoritative religious texts. According to Gandhi, "We should understand the meaning of the words of the Gita not merely to satisfy our curiosity but with the aim of putting its teaching into practice . . . We should leave alone what we cannot put into practice. It is a misuse of our intellectual energy and a waste of time to go on reading what we cannot put into practice" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 32, pp. 227–28).

In a letter to his secretary, Sonja Schlesin (Paxton 2006), Gandhi formulated a methodical approach for interpretation and stated his aversion to reading scriptures literally:

"In reading all religious works, I have learnt one thing. Never to take them literally, but understand the drift and catch the drift also by means of what is to me an infallible canon of interpretation, and reject those which cannot stand the test of Truth and Ahimsa. I know that even in spite of this canon of interpretation difficulties do arise; but they are solved if one has patience and if one has a living faith in God". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 33, p. 355)

Gandhi's criteria, his "infallible canon of interpretation," aimed at revealing the spirit of and behind the text and included truth, *ahiṃsā*, and a living faith. In the hermeneutical hierarchy, however, reason came first: "I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 75).

2.1. Elements of the Letter to Schlesin

In his answer, Gandhi agreed with Sonja Schlesin's argument that "karma and the cross" could go together and referred to his own reading of Jesus' words in Mt 5:22: "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause* shall be in danger of the judgment" (KJV). Gandhi rejected the redundant part "without a cause" because it weakened the power of the saying, demonstrating the lens through which he read the Sermon on the Mount. He found his position confirmed by others' translations.[1]

After providing this example, Gandhi reflected generally on the approach of scriptures. The concepts of reason, *ahiṃsā*, and truth mentioned in the Schlesin letter have been widely described and analysed. Therefore, I highlight here only the elements important for Gandhi's use of scriptures.

2.1.1. Reason

Though the use of the historically heavily loaded concept of "reason" asks for a clear definition, it did not work for Gandhi in this way. Asked once about his authority to use scriptures from various religions, he pointed to his breast, saying, "it lies here." Reason accompanied by morality and conscience is not an abstract concept above time and place. Its clarifying and correctional function can only be demonstrated in concrete situations where religions employ their scriptures to establish and sanction practices that have been used for social abuse. Consequently, he argued that the Vedas ought not to be employed to legitimise untouchability (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 19, p. 243), the Qur'an to legitimise stoning (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 26, p. 202), and the *Manusmriti* to legitimise the subordinate role of women in relation to their husbands (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 85). In the first case, Gandhi used key concepts of the Vedas, such as purity, truth, innocence, chastity, and humility, as counterarguments. In the second case, he observed that the supposed crime and the Quranic stipulations did not match and, even more important, that the historical distance between the time of the Prophet and the present called for reconsideration: "reason and heart refuse to reconcile themselves to torture." When scriptures ask for general assent, they should be submitted "to the acid test of reason and universal justice" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 26, p. 202). In the third case, Gandhi argued that the *Smritis* also contain texts "which give woman her due place and regard her with deep veneration." He admitted that there were conflicting texts indeed and proposed, like a 20th-century Marcion, a cleansing of scriptures to expurgate "all the texts that have no moral value or are contrary to the fundamentals of religions and morality" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 85).

Nevertheless, even in combination with morality and conscience, reason was not Gandhi's ultimate criterion. He was aware of its limitations. Reason turned into rationalism "is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 31, p. 496). Therefore, directly after his statement that scripture cannot supersede reason, Gandhi delivered the following caveat: "There are things in faith where reason has no place, e.g., the existence of God" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 75). Faith as "the Rock of Ages" transcends reason. Temptation, e.g., is an area for which reason does not apply. Neither

is there an absolute morality above time and place. However, there is a relative morality for knowing what to do in the present situation (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 71, p. 46). The role of reason was important to Gandhi, who faced so much unreason in society, politics, scriptures, rituals, traditions, and doctrines. One criterion could be that reason prevails when scriptures, rituals, and traditions harm people. In these cases, they should be ignored or contested. In other cases, where there is no harm, they may be tolerated. In his insightful overview about the practice of Gandhi's use of reason and the interaction between faith and intuition, Nauriya concluded rightly that practice in time and context was the real issue for Gandhi (Nauriya 2020, pp. 98–103).

2.1.2. Ahiṃsā

Gandhi transformed the practice and theory of *ahiṃsā* in a decisive way. He turned the traditional negative and passive conception of it (non-injury) into a concept of active love by connecting *ahiṃsā* with compassion and love as "a root and the tree which sprouts from it" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 40, pp. 191–92). *Ahiṃsā* is not only a guideline for the individual, but a "rule of conduct for society" as well (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 77, p. 145). Parekh rightly noticed the strong influence of Tolstoy on Gandhi's new concept of *ahiṃsā*, but criticised the latter for his defence of this concept as the real meaning of *ahiṃsā* in Hindu scriptures and traditions (Parekh 1999, pp. 126–30). For Gandhi, however, this was a political and religious necessity. He wanted to unite all Hindus, regardless of caste and religion. His ideas about the equality of all religions concerned not only the so-called world religions, but also implied that even the diversity in popular Hinduism had to be accepted insofar as there were no harmful effects of the religious practices and rituals. Therefore, he needed a common ground and stated that he only renewed the old truth by presenting the real spirit of scripture and tradition. For himself, he claimed to be an orthodox, *Sanatani* Hindu, being well aware of the fact that following his own path meant, for many orthodox Hindus, a transgression of the boundaries of specific religious traditions (Mishra 2019, p. 74).

If nonviolence meant that active love was the practised form of *ahiṃsā*, he defined the concept itself as uttermost selflessness, meaning complete freedom from the regard for one's own body. Underpinning this definition are Gandhi's thoughts about body, soul, and *mokṣa*: "The sin of *himsa* consists . . . in taking life fore the sake of one's perishable body" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 31, p. 545). The loss of the intertwining of this bodily aspect and the transference of the concept of *ahiṃsā* was one of the concerns of Veena Howard, mentioned above. Gandhi's nonviolent resistance was unthinkable without his own personal detachment and asceticism. At the same time, Gandhi warned against principles above time and space. The ideal of total selflessness cannot be reached, because living means to destroy some life for the sustaining one's own body or protecting those for whom one is responsible. In extreme situations, killing might be *ahiṃsā* (in case of one running amok) and not killing *hiṃsā* (in the case of failing a necessarily surgical intervention). There may be *yogis*, who are an exception in that they face the one who is running amok with conscious self-sacrifice. For ordinary, erring human beings, however, *hiṃsā* is unavoidable. Therefore, one has to strive for as little *hiṃsā* as possible. Each case should be considered very carefully, and all other means must be exhausted (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 31, p. 546). Not only the cases Gandhi referred to, but also his own statements should be weighed carefully, depending on time, situation, and addressees. "I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the *rishis* and the saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit." (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 18, p. 133 = Young India 11.8.1920). These reflections on the "Doctrine of the Sword" mirror the drama of the *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act, the massacre by British General Dyer at Amritsar (April 1919), and the violence that followed. It is precisely in that context that Gandhi's

statement gains extra weight. The religion of nonviolence is never at stake; it is not only for extraordinary people, but with the strength of the spirit, all humans—common people—are involved. However, what can be called *hiṃsā* or *ahiṃsā* can vary depending on time, place and situation.[2]

2.1.3. Truth

"Truth is the sovereign principle," Gandhi wrote in the introduction of his autobiography, "the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principal, that is God . . . I worship God as Truth only" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 39, p. 4). Looking back at the end of his biography, he hoped that his efforts had brought "Faith in Truth and *ahimsa*", because "a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realisation of *ahimsa*" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 39, p. 401). "Truth and non-violence are my God. They are the obverse and reverse of the same coin" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 72, p. 31, cf. vol. 22, pp. 209, 271).[3] After the coining of *satyagraha* as the better definition of the earlier used "passive resistance," Gandhi emphasised that *satyagraha* did not mean that success would be guaranteed. On the other hand, it could never bring defeat, because serving the Truth was the only way of doing His will (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 61).[4] In his article "Triumph of Truth," he underlined these points using Gita 2:38: "With an even mind face happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss, victory and defeat, and so join battle, thou son of Prithu (Arjuna); thou shalt incur no sin thereby." Perseverance and the righteousness of the struggle are necessary.

By the explicit reversal of "God is Truth" into "Truth is God," (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 48, pp. 404–5) Gandhi found an even clearer formula for intertwining religious inspiration and social and political struggle. In 1931, he explained to a Western public[5] why he chose "Truth is God." He would not oppose seeing God as love, but love has so many meanings, which makes it multi-interpretable (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 48, p. 404). Gandhi stated that the variety of the interpretations of love did not apply to the concept of truth through the meaning of *ahiṃsā* if seeking the truth occurred by listening to the inner voice, in a sense of humility, and by being bound to several vows as guiding principles for *satyagrahis.* The "diligent search after Truth/God" cannot be done without "the vows of speaking/thinking truth, *brahmacharya* (chastity), non-violence, poverty and non-possession" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 48, p. 406).[6] On one side, the search for truth was constricted by the demands placed on *satyagrahis;* on the other side, the reversal of God = Truth to Truth = God and seeking truth as the highest aim in life might widen the circles of the participants in the social-political struggle[7] (Nauriya 2020, p. 103).

Seeking truth will always be unfinalised, according to Gandhi. Truth = God is the vantage point on the horizon where the parallel lines of *satyagraha* and *ahiṃsā* converge.

2.1.4. Living Faith

From his own religious background, Gandhi was familiar with the plurality of God-images expressed by the "thousand names for God"[8] in Vaishnavism, and he found it confirmed in Islam[9]. His basic assumption, however, was that "God alone is and nothing else exists." Connected with the reversed Truth = God, he was able to use a colourful, figurative language: "We are not, He alone Is. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of his *bansi*, and all would be well" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 26, p. 225). Praise and the music of the lute are the vision, but only by "*doing* His will." Imagery is the language of faith.[10] When Mirabehn stated that fear is the result of a lack of faith, Gandhi answered that the eradication of fear and senses will happen "only by seeing God face to face. When we meet Him, we will dance in the joy of His Presence and there will be neither fear of snakes nor of the death of dear ones. For there is no death and no snake-bites in His Presence. The fact is that the most living faith, too, falls short of the perfect" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 52, pp. 257–58). Only God is fearlessness (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 26, p. 225); humans have to live with fear and must face fear with trust and faith. Gandhi emphasised this eschatological seeing of God face to

face with two scriptural references: Mt 6:33: "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," together with Gita 2:59: "For an embodied man who does not eat, the sense objects fade away, except his taste for them; his taste, too, fades when he has seen the highest."[11] The New Testament and the Gita follow here a different path—"all things needed for daily life will be given to you" according to the Gospel, and the disappearance of senses, according to the Gita—but both have in common the striving for eschatological bliss: the Kingdom of God and seeing the Highest.

Because the faith-based search for truth enabled the use of religious language and bridged the gap between the religious and the secular, as well as between the diversity among religious groups, Gandhi defended in Congress his use of religious notions: "To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 26, p. 224, cf. vol. 25, pp. 52–53).

The last criterion Gandhi mentioned in his Schlesin Letter was "a living faith in God." From Gandhi's own statements about his personal faith and the vast literature on this theme (Bilgrami 2011; Chatterjee 1983; Fischer 1997; Majmudar 2005; Mishra 2019; Nauriya 2020; Parekh 1989; Tidrick 2006), I refer to four exemplary statements that highlight the ups and downs of his religious life.

Reproached for using the more informal appellative "Rama," instead of the official title "Shri Ramachandra Prabhu" for the Vishnu avatar, Gandhi answered with a nearly mystical explanation:

> "I myself am a Vaishnava ... There was a time in my life when I knew Rama as Shri Ramachandra. But that time has now passed. Rama has now come into my home ... To me, an orphan without mother, father, brother, Rama is all in all. My mother, my father, my brother—He is everything to me. My life is His. In Him I live. I see Him in all women, and so regard every one of them as mother or sister. I see Him in all men and, therefore, look on everyone as father, brother or son according to his age ... Even now, although Rama is near, He is not near enough to me; ... He is mine now and I [am] His slave. Hence, I beg Vaishnavas not to force me to stay at some distance from Him. The love that must be supported by formal courtesy, does it deserve the name of love?". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 24, pp. 196–97)

The intertwining of a living faith, as stated above, and the realisation of his political program may be illustrated with Gandhi's ultimate ideal of *Ramarajya*, the kingdom or the rule of Rama.[12] Time and again Gandhi used this concept in connection with *swaraj*, "self-rule" (Gandhi 2009) as a condition for *Ramarajya*. He universalised *Ramarajya* by stating that for a Muslim audience, he would call it *Khudai Raj* and for a Christian audience, the Kingdom of God on Earth (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 85, p. 137). *Ramarajya* did not mean *Hindu Raj*, but Divine *Raj*, because Rama and Rahim (Allah, the Merciful) were one and the same deity for Gandhi (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 41, p. 374). Several times he added to the Kingdom of God "on earth," because both the biblical concept and the way Tolstoy (Tolstoy 1894) understood it differed from the concreteness of Gandhi's imagery of Rama rule. Rama rule meant for him an era of truth or the people's *raj* (democracy). In it, the ruler should be the protector; there should be pure air and water for everybody, as well as sufficient food, clothing, and equality in education (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 45, p. 328). Even the distinction between *Brahmin* and *Maharaja*, between *Brahmin* and *Banghi* (Dalit caste) would disappear when their usefulness to society, and not their descent, would be the criterion for judgment (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 163).

His living faith and his experience of the nearness of Rama did not make Gandhi invulnerable. His faith and trust were on trial many times. Frustrated about the divisions in Congress and the tensions between Muslims and Hindus, Gandhi wrote in the same year, 1924, about Goethe's Faust and the famous scene of Gretchen (Margareth) at the spinning-wheel[13]:

"You may paraphrase them a little and the verses almost represent my condition. I seem to have lost my Love too and feel distracted. I feel the abiding presence of my Lover and yet he seems to be away from me. For he refuses to guide me and give clear-cut injunctions. On the contrary, like Krishna, the arch mischief-maker to the Gopis, he exasperates me by appearing, disappearing, and reappearing.". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 25, p. 77)

Twenty-three years later, Gandhi's *satyagraha* and his mission of keeping Hindus and Muslims together as one nation in one state failed. It was the tragedy of reaching independence, but losing unity.[14] The partition between India and Pakistan on 14–15 August 1947 and the end of British rule led to an explosion of violence between Hindus and Muslims: massacres, migration waves, riots, and rapes. Gandhi spent the day of independence in fasting and prayer. He described his state not as depressed, but as helpless:

"Mine must be a state of complete resignation to the Divine Will … All we can do is to make as near an approach to it as possible … I invoke the aid of the all-embracing Power to take me away from this 'vale of tears' rather than make me a helpless witness of the butchery by man become savage, whether he dares to call himself a Muslim or a Hindu or what not. Yet I cry—'Not my will but Thine alone shall prevail'. If He wants me, He will keep me here on this earth yet awhile". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 89, pp. 285–86; Luke 22:42)

There is still trust in divine guidance, and Gandhi is aware of the limits of his work. The questions of how and whether to live on he expressed with the strongest words he could find, quoting Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane before his imprisonment and execution.

Gandhi started his last and fifteenth fast on 13 January 1948, hoping to be so pure that he would be able to use the ultimate means of *satyagraha*, a fast until death. Because the "rot has set in in beloved India," he had taken this step

"with God as my supreme and sole counsellor … I do so because I must. Hence I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace, which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan does not ensure equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world and if India copies her". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 90, pp. 409–10; Prayer meeting 12 January 1948)

This last fast met with such a resonance that he was able to break it five days later. Two weeks later, on 30 January 1948, he was killed by the Hindu nationalist Nathuram Godse.

3. A Key for the Interpretation of Scriptures (2 Cor 3:6)

3.1. Gandhi and 2 Cor 3:6

Gandhi argued that scriptures never have a directly divine origin. The principal books might be inspired, but they "suffer from a double distillation," because they were "transmitted by a human prophet" and needed to bridge the distance between then and now with the help of commentaries and various interpreters. Such a time gap and the hands and voices that transmitted, (re)wrote, and remembered the texts might cause abuse and misunderstandings. The idea of Holy Writ as directly inspired by the deity and therefore, authoritative and beyond reproach, had to be denied, according to Gandhi. In the background of his arguments may be the distinction between *śruti* ("what is heard") as the most holy parts of sacred literature, and the less-revered *smṛti* ("what is remembered") scriptures in Hindu traditions, but Gandhi underlined his argument with a quote from the New Testament: "And above all, 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life'" (2 Cor 3:6).[15] This became his leading principle for the interpretation of scriptures and traditions. Though

Gandhi "did not like [everything in...] Paul's letters," the principle of the killing letter and the life-giving spirit functioned as a basic mantra for his exegesis (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 75). Gandhi repeated this principle in debates when he was challenged by others using scriptural arguments.

One of these situations was in discussing the role of Jesus with Christian missionaries. Gandhi understood Jesus as one of the greatest teachers of the world, but denied his exclusivity. He stated that Jesus "no doubt, said: 'I am the way,'('and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6)), but he also said: 'The letter killeth,'" and Gandhi added: "These things are to be taken figuratively and not literally" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 40, p. 315). Two points are remarkable here. The killing letter and the life-giving spirit were understood as a discrepancy between a literal and a figurative reading. Secondly, Gandhi ascribed the quote from 2 Cor 3:6 to the viva voce of Jesus and not to Paul.

Asked whether his civil disobedience was not going against Mt 22:21: "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," Gandhi paraphrased the text by demonstrating that the Pharisees already possessed the "coins for taxes," used the benefits of Roman rule, and therefore practised what they formulated now as a question. His own assumption was that Jesus "would not have hesitated to defy the might of emperors had he found it necessary." With a clear warning against the trap of literalism, Gandhi referred to 2 Cor 3:6 and to the message of a whole book instead of one single verse (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 43, pp. 131–32).

The killing letter and the life-giving spirit from the New Testament were not limited to the debates between Gandhi and Christians. He used this principle to defend a decision of Congress that called untouchability a sin against the arguments that untouchability belonged to Hinduism: " . . . untouchability is not a sanction of religion, it is a device of Satan. The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth. They are intended to purify reason and illuminate truth . . . 'the letter killeth.' It is the spirit that giveth the light" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 19, p. 243). According to Gandhi, scriptures have a subordinate function in purifying the possibilities and limits of reason and illuminating truth, limiting the first and helping the latter to shine brighter. Again, he brought up the case of the single sentence against the message of the whole. Notions of the Vedas, such as purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, and godliness, are instruments to overcome the letter that kills. These notions, not a literal reading of a single verse or commandment, shaped the spirit of the Vedas. A literal reading may be ignored with the help of leading principles.

No golden rule above time and space may be derived from this. In several cases, Gandhi defended a literal reading, e.g., of the Sermon on the Mount. For literal readings, he argued that the golden rule from Mt 7:12: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" should be the criterion (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 19, p. 243).

In the context of the explicit quoting of 2 Cor 3:6, Gandhi equalised the killing letter and the life-giving spirit with literal and figurative readings. In other cases, he contrasted the supposed meaning of a whole book or the central thoughts of a textual corpus against the one-sided meaning of a single sentence or expression.

3.2. The Killing Letter and the Life-Giving Spirit According to Paul in Early Christian Judaism and in the History of Reception

Gandhi's use of 2 Cor 3:6[16] as a hermeneutic principle raises the following concerns in the context of this paper:

1. A possible meaning of this "proverb-like" statement in its immediate context after the paradigm shift in Pauline studies.[17]
2. The heavily loaded reception history in which parts of Paul's concepts were used as weapons against Jews and Judaism and its repercussion on Gandhi.

3.2.1. Paul

Paul's Statement "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" connects two parts: His defence of being a minister (*diakonos*) of the new covenant (vv. 1–6) and the comparison with the *diakonia* of Moses (vv. 7–11; Duff 2015, pp. 132–35; Cover 2015; Hellholm 2008). It functions as a pivot point between the two parts. Scholars have often assumed that the life-giving Spirit refers to the "new covenant" and the "killing letter" to the "old covenant" (Thrall 2004, pp. 232–37, esp. p. 234, n. 306). However, there are strong arguments to relate it not to the covenant, but to the *diakonia* of Paul, because it points both back to the letter of recommendation for his ministry (vv. 1–3) and forward to his comparison with the *diakonia* of Moses (vv. 7–11). The antithesis letter-Spirit in this context refers to the ministry, not to the covenant (Duff 2015, pp. 132–35.169.212). Nevertheless, Paul claims to be a minister of a *new covenant*.[18] Previously in the Hebrew Bible, an eschatological "new covenant" (Jeremiah) and a "heart of flesh" (Ezekiel) tried to bridge the gap between divine ethical stipulation and human violation. In this "new covenant," according to Jer 38:31–33 LXX, the laws (*nomoi*) will be written in the heart by divine intervention, resulting in an "automatic" observance of the Law in a flawless reciprocity. Ez 36:26 aimed for a purification of Israel, followed by the removal of the "heart of stone" and its replacement by a "*new heart* of flesh"(*lēb ḥādāš*) and "a *new* spirit" (*rûaḥ ḥădāšâ*). With his allusions to Jer 38 LXX and Ez 36:26 in 2 Cor 3:2–3, Paul connected these two related concepts with the keyword "new." "New" in relation to covenant does not mean a fundamental contrast to the previous or abrogated one (Rüterswörden 2006), but emphasises "the dynamic movement of continuity rather than replacement" (North, Botterweck et al. 1977, *TDOT* 4, p. 240). The concept of covenant is one of continuation and renewal, of eschatological hope and concepts of realisation.[19] In the vision of Jeremiah, it is not the Torah which disappears, but the possibility to breach the covenant. For Paul, these prophetic visions had been realised in the death and resurrection of Christ.

In the second section (2 Cor 3:7–11), Paul describes the relationship between his own *diakonia* and that of Moses (Duff 2004, pp. 313–47). First, there is the connecting factor: in both ministries is *doxa* (glory). However, the *diakonia* of Moses is "a ministry of death," (v. 7) and of "condemnation" (v. 9), but Paul's ministry is one of the life-giving Spirit (v. 8) and righteousness (v. 9b). With a *qal va-ḥomer* (from the lesser to the greater) argument, Paul claims that there is more glory in his than in Moses' *diakonia*. How is it possible that Paul connects Moses with death and condemnation? Duff makes here his second point by arguing that Moses' ministry concerned the situation of the Corinthians as gentiles. For them in their previous existence, Torah brought death.[20] "Paul believed that from following the delivery of the Torah to Moses- all humanity (gentiles included!) would be accountable to its requirements" (Duff 2015, pp. 161–62).

The next step in Paul's argument is his own rewriting of Ex 34:29–35. The original narrative reports Moses' return from Sinai carrying the new tablets with a radiant face, due to the meeting with the *doxa* of God, and wearing a veil. Paul claims that this veil is taken away for the Corinthians. Through Christ, they see God with an unveiled face (2 Cor 3:18), while those who still read Moses[21] without turning to the *kyrios* have their faces veiled.

In summary: The letter and the spirit do not refer to the covenant, but to the *diakonia* of Moses and Paul. For Paul, the visions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been realised in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The ministry of death and condemnation ascribed to Moses refers to the idea that the Torah has been neglected by the gentiles because all humans, including Jews and gentiles, had to keep the commandments. Therefore, the ministry of Moses meant death and condemnation for the Corinthians in their previous life. In a bold reversal of the original function of the veil as a sign of protection, Paul describes its role as an obstacle for facing the *kyrios*, now taken away for the Corinthians.

The killing letter and the life-giving Spirit do not denote a literal interpretation of the Torah against a spiritual one. For the *pneuma* of V.6 refers back to the "*pneuma* of the living God," (V.3) "where the Spirit is not the true meaning of Scripture but a divine agency at work in human life" (Thrall 2004, pp. 234–35). The life-giving Spirit refers to Paul's ministry

of Spirit and righteousness and the killing letter to Moses' ministry of condemnation in the sense of Duff's proposal above. The Torah itself, in its function to make humans aware of their actions, is holy and spiritual (*pneumatikos*), according to Paul (Rom 7:12.14; Hafemann 1995, pp. 438–44).

3.2.2. Elements from the History of Reception

In the first half of the second century CE, 2 Cor 3:6 was an important text for Marcion and his dualistic teaching of the benevolent God of the Gospel and the malevolent Demiurge of the Old Testament (LXX). It was clear to him that "the letter that kills" was the Hebrew Bible, and that "the Spirit that gives life" referred to a Gospel that was originally based on Paul's antithesis (Dunn 2016, p. 115). Marcion's *Antitheses*, a list of passages from the Hebrew Bible that contradicted New Testament texts (von Harnack 1924, pp. 89–92; *256–*313), demonstrated his view.

Tertullian (155–220 CE)—one of the most powerful adversaries of Marcion—maintained the negative role of the Law and the positive one of the Gospel, but defended the one God of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.[22] At the same time however, he stated that the Torah admittedly was a bad law—and with a dangerous shift from theory to living people—the Jews needed such laws. [23]

From here on, the antithesis between Law and Gospel, the letter and the Spirit, as equivalent to old and new covenant, became a dominant element in reception history. Paula Fredriksen stated succinctly that in the second-century gentile setting, the older *intra*-Jewish polemic mutated into an *anti*-Jewish polemic (Fredriksen 2017b, p. 1). From here on, Christianity stood against Judaism.[24] It resulted in the *Contra-Iudaeos* literature (Schreckenberg 1995; Krauss and Horbury 1995; Fredriksen and Irshai 2006), with the sermons of Chrysostom (386 CE) marking an oft-quoted all-time low (Meir 2019, p. 258). Of course, 2 Cor 3:6 was not the only text that contributed to the *Contra-Iudaeos* literature, but when Paul's other antithesis *sarx* ("flesh") vs. *pneuma* (Spirit) was integrated, it became a weapon in the anti-Jewish literature as well. For Augustine, the Jews belonged to carnal Israel (1 Cor 10:18) as opposed to spiritual, life-giving Christianity.[25] Supersessionism was long-time part of Christian doctrine.

The big leap from antiquity to Gandhi cannot be made without mentioning Luther's name in this context. His concept of Law vs. Gospel—based on Paul's antithesis—may have been shaped primarily by and for the conflict with the Roman-Catholic Church; it also negatively impacted the relationship between Judaism and Christianity[26] and, because of its profound influence on Western culture, was open to abuse with catastrophic consequences.

Finally, in Judaism itself, the letter-Spirit antithesis plays a more important role than often assumed. Huss, criticising Gershom Sholem, defends that behind the assumed dichotomy between "spiritual, vital Kabbalah and dogmatic, petrified Halakha," a Jewish adaptation of Paul's antithesis of the killing letter and the life-giving Spirit becomes visible (Huss 2021, p. 2).

3.2.3. Gandhi and Paul

Was Gandhi aware of the context and the history behind his own use of 2 Cor 3:6? Probably not. If concepts of the covenant between deity and believers had emphasised the religious exclusivity for one group or another, he would surely have opposed this. On the other hand, the basic concept of a mutual, conditional covenant, with the law as a guide for the practice of human behaviour and as an answer to the love of God, may well have been attractive to him.[27] However, this concept forms no substantial part of Gandhi's reflections. His studies of the Bible focused mainly on the Gospels, and his readings of Pauline texts are, whether deliberately or not, coloured by later Christian reception history, including supersessionism and an antithetic theology of Torah and Gospel.

Gandhi borrowed from Paul a mantra about the killing letter and the life-giving Spirit without knowledge of the complex reasoning behind it. The similarity between the two was their situation. Both tried to reformulate their own religious heritage in a new way by

claiming that the now-defended truth was already present in the scriptures. In need of a hermeneutical key, both found it in the killing letter and the life-giving Spirit. For Gandhi, it was an instrument for free faith-based and context-bound interpretation. For Paul, it was a cornerstone in the apology of his ministry as an invitation to the Corinthians to trust his *diakonia* of the Spirit.

4. Gandhi, the Killing Letter and the Life-Giving Spirit: Some Examples

How did Gandhi use the principle of the killing letter and the life-giving Spirit? He emphasised the freedom of the interpreter to distinguish between the original meaning and the later reception. For the benefit of his audience, he tried to reconcile Vedic practices with a fitting exegesis of the Gita; for himself, this was not necessary: "The teacher of the Gita did not lay down that those who came after him should always read in it only the meaning which he himself had in mind" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 32, p. 212). Even in the case where Gandhi is aware that his reinterpretation of the animal sacrifice (*yajna*) as an offering with the mind differed from the original meaning, "we shall do no injustice to Vyasa[28] by expanding the meaning of his words. Sons should enrich the legacy of their fathers," (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 32, p. 154) with Gandhi further stating "I interpret the Gita to mean that, if its central theme is *anasakti*, it also teaches *ahimsa*. Whilst we are in the flesh and tread the solid earth, we have to practise *ahimsa*. In the life beyond there is no *himsa* or *ahimsa*" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 72, p. 393).

This freedom stressed the need to live in the present, practicing *ahiṃsā* hic et nunc, not in the life beyond. History was, for Gandhi, not the dry search for "how it really was" (Ranke); it should serve the community as an instrument for the interpretation of the present and as a guideline for the future. This reconstruction is not without facts, but the facts serve a higher aim. "Moral truth," in Gandhi's case, "was higher than historical truth" (Parekh 1989, p. 164). Gandhi demonstrated this in different ways. In some cases, e.g., the message exceeded the person and history: "if one should prove that Jesus never existed, the Sermon on the Mount would still be true." In a Christmas talk, he even stated that as long as there is no peace on earth, Christ has not been born (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 48, pp. 438–39).

4.1. A Key for the Gita

There is no doubt that the Gita was the most important source of inspiration for Gandhi (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 27, p. 435, vol. 64, pp. 74–75). The recitation of the eighteen chapters of the Gita was completed within one week during morning prayers. However, in 1936, a situation emerged in which a simple key for Hinduism and the Gita was needed. Gandhi's response was that all other scriptures could be lost, but if the first mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* remained, Hinduism would be saved (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 259). In his own translation, the verse reads:

> "1. All this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God. 2. Renounce it
> 3. and enjoy it (or: Enjoy what He gives you) 4. Do not covet anybody's wealth
> or possession." (*īśā vāsyamidaṁ*, Isha Upanishad)

From the divine pervasion of creation, the mantra derived two relationships: First, the relationship of humans to the whole creation, stating that humans should only take from it what they really need, enjoying that portion. Second, their relationship with their neighbours, in which the desire for other people's possessions should not play any role (Palaver 2021, p. 17). For Gandhi, the Gita doctrine of uttermost detachment (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 84, p. 327) was revealed, for taking more from this creation than the minimum for a living meant theft. The whole Gita was, for Gandhi, a commentary on this mantra. From this verse, Hinduism in all its diverse forms took a short credo as a practical faith-based guide for everyday life (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 260). The very specific context for Gandhi's hermeneutical statement was the opening of the temples of Travancore to all Hindus, regardless of their origin and caste.[29] For Gandhi, it was "the great wonder of modern times." However, now he had to apply his creed of the equality of

all religions to the deeply divided modalities of Hinduism itself, regardless of birth, caste or denomination. In this religious-political minefield, he claimed that the first mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* did unite all Hindus. According to Gandhi, the Gita itself could not function in this way because the Gita was "not a book that I can place before the whole of this audience. It requires a prayerful study before the *Kamadhenu* (the cow of plenty) yields the rich milk she holds in her udder" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 258). Therefore, the mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* united all Hindus, even the *literati* and the *illiterati*. The verse attracted legendary narratives to underline its importance.[30]

4.2. Gandhi and the Gita in 1940

On 15 August 1940, Gandhi had an important conversation with Balasaheb Gangadhar Kher, the first chief minister of Bombay State, about questions on *ahiṃsā*. How would Gandhi nonviolently react in the case of a foreign invasion? In his reply, Gandhi stated that he would line up a non-violent army of about 2000 men between the two combatants, describing his army allegorically with a reference to Tulsidas' Ramayan and the debate between Rama and Vibhishana on how to conquer a mighty enemy (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 72, p. 391). Gandhi concluded that in such a situation, faith would be needed, but that "the worst that can happen to us, is that we shall be crushed. Better to be crushed than to be vanquished".

The next question of Ker was about the central teaching of the Gita. Is it *anasakti (detachment)* or *ahiṃsā*? Gandhi was sure. It must be *anasakti*. For that reason, he called his own translation and interpretation of the Gita "*Anasaktiyoga*," because *anasakti* transcends *ahiṃsā*. To reach the state of detachment, one has to practise nonviolence. *Ahiṃsā* is included in *anasakti*. Gandhi admitted that the author of the Gita probably did not inculcate *ahiṃsā*, but he, Gandhi, did. Kher did not give up and quoted Arjuna, who was willing to practise *ahiṃsā*: "Better I deem it, if my kinsmen strike, to face them weaponless, and bare my breast to shaft and spear, than answer blow with blow" (BG 1:46). Krishna, however, urged Arjuna to answer "blow with blow," and "that there is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war" (BG 2:31). Gandhi denied that the focus in these passages was on *ahiṃsā*. Arjuna had to decide whether he was willing to kill his own kin, because Arjuna stated: "if my *kinsmen* strike" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 72, p. 394). This was a classical debate on the use of scriptures, on meaning and drift, on the priority of concepts, but one that was overshadowed by a world war already started, a possible threat from Japan that would materialise a year later, and the question of how to act in an India still under the British Raj.

Gandhi's answers demonstrated a shift in his reading of the Gita. In 1919, he published a short allegorical interpretation of the Gita (Satyagraha Leaflet no. 18), and contested a literal reading of Krishna's advice to Arjuna to fight his kinsmen: "Now the Bhagavad Gita is not a historical work, it is a great religious book, summing up the teaching of all religions. The poet has seized the occasion of the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas for drawing attention to the war going on in our bodies between the forces of Good (Pandavas) and the forces of Evil (Kauravas)" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 15, pp. 288–89).[31] The allegorical battle returned in his "Discourses on the Gita" (1926): "But here the physical battle is only an occasion for describing the battlefield of the human body. In this view the names mentioned are not of persons but of qualities which they represent. What is described is the conflict within the human body between opposing moral tendencies imagined as distinct figures (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 32, p. 96; Hutchins 2018, p. 36).

Parekh demonstrated how Gandhi could not maintain this allegorical reading of the Gita, and distinguished later between two levels. The philosophical level contained general, moral principles; the historical level applied the principles to a specific situation in time and place. Only at the second level could violence be sanctioned, under certain circumstances (Parekh 1999, p. 167). In his debate with Ker, Gandhi stated, therefore, that *anasakti* as non-attachment was the highest ideal of the Gita, attachment being the major obstacle to *moksha*. Even with his new reading of the Gita, Gandhi maintained that the Gita did not

favour violence; on the contrary, "the Gita's doctrine of *anasakti* undercut the moral and psychological basis of violence" (Parekh 1999, p. 168).

Gandhi's figurative interpretation of the most important scripture of Hinduism was already needed more than thirty years earlier in his contacts with the terrorist movement. The terrorists reinterpreted Hinduism and used the Gita too to allow violence through a literal reading. The first leader of the Indian Independence Movement and radical nationalist, Tilak (1856–1920), interpreted the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna as divine encouragement to fight one's enemies, even one's own kin. *Karma-yoga* (action), not renunciation or devotion, is the main message of the Gita according to Tilak (Mackenzie Brown 1958; Tilak 1935). To give his nonviolent *satyagraha* a scriptural base, Gandhi introduced his allegorical reading, focusing on *anasakti* as the central teaching of the Gita.

4.3. Gandhi and Galatians

After the Gita, the New Testament is the second corpus of scriptures that plays a main role in the thought, speeches, discussions, and writings of Gandhi. It makes sense that author Margaret Chatterjee started with Gandhi's religious thought in connection with Indian traditions, and followed this immediately with, "The Impact of Christianity on Gandhi" (Chatterjee 1983, pp. 41–57).

In a letter from Gandhi to his son Manilal in Phoenix on 12 April 1914 (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 12, pp. 405–7), he addressed a number of exegetical questions explaining some New Testament texts.

Gal 3:10 reads: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Torah'" (Dtn 27:26). Gandhi stated that, "mere bookish souls can never attain *moksha*," which in this case means that a literal reading, and doing only what the *shastras* prescribe, is not enough. The hidden significance of them must be clear. According to Gandhi, Paul meant that the acts enjoined by scriptures should be performed, but, and this is going behind the action, faith is needed in Jesus' teachings, as well as action according to these teachings; otherwise, the curse remains. With regard to Jesus' teachings, Gandhi referred without doubt to the Sermon on the Mount and argued for his focus on action by joining Paul in the literal meaning of Dtn 27:26: "those who do (not) uphold the words of this Torah *by carrying them out*." Gandhi compared Gal 3:10 with the Gita and paraphrased BG 2:45: "The Vedas keep on the plane of the three *gunas*, be thou, Arjuna beyond those *gunas*."[32] A subsequent exegesis aimed at the same opposite. Gandhi's analysis turned on Gal 4:22–24: "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman (Hagar) and one by a free woman (Sarah). But the son of the slave (Ishmael) was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman (Isaak) was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants." The opposition Gandhi saw here is that literally understood scriptures belonged to the slave mother, but that faith (*bhakti*) is the free, heavenly mother (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 12, p. 406). In these and other passages, *nomos* meant to Gandhi "the dry knowledge of Scripture", in contrast to *bhakti*, which meant knowing God's grace.

4.4. Gandhi and the Hebrew Bible

Gandhi's well-known ambivalent relationship with the Hebrew Bible highlights the problematics of reading the Bible "with Christian spectacles" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 63, p. 92). The ambivalence originated from two sides. In the first place, he was influenced by Christian views that subordinated the Hebrew Bible under the New Testament, resulting in statements that the Hebrew Bible "did not deserve the same honour as the New Testament," and that "the God of the Hebrews was quite different from the God of Jesus Christ" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 25, p. 85; vol. 78, pp. 6–7). Secondly his own readings resulted in a view that "the Old Testament which is part of Christian teaching is full of blood and thunder" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 33, p. 358). In *Satyagraha in South-Africa*, Gandhi admired the Boers as strong fighters in their battles against the British. The Boers being "religious

minded Christians" know "the New Testament only by name. They read the Old Testament with devotion and know by heart the descriptions of battles it contains. They fully accept Moses' doctrine of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', and they act accordingly" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 29, pp. 17–18). In his portrait, Gandhi maintained without any hesitation the *lex talionis* of Ex 21:23–25 as characteristic not only for the Boers, but for the Hebrew Bible as well.[33] When confronted with the explosive situation after the Chauri Chaura incident[34] Gandhi made a remarkable statement: "Indeed I am not sure that we do justice to Moses when we impute to him the doctrine of retaliation in the sense that he made it obligatory on his followers to exact tooth for a tooth...I do think that in an age when people were unrestrained in their appetite for the enemy's blood, Moses restricted retaliation to equal measure (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 22, p. 363). There is a *caveat*. This view could be his own wish, and he does not want to lead the reader into a religious discussion. However, due to the threatening situation of possible retaliation from both sides, imprisonments, and death sentences, he understands the *lex talionis* as a limitation of blood revenge. Fifteen years later, the name of Moses has now gained a place together with Jesus, Mohammed, and Zoroaster as representatives of the different religions, but branches of the same tree. They are equally true and equally imperfect because of their interpretation by humans (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, p. 326). In Hinduism, there is room for them, as there is for other prophets (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 75, p. 375). In light of Gandhi's ambivalent relationship with the Hebrew Bible, a question about the equality of Jesus and Moses is important. Gandhi confirmed: "all prophets are equal" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 64, pp. 419–20). Finally, Moses appears in the claim that wisdom had come from the East to the West, not from the West to the East. Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed came from the East, as well as Moses, who—though born in Egypt—belonged to Palestine (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 87, p. 192). On the formal level of the equality of all religions, Moses, the Hebrew Bible, and Judaism are all present. However, as seen at the beginning of this paragraph, in the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, reception history has done its work.

Though Emilsen counted that, in his writings, Gandhi referred to nine books of the Hebrew Bible and later enjoyed the Prophets and the Psalms (Emilsen 2001, p. 81), there is no intensive engagement comparable with his work on the New Testament. There is one big exception: the book of Daniel (Smith-Christopher 1993). After Jesus, Daniel is probably the most important biblical character for Gandhi. Daniel is the exemplary *satyagrahi*, the civil servant who disobeys unjust laws. Gandhi's focus on Daniel is important for several reasons: 1. Gandhi has sought different practices and strategies to shape his nonviolent resistance. He found an example of this behaviour in Daniel. 2. Gandhi was deeply convinced that *aḥiṃsā* as active love evoked something in the violent opponent. He finds this confirmed in the attitude of the king, who regrets the execution of his law. The exegetical literature dealing with biblical texts and the question of violence nearly always focuses on texts of violence, on the image of God, or on visions of peace. Daniel is not included. In his study of Daniel, Gandhi opened a topic that has gone largely unnoticed until today.

5. Conclusions

Gandhi's method of using scriptures displayed a remarkable freedom with one constant drive: transforming tradition for the practice of nonviolence. The aim of the study of scriptures should be to put their principles in practice in both personal and societal life and to illuminate the search for truth. Scriptures of all religions are equally perfect and imperfect. Therefore, a canon of interpretation including the tests of reason, truth, and aḥiṃsā is required. *Ahiṃsā* means active love, and the reversal of God = Truth into Truth = God intertwines faith-based inspiration with social and political action. The interpretation of scriptures requires a living faith (*bhakti*). Principles that sustain the theme of a book overrule a single expression or sentence. Gandhi found a key for interpreting scriptures with the quote of 2 Cor 3:6: "The letter kills, the Spirit gives life." Paul interpreted the con-

cepts of a new covenant and a "heart of flesh" from the eschatological visions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel with a different focus, but in a similar way to the communities of the Qumran: living in the already-present new covenant. The killing letter in 2 Cor 3:6 does not mean the literal interpretation of the Torah against a spiritual reading. The life-giving Spirit refers to Paul's ministry of Spirit and the killing letter to the ministry of Moses, according to Duff's proposal. Elements from reception history demonstrate how an intra-Jewish polemic mutated into an anti-Jewish polemic, with catastrophic consequences for Jews and Judaism.

In practice, Gandhi often balanced 2 Cor 3:6 with a literal and figurative reading. A reader is free to add meanings different from those of the original author, tradition, or reception. History and its reconstruction serves as a guideline for the present and the future. The examples of the first mantra of the *Isha Upanishad* as a summary of the Gita, the allegorical reading of the Gita, and *anasakti* as the centre of the Gita demonstrate the need for a contextual interpretation. In the first case, the spiritual and political unity of all Hindus was at stake, and in the second, the reclaiming of the Gita using a nonviolent interpretation was used against the interpretation of the revolutionaries who read it as legitimising violence. The example of Galatians demonstrated how Gandhi mobilised Paul for an active interpretation of *doing* the teachings of Jesus. He even used Paul's two covenants allegory for distinguishing between the "dry knowledge of scripture" and a living faith. The last section on Gandhi and the Hebrew Bible shows how reception history influenced Gandhi's readings of the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, he found his own access with the character of Daniel as the ideal *satyagrahi*. From the view of Gandhi's use of scriptures, the thesis may be upheld that "the formation of his religious identity was part of his ethico-political identity—and vice versa" (Cox 2010, p. 18), and that his political action was never without a devotional or *bhakti* focus (Gray and Hughes 2015).

Notes

[1] In some translations Gandhi used, "without a cause" (εἰκῆ [*eikē*] from the *textus receptus* has been deleted. The phrase is indeed a later addition and was omitted in the Greek New Testament (NA28) for text-critical reasons. It is a nice example of the merging of an intuitive reading and literary-critical/redaction-critical analysis.

[2] It may be noticed that *ahiṃsā* is only mentioned three times in the Gita. It appears, together with other qualities such as divine gifts (10:5), as part of knowledge in stead of ignorance (13:7), and as part of the divine heritage (16:2–3).

[3] For an analysis of the influence of Tolstoy on Gandhi's understanding of truth and its linkage with God and universal love, see (Gray and Hughes 2015, pp. 378–80).

[4] In *Indian Opinion*, 8.2.1908, Gandhi celebrated the agreement with General Smuts concerning the Black Act (Gandhi 1958–1994, pp. 29: 86–96: Satyagraha in South-Africa, XII–XIII) and reflected on the ongoing struggle. "He (the *satyagrahi*) will give no thought to success or failure. He is pledged only to the great task of serving Truth, doing his duty in the name of God. The outcome itself is in the hands of the Lord." (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 61).

[5] A meeting in Lausanne on 8 December 1931 after returning from the Second Round Table Conference in London.

[6] Gandhi mentions here only five vows. In his ashrams, the framework of vows for practising *satyagraha* was more comprehensive (Chandel 2017, pp. 139–40; Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 55, p. 301; vol. 61 p. 38; vol. 62, p. 202; vol. 82 p. 4; vol. 86, p. 155).

[7] Reference to Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), the British atheist, freethinker, and founder of the National Secular Society (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 48, pp. 404–5; vol. 26, p. 224).

[8] *Vishnu Sahasranāmam*, the song of a thousand names of the all-pervading Vishnu (*Mahābhārata* 13:135).

[9] The tradition of the 99 names/attributes of God is taken from the Qur'an and the *Hadith*.

10 For dealing with the abstractness of Truth on the one side, and with "idolatry embedded in human nature" on the other side, cf. (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 61, p. 81).

11 Translated by Van Buitenen (1981, p. 85). When Gandhi quotes his own translation from *Anasaktiyoga*, that version will be used (Desai 1946). Other references follow the more literal translation of Van Buitenen (1981).

12 (Gray and Hughes 2015, p. 388) emphasise correctly the religiously loaded concept of *Ramarajya*. Even as an ideal, Gandhi used an imagery with concrete examples. In contrast to Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, Gandhi formulated the Kingdom of God *on Earth*.

13 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, Faust I, Scene XV. Gretchen in her room, being seduced and abandoned by Faust:

"My peace is gone, and my heart is sore. I have lost him, and lost him, for evermore! The place where he is not, to me is the tomb. The world is sadness and sorrow and gloom! My poor sick brain is crazed with pain; and my poor sick heart is torn in twain! My peace is gone and my heart is sore, for lost is my love for evermore!"

14 Hardiman described Gandhi's actions after the partition as "Gandhi's 'Finest Hour'" and valued his personal courage and his "staying to truth." He still tried to convince people to stay in their villages, rather than flee to a 'safe' place with a majority of their own religion (Hardiman 2003, pp. 184–91; Guha 2019, pp. 826–45; Hutchins 2018, pp. 192–202).

15 In the spelling of the KJV as quoted by Gandhi. In cases of other references, NRSV is used.

16 Here, 2 Cor 3 is exegetically qualified as "the Mount Everest of Pauline texts" (Hanson 1980, p. 19; Duff 2015, p. 13). The main concerns are the literary-historical problems of the letter, the conflicts within the community in Corinth, and the precise character of Paul's opponents (Mitchell 2001, 2003, pp. 17–53).

17 The "New Perspective on Paul" (NPP), initiated by (Sanders 1977) and (Stendahl 1963), differs in its outcomes, but has in common that the Jewish background of Paul has been highlighted (Fredriksen 2017a), the diversity of Judaism has been stressed, and that Luther's most influential scheme of the Law and the Gospel has been weakened.

18 The covenant as a concept of the relationship between deity and people took its defining shape in the crises of the collapsing world of Israel and Judah after the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests (722/586 BCE) (Perlitt 1969). The rethinking of the responsibility for the loss of the state of Israel (722 BCE), Judah, and the temple of Jerusalem (587 BCE) triggered a narrative of divine commitment and human failure and a relationship of breaks, renewal, and hope. In the founding story, Moses smashed the first tablets of stone at Mt Horeb in response to the creation of the bull statue (Ex 32:19). With the two new tablets of stone, the founding Sinai covenant was already the result of a broken covenant. Breach and renewal were the threads of the development of the deeper concepts of the covenant. Priestly circles reacted to the conditional character of this concept with an image of an unconditional promissory covenant (Gen 9, Noach; Gen 17, Abraham).

19 Paul was not the only one who tried to actualise the eschatological visions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel with a new covenant and a renewed relationship with God. Previous to Paul and in a different context, the Jewish communities behind the Dead Sea Scrolls did the same. For them, the prophetic new covenant had already been realised (Texts and translations: (García Martínez and Tigchelaar 1999; Parry and Tov 2004). The members of the group (*yaḥad*) "entered the new covenant (*bᵉrît ḥᵃdāšâ*)" (CD-A vi 19//4Q266 3ii). Living "in the last days" and expecting a final battle between "the sons of light" and the "sons of darkness," not only did election and covenant play a role, but the Spirit as well. (1QHodayota 4:17; 20:11–12). The role of the (holy) spirit here as revelation of divine mysteries differs from the dualistic concept of the two spirits of truth and deceit in every human (1QS iii 13–iv 26, esp. iii 17–19). This Qumran community was one of the sects within Judaism (Josephus 1926a, II, pp. 119–66; 1965, XVIII, pp. 11–25; 1926b, pp. 10–12; Baumgarten 1997; Regev 2007) and according to the Groningen hypothesis, a split-off from the Essenes (García Martínez and van der Woude 1990; García Martínez and Trebolle Barrera 1995, pp. 77–96). The descriptions from Josephus and the New Testament, the congregations behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Hellenistic communities demonstrate the pluriformity of the developments within Second Temple Period Judaism. The same can be said for emerging Christianity with its different views on the role of Jesus. In this fermenting world of political and economic tensions, from spectra from Hellenised Jewish communities to strictly halachic groups, and from apocalyptic traditions to wisdom and gnostic thought, Paul made his statement about the killing letter and the life-giving spirit. The terminology "Early Christian Judaism" following (Luttikhuizen 2012, ch. 5), indicates that different and competing Christian groups in this early phase can be considered as movements within Judaism. Paul's letters to the gentile community of Corinth presuppose knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, the LXX, and its traditions, otherwise his arguments do not make any sense. It should be remembered that in this letter, his advocacy for admitting gentiles without circumcision, dietary, and Sabbath laws was part of a debate (Peter, James) before it became the mainstream in emerging Christianity.

20 Duff builds his case using Jewish texts from Hellenistic and Roman times (Duff 2015, pp. 155–58) and the use of the first person plural, "*we all*," meaning Jews and gentiles, from Galatians 3:13–14, 23–25; 4:3–8.

21 Here understood as the written Torah, not the lawgiver as a person.

22 (Tertullian 1972, V 11).

23 (Tertullian 1972, II 19). Fredriksen (2017b, p. 1): "The problem was not the God of the Jews, nor the text of the Jews, asserted Tertullian: the problem was the people themselves."

24   For the problem of categorisation, see (Mason 2007). He defended the argument that there was no category of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world, the *Ioudaioi/Judaeans* were understood as an *ethnic* group with their own customs. From the early Third Century, this changed due to the use of Iudaismus as a belief system, initiated by Tertullian (Mason 2007, p. 471).

25   According to (Fredriksen 2017b, pp. 5–8), Augustine maintained the traditional and hostile rhetoric against the Jews in his sermons, but wrote amazingly positive texts about Jews and Judaism in his conflict with the Manichees.

26   (Langton 2010, pp. 16, n. 40, 41; 165–66, 169).

27   *Tertius usus legis*, (Calvin 1960, II.7.12).

28   Vedavyasa: according to tradition, the composer of the Gita as part of the Mahabharata.

29   Proclamation of Maharaja Chithira Thirunal of 12.11.1936.

30   The narrative: Devendrath Tagore—the father of the poet—was depressed after the death of his father. A piece of printed paper was wafted by a passing breeze. He picked it up, but he could not read the Sanskrit. The family pundit translated: it was the first verse of the *Isha Upanishad* (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 84, p. 326).

31   For a critical view of Gandhi's reading: (Tidrick 2006, pp. 142–43).

32   BG 2:45 "The domain of the Vedas is the world of the three *gunas*: transcend that domain, Arjuna, beyond the pair of opposites, always abiding in purity, beyond acquisition and conservation, the master of yourself" (Van Buitenen 1981, p. 84).

33   The lex talionis is Marcion's antithesis VIII (von Harnack 1924, p. 90) in which Ex 21:23–25 and Mat 5:38–39 are confronted.

34   During the Chauri Chaura incident (2–5 February 1922), aggressive protesters torched a police station killing 22 police officers because they had fired on an advancing crowd, killing 3 and wounding many others. Gandhi went on a five-day fast and called the Non-Cooperation Movement off. The people were not ready for *satyagraha* and *ahiṃsā*, according to Gandhi. The British executed 19 men, and 110 men received life imprisonment. Confronted with the spiral of violence and the actual problem of retaliation, Gandhi changed his view about Moses and the doctrine of "an eye for an eye". A few years later in his autobiography he returned to the uncritical old view mentioned above.

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Gandhi and the World of the Hebrew Bible: The Case of Daniel as Satyagrahi

Ed Noort [1,2]

1   Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen, 9712GK Groningen, The Netherlands; e.noort@rug.nl
2   Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Wallenberg Research Centre, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: Among the biblical characters used as examples in developing and explaining *satyagraha*, Daniel is the most important after Jesus. In Gandhi's speeches and writings from 1909 to 1946, Daniel served as the ideal *satyagrahi* both in South Africa and in India. Over time, Daniel received company in the gallery of examples in which Socrates occupied a prominent place. Depending on theme, place, and audience, past and present characters from different traditions and scriptures accompanied Daniel. They represented the development of aspects of *satyagraha*: nonviolent active resistance as a weapon of the strong, courageous actions as a deliberate choice without excitement, love for the antagonist, preparedness to suffer, and no fear of death. All these aspects are embodied by the Gandhian Daniel. Gandhi emphasized the active role of Daniel as a resister, not the traditional view of the victim of court intrigues. In this paper, I argue that the image of the ideal *satyagrahi* Daniel could be strengthened by combining the court narratives from the first half and the apocalypses from the second one of the biblical book. The article provides context both for Gandhi's political and religious practice and for the book of Daniel. The strange world of apocalypses seems to contradict the model of the Gandhian figure Daniel. However, they are crisis literature, and it makes sense to observe how the protagonist and his audience in times of occupation, persecutions, and war ask for guidance. Apocalypses show how Jewish resistance to foreign rule was conceived. The result of the survey is a complex image of competing literatures from roughly the same period and the hands, heads, beliefs, and sufferings behind them. The view of the end of history, a program of nonviolence, and hope in the Daniel apocalypse serve as contrast propaganda to contemporary visions on the violent Maccabean revolt and the Seleucid persecutions. They offer a nonviolent counterweight to the ideology of the state propaganda of the Seleucids. They contradict the historiographic idealization of the Maccabean revolt and its armed resistance.

Keywords: Gandhi; Old Testament/Hebrew Bible; Daniel; Socrates; *satyagraha*; hermeneutics; apocalypses; nonviolence

1. Introduction

The article on Gandhi's use of scriptures in this Special Issue on nonviolence and religion ended with a short overview of his ambivalent relationship with the Hebrew Bible (Noort 2022, pp. 13–14) and the big exception: Daniel. This paper explores the importance of the Gandhian Daniel when combined with other characters from tradition and authoritative scriptures. It sketches the background of the literary context and historical setting of the biblical book of Daniel from which Gandhi took his example and reflects on the possibility of deepening Gandhi's intention by combining the courtier Daniel with the visionary sage of the apocalypses in contrast to other ideologies of the Seleucid era.

I begin with the Gandhian texts in which Daniel appears (2), ask for the reception of Gandhi's approach in the scholarly discourse on Daniel (3), continue with the book of Daniel and its apocalyptic program in a historical context (4), and make a plea for giving

Daniel a place in the debates on nonviolence by reading the courtier and the apocalyptic seer together through the Gandhian lens (5).

Daniel, the legendary sage, counsellor, dream interpreter, and visionary, was inspirational for Gandhi as a Jewish courtier who obeyed the laws of his God more than the edicts of the king due to hostile conspiracies. Thrown into the lion's den, he was saved by his God, whose universal power was recognized by the sovereign (Dan 6:1–28). Gandhi's favorite chapter is a part of the collection of court narratives (Dan 1–6). Together with canonical parallels such as the Joseph novella and the book of Esther and the non-canonical, widespread narrative of *Aḥiqar* ([Porten and Yardeni 1993](), pp. 23–57), they treat the theme of the threats and precariousness of Jewish life in an exposed position under foreign rule. For Gandhi, the way in which the hero handled the threat was crucial. In a wider context, the overarching question is how an initially divinely legitimized foreign rule can be resisted and ended. To draw out how the stories about Daniel answer this question, I compare the different approaches to this question in the books of Daniel and Maccabees.

2. Daniel and Companions

In his speeches and writings, Gandhi often referred to Daniel by explaining and developing the most important aspects of *satyagraha*. Depending on time and context, Daniel received company (See Table 1).

Table 1. An overview.

DANIEL AND COMPANY	
South-Africa, London	*Genre, Situation and Themes*
Daniel	Johannesburg. Speech after imprisonment on passive resistance against laws in conflict with conscience. 24 May 1909.
Jesus Christ, Daniel, Socrates, Tolstoy	Germiston. Report of speech after imprisonment. "Soul Force" as the better term for passive resistance. 7 June 1909.
Daniel	Farewell party in London. Report of speech and direct speech. Not accepting any violent method means willingness to suffer. 12 November 1909.
Daniel	Kimberley. Report of speech on resistance to laws against reason and holiness. 24 April 1911.
Jesus, Daniel, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Tolstoy	Farewell party Durban. Report of Speech. Passive resistance needs greater courage than physical resistance. 8 July 1914.
India	
Harischandra, Prahlad, Mirabai, Daniel, Socrates, Arabs (in Franco-Moroccan War)	Letter to Shankarial. "Ideas on Satyagraha". Satyagraha brings good both to the satyagraha and his adversary. 2 September 1917.
Prahlad, Daniel, Jesus, Mirabai, and others	Letter to Satyan and Bose. Passive resistance is soul force and essentially a religious principle as old as the world itself (before). 16 September 1917.
Henry David Thoreau, Daniel, John Bunyan	Letter to the *Times of India*. Civil resistance, not violence, is the true remedy. 20 August 1919.
Bunyan, Daniel	Letter to Esther Faering (Menon). Justification of rebellion in the religious sense of the term. 25 August 1919.
Daniel, Socrates, Prahlad, Mirabai	Congress Report on Punjab Disorders. Satyagraha as a weapon of the strongest. Not any ill will towards persecutors. 25 March 1920.
Zoroaster, Mahavir, Daniel, Jesus, Muhammed, Nanak, a host of others	After Chauri Chaura killings, article in *Young India*. Non-resistance to evil means not to retaliate. 9 February 1922.
Daniel, Bunyan, Latimer, Prahlad	After Chauri Chaura killings, Notes in *Young India*. Civil resistance excludes the idea of excitement. 9 March 1922.
Daniel	Report of talk with missionaries in *Harijan*. Real belief needs no guarantee, statutory or otherwise. 28 April 1946.

2.1. Daniel in South Africa

At a meeting in Johannesburg on 24 May 1909, Gandhi mentioned Daniel for the first time in a public speech when, just released, he looked back on his third time in jail.[1] From February 25 onward, he had been imprisoned for not producing his (burnt) registration certificate. After the early morning release from his three months of imprisonment with hard labor, he addressed crowds first in a mosque in Pretoria, later in Johannesburg. The reference to Daniel appears only in the English part of the Johannesburg speech, a meeting where Gandhi was received as a hero; Rev. Joseph Doke was also present there.[2] In jail, Gandhi "found much consolation in reading the book of the prophet Daniel". He had been able to borrow a Bible from the prison's library and it formed part of his extensive reading. Daniel was one of the "greatest passive resisters that ever lived". He was an example for Indians when they were confronted with laws "in conflict with their consciences" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 9, p. 220). The tertium comparationis of Daniel and the Indians in South Africa was the opposition against laws in conflict with conscience. Though *satyagraha* had already been coined the year before, here Gandhi still used "passive resistance". Gandhi probably encountered Daniel during his third prison term because Daniel does not appear in his extensive accounts of his previous imprisonments.[3]

2.1.1. Daniel's Elder Brother: Socrates

What historically would be nonsense: calling Socrates Daniel's elder brother, makes sense through the way Gandhi used these two beloved examples: Daniel and Socrates. Next to (daily) readings of the Gita, Quran and the Bible, the Upanishads, and the Jain poet, Rajchandra, it was Daniel and Socrates who encouraged and comforted Gandhi during his imprisonments. Especially Socrates figured prominently during his earlier prison stays. The figure of Socrates functioned in two directions. Firstly, as a stimulus and comfort for Gandhi himself during his prison terms. Secondly, as a mighty weapon and message for the Indians during the struggle.

The first mention of Socrates appeared in a "Special Contribution" to the *Indian Opinion* of 26 August 1905 (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 5, pp. 69–70),[4] but Socrates begins to become especially important for Gandhi during his readings[5] and rewriting of Plato's *Apology*. In a series of six articles,[6] he paraphrased the *Apology* during his time in prison and used it as a wake-up call to the Indians not only in South Africa but also in India.[7] The homiletic character of his paraphrase may be illustrated by the last sentence:

> "This (process and death of Socrates) is a historical event, that is, an event that actually occurred. We pray to God, and want our readers also to pray, that they, and we too, may have the moral strength which enabled Socrates to follow virtue to the end and to embrace death as if it were his beloved. We advise everyone to turn his mind again and again to Socrates words and conduct". (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 229)

In a stimulating article, Phiroze Vasunia (Vasunia 2015) studied Gandhi's paraphrase and its connections to Ruskin's *Unto This Last*,[8] stressed Gandhi's own preparedness for death and dying for a just cause, and made clear which translation Gandhi used (Cary 1905; Vasunia 2015, p. 179). He demonstrated Socrates's/Gandhi's willingness to self-sacrifice and die worthily rather than to escape in a cowardly manner.[9] Vasunia carefully compared Cary's translation and the Gujurati and English version of Gandhi's paraphrase of the third speech of Socrates (Plato 2017, *Apology* 38c–39b).[10]

Gandhi identified himself strongly with the character of Socrates, resulting in the title of his rewriting of the *Apology* in Gujurati *Ek satyavirni katha*, "Story of a true soldier" or, as Gandhi 1958–1994 vol. 8 renders it, "A soldier of truth" (Vasunia 2015, pp. 177–78). Moreover, his readings of the *Apology* and his view on Socrates were an incentive for the further development of *satyagraha* instead of "passive resistance". It was the influential art critic, social thinker, evangelical, and later Oxford professor John Ruskin (1819–1900), and especially his four essays from 1860 titled "Until This Last",[11] that influenced Gandhi

strongly. One week after the closing article on Socrates's *Apology*, Gandhi began with "extracts" from Ruskin's essays because "Socrates gave us some idea of man's *duty*. He *practised* his precepts.[12] It can be argued that Ruskin's ideas are an elaboration of Socrates's. Ruskin has described vividly how one who wants to live by Socrates's ideas should acquit himself in the different vocations" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 241). However, just as Gandhi stated that Ruskin elaborated the ideas of Socrates, we may focus on the reversed direction: Gandhi read Socrates through the lens of Ruskin (Vasunia 2015). Ruskin stated that there are five intellectual professions/vocations in a civilized nation: the soldier (for defense), the pastor (for teaching), the physician (for health), the lawyer (for enforcing justice), and the merchant (for provisions), and that their duty is to die for their cause in case of battle, falsehood, plagues, injustice, and famine. Gandhi united these professions in himself. He was a preacher, a healer, a lawyer, came from a caste of merchants, and was prepared to die for his cause (Vasunia 2015, pp. 176–78). The image of Socrates preferring death above flight or giving up his divinely given duty, on the one side, and the vision of Ruskin on the other side inspired Gandhi to develop *satyagraha* further.

The result of Gandhi's prison readings of Plato appeared on 4 April 1908 for the first time in *Indian Opinion*.[13] In his preface, Gandhi already mentioned the principal elements that made Socrates an example and an inspiration. Socrates lived in the fear of God and had no fear of death.[14] He himself adhered to the traditional religion but encouraged the people to fight the corrupt elements of its practices. Socrates showed no fear after his death sentence and took the poison smilingly. *Mahatma* Socrates "was a great *satyagrahi* and adopted *satyagraha* against his own people". His words could be an elixir for healing the disease of India, i.e., the British oppression. For "we must learn to live and die like Socrates" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, pp. 172–74). It is not difficult to see how Gandhi recreated Socrates in his own image and how in turn this image inspired him. The intertwining of Socrates's repeated assertion that he fulfils a divine mission,[15] doing his duty "unto this last", the unshaken awareness of being innocent, and the courage of dying fearlessly for the good of the community illustrated the importance of Socrates for Gandhi. Socrates, Gandhi, and Ruskin came together in Gandhi's rendering of the incentive never to give up your task from the *Apology*:

> "The right thing for a man is not to desert his post, even if he has to run the risk of being killed or any other risk, whether he has chosen the post of his own will or has been put there by a superior" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 213; Plato 2017, *Apology* 28d).[16]

Leaving his post would mean for Socrates ceasing to practice philosophy, to critically examine the youth and the citizens of Athens, and no longer "opening the eyes of men for their own ignorance" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, pp. 196–97; Plato 2017, *Apology* 23b). This post is divinely given and therefore, "I shall obey the god (*ho theos [Apollo]*) rather than you; and so long as I have breath and am able, I shall not stop practicing philosophy" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 213; Plato 2017, *Apology* 29d). Metaphorically, his task is to be reins for strong horses, i.e., Athens and the Athenians.[17]

Even more important than the repeated statements on his adherence to traditional religion and beliefs in response to the charge of atheism are Socrates's utterances that "something god-inspired and spirit-like comes to me" (*hoti moi theion ti kai daimonion gignetai),* a voice (*phōnē*), a spiritual sign (*daimonion sēmeion*) that opposes the undertaking of wrong actions.[18] The inner voice, however different the contexts of Socrates and Gandhi might be, appeared to be a powerful guide and important compass for Gandhi as well. Most clear were Gandhi's thoughts about this "Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice or the 'still small Voice'" in the discussions about his fasts in 1933, when even his old adversary from South Africa, Jan Smuts, tried to stop him with an appeal for "old friendship's sake and for the great causes you have championed so successfully" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 55, pp. 120–22).[19] Gandhi, however, listened to his inner voice and started his three-week fasting anti-untouchability strike.

In his last article, Gandhi paraphrased Socrates's famous view that death can only be a good thing, because it is either the highest form of sleep—and that is a blessing—or it is a journey to another place where he will meet Orpheus, Hesiod, Homer, and others (Plato 2017, *Apology* 41a). When Socrates concluded "that this one thing is true: that nothing can be bad for a good man, either alive or dead, and his affairs are not ignored by the gods" (Plato 2017, *Apology* 41c–d), Gandhi rendered it as: "Believe it as a truth that no good man can come by evil either in life or after death. Such a man is never forsaken by God. And you may be sure that the man of truth is always happy" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 229). He reinforced the element that the outcome of a battle—life or death—does not matter for the man of truth, *a satyagrahi*. It is in the hand of God. How closely connected and how inspirational Socrates's views were is demonstrated by Gandhi in his "Triumph of Truth" celebrating the agreement with General Jan Smuts one week after his release from his (first) prison term: "He (the *satyagrahi*) will give no thought to success or failure. He is pledged only to the great task of serving Truth, doing his duty in the name of God. The outcome itself is in the hands of the Lord" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 61, *Indian Opinion* 8.2.1908). Here, Socrates, Gandhi and *satyagraha* are amalgamated.

Gandhi "saw something of himself in Socrates whose life had been a long *satyagraha* against a society entrenched in error and prejudice" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. VI). Inspirational for Gandhi was the fact that Socrates followed virtue to the end, practiced his precepts, adhered to the traditional religion but fought the corrupt elements of it, and above all that he did not desert his post, his duty in life. He was prepared to die for it. Though it is too short-sighted to establish clear oppositions, in which Daniel represents the religiously motivated ideal of how to live in opposition to unjust laws and Socrates how to die, Socrates returned in later writings and speeches of Gandhi with a strong emphasis on the way he handled suffering, dying, and death.[20]

2.1.2. Daniel Again

Returning to Daniel and his first appearance in Gandhi's speeches in 1909, the expression "passive resistance" did not, in fact, fit with Daniel's actions. Two weeks later (7 June 1909), Gandhi explained at a meeting in Germiston that "soul force" (*satyagraha*) would be the better term. Active resistance, including violence, should be called "body force". In the demonstration of this "soul force", Daniel received company. The purest form of *satyagraha* was represented by Jesus Christ, Daniel, Socrates, and Tolstoy, who lived according to their convictions.[21] Daniel and Socrates were now a couple, accompanied by Jesus and Tolstoy (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 9, p. 243). "Soul force" should be taken literally, for Gandhi emphasized that the recognition of the existence of the soul as apart from the body and its permanent and superior nature connected with a living faith was a conditio sine qua non for a successful use of *satyagraha*.[22]

From June until November 1909, Gandhi remained in England for negotiations on the future of the South African Union. A recognition of theoretical equality (voting) and a satisfying solution for immigration rules could not be reached. The farewell party for Gandhi in London was dominated by the failed negotiations; however, on the way back, he would write his masterpiece *Hind Swaraj* on the future of independence (Gandhi 2009). In the speech at this party, he returned to the problem of the expression "passive resistance" and explained *satyagraha* through Daniel, who "refused to obey the laws of men which he did not approve" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 9, p. 541 and vol. 10, p. 78).[23] What Daniel did was the same as what the South African Indians did when they refused to accept the laws concerning the Registration Act. The decision they made not to meet violence with violence forced them to act as Daniel did. Gandhi repeated the example in a speech at Kimberley, where he "likened the Transvaal passive resistance to the conscientious opposition offered by . . . Daniel to the Laws of the Medes and the Persians".[24] The report offered an additional argument. Daniel's conscience spoke because the laws of the Medes and the Persians were "against reason and holiness". Daniel received the title "Prophet".

The last time for Daniel in South Africa came at the Durban farewell party before Gandhi, his family, and Kallenbach left South Africa definitely for (England) and India. Not conscience but courage was the theme of his speech when Gandhi referred to the power of passive resistance. Passive resistance is not "the weapon of the weak". You need "greater courage to be a passive resister than a physical resister". Moreover, "it was the courage of a Jesus, a Daniel, a Cranmer, a Latimer and a Ridley..., and Tolstoy who could go calmly to suffering and death" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 12, p. 446). To Jesus, Daniel, and Tolstoy, three (Anglican) bishops were added. These three "Oxford martyrs" were burned at the stake during the persecutions of Mary Tudor (1555/1556), who tried to reverse the English Reformation. Now the emphasis was not on "conscience" but on "courage".

2.2. Daniel in India

The definite return to India brought a new context for Gandhi's use of exemplary characters from authoritative scriptures, tradition, and contemporaries. In "Ideas about Satyagraha" from 1917, Gandhi repeated that *satyagraha* was not the power of the weak, not passive: "it can only be used by the strong... and indeed it calls for intense activity". A real *satyagrahi* does not fear for his body; he has no fear of death; truth is his ultimate goal; he has compassion with his antagonists; he acts without waiting for others. Who were now together with Daniel in the "cloud of witnesses", who were real *satyagrahis*? Gandhi began with Harishchandra, continued with Prahlad and Mirabai, followed by Daniel and Socrates, and "those Arabs who hurled themselves on the fire of the French artillery" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 13, pp. 521–23). The legendary King Harischandra of Ayodhya entered the life of Gandhi at an early stage. He saw the play as a child, identified himself with the tragic ruler who became the slave of *chandala,* and, preserving his dharma, was willing to sacrifice his dearest wife Taramati (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 39, p. 11 and vol. 30, pp. 252–53). Prahlad, a devotee of Vishnu, was the pious son of a king, who did not like his son's spiritual inclination and tried to kill him through poison, elephants, snakes, drowning, and fire. Prahlad survived all these trials and continued to worship Vishnu. The poet Mirabai, a 16th century *bhakta* and devotee of Krishna, refused to commit *sati* after her husband's death.[25] Her inlaws tried to kill her through poison, snakes, and drowning, but they did not succeed. Mirabai stayed with her "real husband": Krishna. Harischandra, Prahlad, and Mirabai stuck to their truth, faced all trials, and were saved. Gandhi had these three Indian characters accompanied by the pair Daniel and Socrates and finally "the Arabs who hurled themselves on the fire...". He was referring here to a story from the Franco-Moroccan War (1911–1912), in which the Arabs ran into the artillery fire of the French. The French refused to continue the shooting and embraced the Arabs, impressed by their bravery. However, Gandhi had a *caveat* here. Those Arabs were *sayagrahis* indeed and the reaction of the French demonstrated that *satyagraha* is successful. However, the Arabs were not *satyagrahis* through a deliberate choice. They were religiously motivated but "had no love in their hearts. A *satyagrahi* does not lay down his life in anger" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 13, pp. 517–18). Gandhi repeated the importance of a religious motivation in the same month, September 1917. According to Gandhi, *satyagraha* is a *religious* principle, and he underlined this with the conduct of Prahlad, Daniel, Mirabai, and others, whose guiding principle in their lives was religion (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 13, p. 531).

Guided by Gandhi's use of the figure of Daniel, the examples of Harischandra, Prahlad, and Mirabai appear here in the survey of his return to India. This does not mean a separation between a Greek-Judean-Christian lifeworld and the Indian one, nor a claim on priority. Gandhi would be the last to agree to such a scheme or claim. Chronologically, Mirabai already appears in 1907 in a wish "that we badly need thousands of women who can compare with Mirabai" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 7, p. 51). A song of her demonstrates that the ultimate love of God makes anything else bitter tasting. Compared to *satyagraha* petitions and deputations are such a bitter tasting (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 9, vol. 9, p. 386). The same is the case with Prahlad, "God's devotee, (who) boldly embraced the red-hot pillar" as a demonstration of courage and honor (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 7, p. 123). In

an encouragement letter to the Tamils just before his third imprisonment in 1909, he reminds his audience that "we are both descendants of Prahlad . . . passive resister of the purest type" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 9, p. 199). The examples fulfil different functions in different situations and—more importantly—Gandhi tailors his examples to his audience or addressees.

Two years later, Daniel received other companions. In a letter to *The Times of India* (22 August 1919), Gandhi wrote about civil disobedience, and now the context and addressees required different examples. Next to Daniel, who disobeyed the law of the Medes and the Persians,[26] he referred to Henry David Thoreau,[27] through his "immortal essay" on civil disobedience (Thoreau 1849), and to John Bunyan,[28] the puritan, non-conformist preacher, who spent twelve years in jail after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy (Hofmeyr 2004). Civil disobedience against laws that wound the conscience was the link between Thoreau, Daniel, and Bunyan (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 16, p. 51).

In the same month, Daniel and Bunyan were brought together in a letter to his "dearest child", the Danish missionary Esther Faering, who wanted to stay in India and later lived in his *ashram:* "Success [of requests for a longer stay in India] could only be justified in the religious sense of the term, even as Daniel's and Bunyan's were justified" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 16, p. 63).[29] Daniel and Bunyan served as examples of religiously motivated acting. The reference fitted with Faering's background and the problems around her engagement in the *Sabermati Ashram*.

The Congress Report on the Punjab Disorders of 1920 contained a chapter on *satiyagraha.* It demonstrated the long-lasting need of delimiting *satyagraha* from "passive resistance". Again, it was necessary to emphasize that the former as the weapon of the strong excluded physical force or violence while the latter not. The examples Gandhi used were now almost all traditional: Daniel, Socrates, Prahlad, and Mirabai. Daniel refused to obey a law that was against his conscience and calmly suffered the punishment; Socrates wanted to teach the truth to the Athenian youth and was sentenced to death; Prahlad refused his father's orders because they were inconsistent with his religious beliefs; Mirabai followed her conscience against her husband's orders. Gandhi emphasizes their common ground: "none of them had any ill will towards their persecutors. Daniel and Socrates were model citizens of their state, Prahlad a model son and Mirabai a model wife" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 17, pp. 152–53).

The first months of 1922 were dominated by the dramatic Chauri Chaura killings (Tidrick 2006, pp. 176–80; Guha 2019, pp. 155–57), when aggressive protesters torched a police station, killing 22 policemen, because they had fired on an advancing crowd. For Gandhi, the incident demonstrated that the people were ill prepared, not ready for real *satyagraha* and *ahiṃsā*. He himself went on a five-day fast and called the Non-Cooperation Movement off.[30] The British sentenced 170 men to death by hanging and Gandhi, also arrested, to 6 years in jail.[31] Deeply affected by the spiral of violence, Gandhi emphasized two other elements of *satyagraha*. The idea of *excitement* should be excluded, and he illuminated it by the examples of Daniel, Bunyan, Latimer, and Prahlad. Without excitement, Daniel "opened his doors (windows)" for praying to his God; Bunyan turned into a non-conformist without excitement, Latimer at his execution said calmly that his hand should be burnt first, because "it was this hand had offended writing contrary to his heart". Prahlad "rushed to the pillar his father had heated and embraced it" without excitement. All these actions were deliberate decisions. A new aspect had been added: "deliberate decisions taken without excitement are the real test for true civil disobedience" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 23, p. 53).

The second element was non-retaliation. One week after the Chauri Chaura events, Gandhi reacted with remarks on retaliation (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 22, p. 363. YI 9 February 1922). His own life had been devoted to non-retaliation, because "the greatest teachers of the world: Zoroaster, Mahavira, Daniel, Jesus and Mohammed, Nanakand and a host of others" inspired him.[32] The commandments were no obligation to blood-revenge but a restriction of it.[33]

Twenty-four years later, in April 1946, Gandhi returned for the last time to Daniel, adding again a new aspect to the Daniel image. Christian missionaries had asked Gandhi whether an independent India would guarantee the rights of mission and proselytization. His answer was negative, because a real believer leaves the outcome of his work to God, as Daniel did. Obeying his conscience, he went into the lion's den, and after he was saved by God, the king recognized "that the God of Daniel is the living God, enduring forever" (Dan 6:26). "Who is the living God will come to light without statute or guarantee" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 84, p. 52). Therefore, the missionaries did not need any guarantee if they really believed their own message.

2.3. The Gandhian Daniel and Company: Summary

After Jesus, Daniel was the most important biblical character for Gandhi. Daniel was paired with Socrates, spiritually "his elder brother", and accompanied by characters suitable for the addressees of his writings and speeches in their own context. Though at an early stage Daniel was "one of the greatest *passive resisters* that ever lived", Gandhi used the Daniel narrative time and again to explain the idea and practice of *satyagraha* as the better definition of what "passive resistance" really meant.

Daniel and company demonstrated the wide range of Gandhi's use of authoritative scriptures. For Gandhi, there were no boundaries between the scriptures of different religions. Past and present, holy writ and tradition can come together. History, legend, and myth are mixed.

Which aspects of *satyagraha* represent the character Daniel? Daniel was—next to Socrates—a comforting figure during imprisonment. Just as Gandhi did, Daniel, a model civil servant and citizen, opposed laws in conflict with his conscience. Gandhi's comparison that Daniel did the same as the Indians did with their opposition against the Registration Act goes in a twofold direction. First, it serves as an encouragement in the direction of the Indians, and second, as a signal to his English audience that the events in South Africa mirrored the situation and the actions of the biblical hero Daniel, a figure of their own tradition. The object of the conscientious opposition received an additional qualification as "Law of the Medes and the Persians" (Dan 6:12.15), a symbol for an unchangeable decision that became a trap for the king himself (Dan 6:14). Daniel's defiance of such a law enlarged his conscientious decision, for the content of the law itself was "against reason and holiness", important concepts in Gandhi's thought (Noort 2022, section 2.2.1, p. 3). According to Gandhi, "Soul force" should be taken literally, and this required a belief in the superior nature of the soul combined with a living faith. The Gandhian Daniel embodied the courage of a real *satyagrahi*. *Satyagraha* was and is the weapon not of the weak but of the strong. Immense courage will be needed. It was Gandhi's crucial message when he definitely returned to India. Daniel by then received other companions. Harischandra, Prahlad, and Mirabai preceded Daniel and Socrates. The American biblical scholar Daniel Smith-Christopher drew attention to the social resistance of Mirabai. Her *religious* devotion was a critique of domestic power in which marriage was strictly regulated and in this way demonstrated active resistance (Smith-Christopher 1993, pp. 327–28). When Daniel and Socrates represented conscience against unjust laws, the Indian background transferred it with the Gandhian examples to resistance against royal and domestic power. Such a resistance needed a deliberate choice. If not, if there was no love for the antagonist, the most important aspect of *satyagraha* was missing. The conditio sine qua non of Daniel's civil disobedience was nonviolence.[34] *Satyagraha* should be offered without excitement. There is no place for retaliation and the outcome of *satyagraha* should be left to God. Daniel resisted nonviolently and was prepared to suffer. There was no fear of death.

3. The Gandhian Daniel and His Reception

Gandhi's model Daniel as the exemplary *satyagrahi* has had a limited reception. In especially Christian reception history, the book of Daniel has been considered largely for its

view on the future and the supposed tools it offered to reveal the secret meaning of history, powers, and empires (Koch 1997).

As far as I can see, there has been only one serious engagement with Gandhi's approach to demonstrate the relevance of the Gandhian Daniel (Smith-Christopher 1993, 1996). Emilsen mentioned it and it came to life again in the commentary of Newsom on Daniel, especially in the sections about the reception history (Emilsen 2001a, 2001b; Breed 2014; Newsom 2014).

Daniel Smith-Christopher's point of departure was the question as to whether readings from different cultural contexts "could give us new ideas about what the (biblical) text historically meant" (Smith-Christopher 1993, p. 323).[35] He analyzed how the Gandhian Daniel really acted in Dan 6, whether his active resistance fitted into the exegesis of the court tales, and what this meant for an implied attitude to foreign rule in Daniel 1–6. The crucial verse, Dan 6:10, reads (KJV):

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing (royal decree) was signed he went into his house; and his windows *being open* in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime".[36]

Gandhi supposed that Daniel actively *opened* his windows. In this way, he demonstrated his opposition against the unjust royal decree. Retelling the narrative in 1946, Gandhi made Daniel's active resistance even clearer. Normally, according to Gandhi, Daniel prayed *behind closed doors*, but now the windows were open so that all could see him (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 84, p. 52). Smith-Christopher supported Gandhi by referring to the Septuagint, rendering the active form "he opened" instead of the passive form of the MT.[37] This may seems to be a very small detail, but it proved that there was a textual tradition that gave Daniel an even more active role in his opposition.[38] Drawing the circle wider, Smith-Christopher concluded that the court tales read in the context of the "highly politicised apocalyptic visions of Dan 7–12... take on political significance as Jewish calls to remain steadfast". Taking up the recent trend of judging the Persian rule less positively than earlier in the scholarly debate, he raised the possibility of understanding the court stories as folk tales of subordinated Jews taking up a court setting but longing for freedom and power (Smith-Christopher 1993, pp. 333–37). The Daniel stories served as resistance literature for Jews under foreign rule.[39] As I will argue in the next sections, reading the court narratives together with the apocalypses offers even more possibilities than Smith-Christopher indicated in his pioneering paper.

4. The Book of Daniel and Its Context

4.1. Daniel: Not by Human Hands

In the following sections, we leave the Gandhian reading of the figure of Daniel and turn to the world of the book of Daniel in which this collection of court stories, dream interpretations, visions, and apocalypses emerged. In its historical context, the book of Daniel is one voice among competing and controversial other voices from roughly the same time. A time of dangers, persecutions, and wars not only on the narratological level but also in the real world and a time of the search for resistance to imperial power and propaganda. Bringing the Gandhian figure of Daniel together with the book of Daniel and the competing voices of the Maccabees is rewarding because the choices made by Gandhi and the authors of Daniel obtain context in the real world. Gandhi himself was not aware of this broader context. For him, Daniel—the courageous satyagrahi from the court narratives—was essential. The second part of the biblical book with the apocalyptic visions did not really interest him. Eschatology and apocalyptic thinking were not very important for him because on first view, they lack direct indications for concrete actions. When Gandhi referred to eschatology, he transferred it immediately to a concrete situation. The famous "swords into ploughshares" of Isa 2:4 resulted in a call on both Muslims and Hindus not to expect peace by the possession of rifles during the tensions shortly before independence in 1947 (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 87, p. 298; Emilsen 2001b, p. 21). The "Prince of Peace" (śar šālôm) of Isa 9:6 (MT 9:5) led in 1935 to the conclusion that "it is a first-class

human tragedy that peoples of the earth who claim to believe the message of Jesus who they describe as the Prince of Peace show little of that belief in actual practice" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 62, pp. 175–76; Emilsen 2001b, p. 23).

Nevertheless, a look at the book of Daniel, from which Gandhi conceived of his protagonist, is needed.[40] It is the latest book of the Hebrew Bible and the only one that contains apocalyptic visions (Koch 1972, p. 23; Collins 2003, pp. 49–52).[41] It is part of a group of larger Danielic literature from Persian and Hellenistic times until deep in the common era.[42] For the reception history, it is important that fragments of all twelve chapters of the Book of Daniel have been found in Qumran.[43] This means that within a relatively short time between an edition of the Book of Daniel that would become the Masoretic Text and Qumran, there was already a connection between the court stories and the apocalyptic parts. The Aramaic part of Daniel contains the court stories (Dan 3–6), which are surrounded by the dream vision of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2) and the apocalypse of the four beasts (Dan 7).

In the apocalyptic visions, Daniel himself is in need of an angelic interpreter. He is not the active agent but the receiver. The scope is enlarged; it is not any longer the situation at a foreign court that is at stake but the secret meaning of world history and the long-awaited end of foreign rule and occupation. The primary question of this crisis literature is not how to act truthfully in a conflict situation, not the question of *lāmâ* "why (this suffering and suppression)", but *ʿad mātay* "how long?". The answer is given in revelatory dreams and visions, revealing the secrets of the end of history by a heavenly figure. A four-kingdom scheme (Newsom 2014; Perrin and Stuckenbruck 2020) revealed the past and the future.[44] In it, the historical empires of Babylonia, Media, and Persia are represented by the beasts of lion, bear, and leopard, respectively, while the fourth kingdom meant Greece and the Seleucids after the death of Alexander the Great (Dan 7:3–7). The addressees of the apocalyptic part of Daniel are the politically and religiously suppressed Judaeans during the Seleucid reign. The "Wise among the people" (*maśkîlîm*, Dan 11:33–35; 12:3), probably the hands and heads behind the book of Daniel, chose another way than the armed resistance of the Maccabees. On one side, they opposed the extreme Hellenization ("those who violate the covenant" (Dan 11:32); on the other side, the Maccabees are only "a little help" (Dan 11:34). The *maśkîlîm* did not join the armed battles (Helms 2013, p. 24). "Deliverance by divine intervention, not militant struggle is the bottom line of the book of Daniel" (Tonstad 2016, p. 143).

4.2. Maccabees: Armed Resistance

The deep rift between Hellenized and traditional Judaism is the theme of the Books 1 and 2 Maccabees from roughly the same period as the youngest texts of the book of Daniel. 1 Maccabees describes the battles of the Maccabee family against inner and outer enemies, and homage is paid to their rise in power as the Hasmonean priest-kings. The main corpus of 2 Maccabees narrows the chronological frame from the rise of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 BCE) until the defeat of his general Nicanor in 161 BCE and focusses on the battles of Judas Maccabeus.

Tonstad emphasized that the Maccabean uprising was not only a battle against the Hellenization from outside as a defense against Antiochus IV Epiphanes but also an internal conflict within the Jewish community.[45] Although fluid boundaries between the two existed,[46] religious purging became the ultimate goal, if necessary by the sword. Divine legitimation and inspiration could be found in the fall of Jericho under Joshua (2 Macc 12:15–16),[47] the reform of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:4–20), and the deuteronomistic ideology of the ban (devotion to destruction):

> "They (Mattathias and the *ḥăsîdîm*, "the (militant) pious") organised an army and struck down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety they tore down the altars; they forcibly circumcised

all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel". (1 Macc 2:45–46)

"They (Edomites, Ammonites) were shut up by him (Judas) in their towers, and he encamped against them, devoted them to destruction,[48] and burned with fire their towers and all who were in them". (1 Macc 5:5)

Further Deuteronomi(sti)c influences on 1 and 2 Maccabees are clearly visible (Berthelot 2007, pp. 46–53).[49]

4.3. Daniel and Maccabees

Against the background of a shared history of persecution by the Seleucids, especially by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his desacralization of the Jerusalem temple, the books of Daniel and the Maccabees offer different answers for survival and resistance. They cover in their central sayings roughly the same period of the second century BCE, but they differ in their vision on the role of human action.

For the book of Daniel, two points are crucial, as Tonstad has demonstrated (Tonstad 2016, p. 142). The first is the famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which envisages a statue with images of parts of the human body and a series of metals representing the diminishing power and value of the four empires of Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Greece:

"The head of that statue was of fine gold (Babylonia), its chest and arms of silver (Media), its middle and thighs of bronze (Persia), its legs of iron (Greece [Alexander]), its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (Ptolemies and Seleucids)" (Dan 2:32–33).

The last and weakest part of the statue will be crushed by a stone "cut out *not by human hands*" (Dan 2:34.45). The dream interpreter Daniel spans ages and imperial powers with a vision of hope for the threatened present of the Seleucid persecutions. It is a dream interpretation of cultural and religious resistance. The deliverance from imperial power will *not* be by human hands; it will come without human agency. An everlasting kingdom will appear, for "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (Dan 2:44). This probably refers to a direct manifestation of divine ruling (Koch 2015, pp. 213–23).

The second point focusses on a heavenly scene and introduces Michael, the guardian angel of Israel, who helps the heavenly messenger, Gabriel. The divine answer to Daniel's prayers and mourning was delayed, according to the text, because Gabriel was opposed by the national angel of Persia.[50] Admittedly, Daniel's search for understanding the future fate of Israel and his prayers were heard immediately by God:

"but the angel of the kingdom of Persia opposed me (Gabriel) twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief-princes came to help me and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia". (Dan 10:13)

After delivering his message, Gabriel has to return "to fight against the prince of Persia" (Dan 10:21a).[51] In this vision, the wars are transcended to heaven. The scenes in heaven mirror the earthly circumstances and national parties. Therefore, both Israel and Persia have their own guardian angel. However, one thing is clear for the "wise" (*maśkîlîm*), the hands and heads behind the book of Daniel. The real battle, the course of history towards the end of time, will be decided in heaven. No battle on earth will be decisive. This important premise allows a detailed report in disguise of the events from Alexander the Great till Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dan 11:3–40 in combination with foresayings of the end of time. Thus, Michael, "the great prince, the protector of your (Daniel's) people", returns in the final chapter of the book as the deliverer of Israel (Dan 12:1). Resurrection of the dead, final judgement, afterlife, will occur when the time of the end has come. Of course, the crucial question follows ʿad mātay "how long", will it take till this end, this delivery will come? (Dan 12:6).

Both examples, the pulverization of the imperial power by a stone "not made by human hands" in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the battle between the angels of nations

claiming that the course of history will be decided in heaven, not by armed resistance on earth, contradict the Maccabean solution of the violent revolt.

4.4. The Role of Apocalypses

Though there is violence in the rhetoric of the Daniel apocalypses, moving the vindication of war to the heavenly domain means that violent *human* action is not the decisive factor. With the help of the analyses of Anathea Portier, it is possible to widen this aspect. She argued that the first Jewish apocalypses emerged as resistant counter-discourse: not a flight from reality into fantasy, but a literature of resistance to an empire, which realized its power not only through force and physical violence but also through propaganda and ideology.[52] Within this sphere, the Daniel apocalypses contradicted the Seleucids' claims through their ideological propaganda:

> "they answered terror with radical visions of hope.... a new visionary form that reconnected past, present, and future in a narrative governed by divine providence. In these ways apocalypse intervened in the logic of terror and so countered the empire's deadliest weapon". (Portier-Young 2011, pp. xxii–xxiii, 175)

With this definition of the exercise of power, apocalypses are resistance literature indeed (Portier-Young 2016, pp. 104–9).

However, this does not mean that apocalypse as a genre in general took the position of Daniel. The allegory of the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch sides with Judas Maccabeus and his revolt. In this dream vision the flock of sheep (Jews) is attacked by birds of prey, the raven representing the Seleucids. Finally "a large horn (Judas Maccabeus) sprouted on one of the lambs" (1 Enoch 90:9) . . . . "And those ravens battled and contended with it, and they wanted to eliminate its horn, but they did not prevail against it" (1 Enoch 90:12; Olson 2013, pp. 208–14). The passage tells the early military successes of the Maccabean revolt, the failure of the Seleucid armies, and is apparently unaware of Judas' death in the battle of Elasa (160 BCE). Therefore, the passage may be dated before 160 BCE. The allegory of the Animal Apocalypse serves as propaganda for the Maccabean revolt and its armed resistance, because it is followed by the eschatological final battle in which all the beasts and birds of prey will be destroyed[53] (Olsen 2013, pp. 90–99). Judas and his battles are the last important step for the eschaton with a final battle, a last judgement and a new Jerusalem, a new temple where God will reside (1 Enoch 90:20–36).[54]

5. Gandhi and Daniel: Perspectives

The result of this survey is a complex image of competing literatures from roughly the same period and the hands, heads, and beliefs behind them (Grabbe et al. 2016). The courtier Daniel and his nonviolent resistance is enhanced by the consciously active role ascribed to him by Gandhi. On the other hand, the Daniel apocalypses and dreams of hope and trust in the same biblical book emphasize "not by human hands" and offer a nonviolent counterweight to the ideology of the state propaganda of the Seleucids. They contradict the historiographic idealization of the Maccabean revolt and its armed resistance. With the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch, which positively includes the Maccabean revolt in the course of (biblical) history, apocalypse stands against apocalypse. These competing voices do not offer a simple solution; they ask for choices, referring to their own different worldview in complex political, cultural, and religious situations.

How can this be accomplished? One solution is by walking with Gandhi in reading Daniel as the active courtier *and* the receiving seer. This seems a contradiction because Daniel's ethic of quietism (Collins 1993) seems to collide with the active role of the *satyagrahi.* However, again and again Gandhi stated that the outcome of *satyagraha* lies in the hand of God (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 61). His ultimate ideal was Ramarajya, Rama rule in this world. He made Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* more concrete with the extension The Kingdom of God *on Earth* (Gray and Hughes 2015; Noort 2022, p. 6). It is the same creed as the basic assumption of the Danielic apocalypses. Therefore, a reading of Daniel that combines court narratives and apocalypse supports its qualification

as resistance literature opposing imperial power. Most scholars assume that the court narratives literary-historically precede the apocalypse. However, a reversed, combined reading of the courtier narrative against the background of the apocalypses as the final text makes Daniel the active sage who obeyed his conscience against unjust laws, knowing that the outcome of his actions did not depend on him.

In Biblical Studies, the scholarly discussion on war, on peace, and (non)violence have mainly focused on the problem of the violent images of God in the Hebrew Bible, divinely legitimized human violence (Noort 1997; Noort 2018), war narratives on the one side (Schmitt 2011), and prophetic eschatological views of an eternal peace on the other. A courageous, but outdated attempt by Burress to connect Gandhi with the ethics of the prophets will require the newer results of inquiry into prophetic literature (Burress 1998). Till now, Daniel simply did not appear in this discourse because biblical scholars and faith communities focused on images of God and the belief systems in which violence, power, and divine action played the main roles. A recent, valuable overview studying the three canonical parts of the Hebrew Bible on violence does not provide any reference to Daniel or apocalyptic literature (van Ruiten and Bekkum 2020). The postcolonial discourse on apocalyptic literature as resistance literature, and the choices made there, are still at an early stage of systematic reflection. For Gandhi, problematic images of God were not that significant because, for him, the world of the divine had many colors. His examples from a religious context were always positive ones. If needed, as in the case of the violent character of the Gita, he proposed an allegorical reading but was flexible when he could not maintain such an interpretation (Gandhi 2010; Noort 2022, p. 12; Parekh 1999, p. 167–68).

To focus on the Gandhian Daniel and his "elderly brother", Socrates does not intend to reduce the power of other examples in their company, e.g., from the Indian context. Daniel and Socrates obtained their important place in the South African context, where both belonged to the cultural baggage of adversaries such as Botha and Smuts. Accompanied by others, they kept their place after the return to India.

The Gandhian Daniel is a model civil servant and citizen, opposing laws in conflict with his conscience, laws against reason, and holiness. His soul force as a weapon of the strong enables him to make deliberate choices without excitement. He leaves the outcome of his civil resistance to God and has love for his antagonist. He is prepared to suffer and has no fear of death. This also applies to the Gandhian Socrates. He follows virtue to the end, practicing his precepts, and adheres to the traditional religion but fights the corrupt elements of it. Above all, he does not desert his post. Daniel and Socrates were real satyagrahis.

The biblical Daniel offers the possibility to connect the courtier and the apocalyptic seer. As argued above, contextualizing the Danielic literature brings a real world to life, in which wars, persecutions, and occupation asked for answers of hope and resistance. They were given and practiced in different ways. The choice for Daniel in the context of apocalyptic resistance literature offers Biblical Studies the opportunity to explore new territory. Gandhi opened the door for it.

Notes

[1] On 28 December 1907, Gandhi was sentenced to leave Transvaal within 48 h or to register under the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act (TARA). By failing to do so, his first imprisonment began on 10 January 1908. Negotiations with General Jan Smuts ended with his release on 30 January. His second imprisonment began on 7 October 1908 for two months with hard labour, and the third one for three months with hard labour starting on 25 February 1909.

[2] The Baptist missionary Joseph J. Doke (1861–1913) and his family nursed Gandhi after the brutal assault on his life on 10 February 1908 by the Muslim Pathan (Afghan) Mir Al'am, a former client who was convinced that Gandhi had betrayed them by accepting a compromise (voluntary registration) with Smuts concerning the Asiatic Registration Act (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, pp. 93–97). According to Emilsen (1997), p. 89, Gandhi had three wishes during his recovery: 1. Registering voluntarily as fulfilling his part of the compromise (he did); 2. The attackers should not to be charged, but released (they were sentenced); 3. Olive, the daughter of Doke, should sing Gandhi's favourite hymn "Lead, kindly Light" (she did) (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 29, p. 140, vol. 35, p. 395). Joseph Doke was also the first biographer of Gandhi: Doke (1909).

[3] Gandhi (1958–1994), My first experience in gaol: vol. 8, pp. 119–21, 134–36 (I), 139–43, 145–46 (II), 152–55 (III), 158–62 (IV), My second experience in gaol: vol. 9, pp. 120–24 (I), 140–42 (II); 145–49 (III), 161–65 (IV); 179–83 (V).

[4] Gandhi paraphrased an article from "The Christian World" in which the author referred to the substantial influences of other religions on Early Christianity. There is a reference to the apologist Justin Martyr, who regarded the wisdom and reason of Socrates as inspired by the *Logos* (Joh 1:1) which—according to Justin Martyr—made him a Christian even before the incarnation (Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, X v). For Gandhi, it was important that the article stated that "Religion, by a hundred different names and forms, has been dropping the one seed into the human heart, opening the one truth as the mind was able to receive it". He called the author "broadminded", stated that Europeans and Indians are working together for the common good, and ended with a call for Muslims and Hindus to realise the same tolerance as demonstrated in the article.

[5] Reports on Gandhi's extensive reading during his terms in jail: Gandhi (1958–1994), vol. 8, p. 159; vol. 9, pp. 181–82, 241–42.

[6] Gandhi (1958–1994), vol. 8, pp. 172–74 (Indian Opinion 4 April 1908); 185–87 (IO 11 April); pp. 196–99 (IO 18 April); 212–4 (IO 25 April); pp. 217–21 (IO 2 May); pp. 227–29 (IO 9 May).

[7] Gandhi used here the title *Mahatma* for Socrates, a title he disliked when given to himself.

[8] The title of Ruskin's *Unto this Last* comes from Mt 20:14, the parable of the workers in the vineyard: "But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last (one), even as unto thee" (KJV). Although Gandhi knew the parable, he did not think it necessary to explain it to his readers, and Vasunia (2015, p. 181), argues that Gandhi interpreted *Unto this Last* "also in the terms of a principled commitment to be upheld to the very end of one's life, that is, unto the last or unto death".

[9] A proposal of exile as a verdict from the side of the defendant would probably have won over a majority of the jurors. Socrates, however, provocatively proposed that he be rewarded by receiving meals and maintenance in the Prytaneion, the townhall (Plato 2017, *Apology* 36d–37a). Forced to propose a penalty, he suggested a fine of one mina of silver (Plato 2017, *Apology* 38b–c).

[10] In this article, I use the new edition of Loeb Classical Library 36 (Plato 2017) based on the revised critical Oxford edition = Plato (1995).

[11] See Ruskin (1905). Cf. Wong (2012).

[12] Indian Opinion 16 May 1908.

[13] Five articles introduce the Apology and paraphrase Socrates's first speech. The sixth article renders the second and third speech with Socrates's answer to the verdict and the definite voting for the death penalty by the jurors. For a study of especially the sixth article, (see Vasunia 2015).

[14] For the important theme of (non) fear, fearlessness in relation to death, faith and God, see (Palaver 2021, pp. 17–18; Noort 2022, pp. 5–6).

[15] In comparing Gandhi's and Socrates's piety, it should not be forgotten that one of the accusations Socrates faced was "that he did not believe in gods at all" (Meletus, Plato 2017, *Apology* 26c). The repeated statements about divine guidance are therefore a part of his defence.

[16] Socrates refers to Homer (1999, Book XVIII, 96, 98, 104), where Thetis tries to stop her son Achilles, who states that it is his duty to kill Hector and to revenge Patroclus's death even when he himself will be killed. Comparable is *Apology* 39a and Gandhi (1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 228), where Socrates discusses the possibility of escaping death in a battle by laying down arms. Gandhi adds "but such a man we call a coward".

[17] Gandhi (1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 218), uses the metaphor of reins for Athens as a sluggish horse. The corresponding passage in Plato (2017), *Apology* 30e, offers a stronger expression. Socrates describes himself as a μύωψ, *mýops* a gadfly or horse-fly. It became his nickname. See, however, Marshall (2017) (Spur).

[18] Mentioned by Gandhi in his paraphrase of *Apology* 31d (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 8, p. 218). Ironically, Socrates' *daimonion* prohibits him to go into politics, unlike Gandhi. The most important reference in the *Apology* is 40 a–c, where the *daimonion* does not stop Socrates from going to his trial and to speak as he did, accepting, even seeking, his own death (Bussanich 2013, pp. 276–93; Irrera 2018, on the Socratic δαίμων: McPherran 1996, pp. 185–90).

[19] For the context and Gandhi's reflections on proof, certainty and the kind of inspiration, see (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 54, pp. 113–14; vol. 55, pp. 254–56).

[20] Gandhi (1958–1994), vol. 29, p. 237 "Socrates embraced death in his dark and solitary cell and initiated his friends and us into the mysterious doctrine that he who seeks peace must look for it within himself"; vol. 22, p. 245 "The prison cell where Socrates drank the poison cup was undoubtedly the way to bliss"; p. 432 "Holding a cup of poison in his hands, Socrates addressed to his dear pupil a discourse on the immortality of the soul" (*Phaedo*, Cary 1905); p. 501 "(Imprisonments) are temples of liberty only

for those who are innocence personified"; vol. 23, p. 6 "Socrates made his best speech holding a cup of poison in his hand and, by his death, won immortality for himself and his words"; vol. 49, pp. 169–70: Retelling of the third speech of Socrates from the Apology; vol 53, p. 469. Gandhi recommended in a letter to the seriously ill Annapurnanand the reading of the dialogue of Socrates on death (*Phaedo*).

21 Of the four examples, Tolstoy received the highest praise: "he not only expounded (the doctrine of *satyagraha*), but lived according to it".

22 It would be a misunderstanding to conclude that this dualism, Gandhi's fasts, *brachmacharya*, the preparedness for suffering and asceticism led to a negative view of the body. Nursing the human body, proper body care, hygiene, nutrition and respect were essential for Gandhi (Coelho 2021, p. 1).

23 12 November 1909 at Westminster Palace Hotel, London.

24 Gandhi (1958–1994, vol. 11, p. 41). *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 25 April 1911.

25 The practise of (self) sacrifice of a widow, in which she is burned on the pyre of her dead husband.

26 The expression meaning a law that cannot be revoked is a direct reference to Dan 6:12.

27 Thoreau's essay—originally a lecture—was published in 1849, and reprinted as *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience.* He reflected on the role of the State and the right of individuals to oppose unjust laws—in his case, slavery and the American–Mexican war of 1846–1849.

28 John Bunyan (1628–1688), author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, refused to stop preaching and calling the people together, because "it was against his conscience".

29 Letter to Esther Faering (Menon), August 1919. For the context, see Barnes (1959) and Reddy and Terp (2013).

30 It did not mean that by halting the Non-Cooperation Movement, the aims of *swaraj* would be adjusted. They would be the pillars "forever": 1. removal of untouchability; 2. manufacture of *khaddar* 3. Hindu–Muslim unity; 4. cultivation of nonviolence.

31 After mass protests, the High Court reviewed the sentence in 1923: 19 death sentences were confirmed and the men executed, and 113 were convicted to imprisonment of various lengths.

32 For Gandhi, the Mosaic *lex talionis* "an eye for for eye" (Ex 21:22–25; Lev 24:19–21; Dtn 19:16–21; Mat 5:38–39) was the symbol of retaliation. He later revised his opinion and was open to the possibility that the intention of the *lex talionis* was a limitation of blood revenge. See Noort (2022, pp. 13–14).

33 Gandhi is not really sure: "It may be my wish that is father to the thought", but he did not want to lead the reader into religious discussions (p. 363), given the broad reception history of the negative interpretation.

34 "Violence is the law of the beast in us. Self-suffering, i.e., civil resistance is the law of the (hu)man in us" (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 16, p. 51). Gandhi replied to a letter of "Pennsylvanian" in *The Times of India* (Gandhi 1958–1994, vol. 16, pp. 540–44) in which the author asked Gandhi to concentrate on social reforms and to give up his opposition against the Rowland Acts. Giving up the resistance was not possible for Gandhi because the Acts wounded consciences.

35 (Smith-Christopher 1993, p. 325) '"If it is possible that cultural perspectives can suggest new possibilities for historical meaning of biblical texts, then once such a new interpretive idea is suggested, it should hold up to critical scrutiny and not simply be accepted on the basis of a moral sympathy with the source". To reach historic shores is in my view one bridge too far, but sometimes Gandhi's intuitive reading exposed redactional processes in the original text. An example is Mt 5:22; see Noort (2022, n. 1).

36 The translations following Vulgata: Dan 6:10; Hebrew Bible (Aramaic) and LXX: 6:11.

37 The Hebrew/Aramaic root *pātaḥ* "to open" appears in Dan 6:11 MT in the passive *pᵉtîḥān* "the windows *were opened* to Jerusalem". Theodotion follows MT. Vulgata: *fenestris apertis.* The LXX (G*) read *thyridas ēnoixen en tō hyperōō autou* "he (Daniel) opened the windows in his upper chamber" in an active form, as well as the Ethiopian Daniel.

38 The question whether G*, MT/Theodotion or MT offers the "original" text of 6:11 does not make sense. They represent different traditions. The differences between the MT, Old Greek and the revision of Theodotion in the chapters 4–6 do not allow for a judgement about the "better" text. For an overview: Newsom (2014, pp. 2–12).

39 Newsom acknowledged the new approaches stimulated by postcolonial studies but warned against the underestimation of the complex relationship between imperial and colonized discourse (Newsom 2014, p. 16). A central point for her is the relation of divinely legitimated Gentile rule and the end of it.

40 For an overview of the main positions in the scholarly debate on the textual and tradition history, see Helms (2013, 2018) and Niehr (2016, pp. 618–29). Newer commentaries: Collins (1993) and (Newsom 2014).

41 From Dan 11: 29–39 it appears that the narrative of the violent and forced Hellenization by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168 BCE by defiling the temple, Dan 11:31; Macc 1:29–32.54) does not know about the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee (164 BCE 1 Macc 4:36–61). Therefore, the final form of the MT Daniel may be dated between 168–164 BCE.

42 García Martínez, 4QPseudo-Daniel Aramaic and the Pseudo-Danielic Literature, in García Martínez (1994, pp. 137–61), discusses the wide range of Jewish (Syriac and Persian Pseudo-Daniel) and Christian works. 4QPseudo-Daniel Aramaic might be a genuine product of the Qumran sect. The Syriac and Persian Pseudo-Daniel are Jewish texts, and the Arabic, Coptic, Slavonic, Greek and

Hebrew Pseudo-Daniel are late Christian texts. This demonstrates the everlasting need of mastering history and the longing for knowledge of the turn of history, the new eon.

43   1Q71-72; 4Q112-116; 4Q174; 6Q7 all published in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* vols. I, III, V, XVI. See (Barthélemy and Milik 1955, 1962, 1968, 2000).

44   By situating Daniel at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius the Mede, the dreams and visions covering the time of the Seleucid rulers of the 2nd century BCE and thereafter are presented as *future* events, while the intended audience on the basis of a verifiable past may trust the visions that go beyond their own time and situation.

45   The author(s) of 1 Macc calls the Hellenised Jews "renegades" (1 Macc 1:11; 7:5; 9:23;11:21.25), "law breakers" (1 Macc 3:5.6; 9:58) and "ungodly" (1 Macc 3:8; 6:21).

46   The argument for making a covenant with the Gentiles that "since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us " (1 Macc 1:11) resembles the argument of Jer 44: 15–18, where halting offerings to the queen of heaven led to death by the sword and famines according to the protests against Jeremiah.

47   Schwienhorst-Schönberger (2012). Josua 6 und die Gewalt, pp. 459–60, in Noort (2012).

48   *kai anethematisen autous* //Hebr. *ḥrm* hif.

49   Bertholot mentions a.o. Dtn 7 (not worshipping foreign gods), Dtn 13 (total loyalty to YHWH), Dtn 20 (war laws) and 2 Kgs 18–19 (Hezekiah and Sennacherib).

50   *śar* "prince" is here an angelic appearance. The image of the heavenly national representatives may have originated from Dtn 32:8: "When the Most High/Elyon apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the nations according to the number of *the sons of God*" (MT em./4Q37). Every son of God (lesser god) received his own nation. Here, they appear as angels, protectors for their own nation.

51   For the New Testament scholar Walter Wink, author of the trilogy on the Powers (Wink 1984, 1986, 1992), the apocalypse of Dan 10 was important because of the war between contending powers (angels of the nations) was waged *in heaven*. He used it in a theology of prayer, arguing that being aware of these powers, and naming, unmasking and engaging them may lead to "politics of hope. Hope envisages its future and then acts as if that future is now irresistible, thus helping to create the reality for which it longs" (Wink 1999, p. 185). On Daniel: Wink 1986, pp. 88–91; 1999, pp. 4, 188–92, 195).

52   Dan 7; The Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 93:1–10 and 91:11–17; The Book of Dreams (1 Enoch 83–90).

53   1 Enoch 90:18-19 "And I watched until the Lord of the flock came to them. And he took in his hand the rod of his wrath and he struck the earth; and the earth split open. And all the beasts and all the birds of the sky fell away from the flock, and they sank into the earth, and it covered over them".

54   Oegema (2016, p. 81) speaks of "realized eschatology" in embracing Judas and his revolt resulting in the Hasmonean reign.

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Article

Defending Victims, Practicing Restraint: God-Consciousness and the Use of Force in the Qur'an

John J. Ranieri

Department of Philosophy, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079, USA; john.ranieri@shu.edu

Abstract: The Qur'an speaks frequently of victims and the need to defend them—whether they are the marginalized, the oppressed, those who bring God's word to a resistant people, or the early community of believers. However, the obligation to defend victims leads to the question of whether force can be used in their defense (including self-defense). Too often, this question is addressed by isolating passages that allow for the use of force, trying to identify their occasions of revelation, and considering whether later passages abrogate earlier ones. This approach suggests that the use of force or violence is an identifiable theme in the Qur'an, detachable from its broader message. However, the question of how and when force may be used is inseparable from the important Qur'anic notion of God-consciousness (*taqwa*), which ifs presupposed in the Qur'an when considering whether the use of force is justified. God-consciousness serves both as a source of restraint for those who would resort to violence out of anger or indignation, as well as a critical standard for those who find themselves conflicted over the possible use of force. Considering the question of the use of force in the defense of victims in light of God-consciousness shifts the focus away from isolated passages and arguments about abrogation to a more open and adaptable approach that calls into question the use of force as one option among others, and leaves open up the possibility of a non-violent response as entirely keeping with the spirit of the Qur'an.

Keywords: Qur'an; violence; God-consciousness

1. Defender of Victims

The Qur'an consistently and emphatically sides with the marginalized, the indigent, and the oppressed.[1] The "alms tax is only for the poor and the needy . . . for freeing slaves, and for those in debt, for God's cause, and for needy travelers. This is an obligation from God" (9:60).[2] The reference to bondage in this passage can also be understood to include "all those forms of subjugation and exploitation–social, economic or political–which can rightly be described as 'slavery'".[3] In the case of the actual institution of slavery, the Qur'an tolerates the practice, while qualifying it in ways which mitigate its harshness and point toward its eventual abolition.[4] Typical of the Qur'anic sense of obligation in this regard is the following:

> [The truly virtuous are] those who fulfill their vows, and fear a day of sweeping horror, and give food–despite their desire for it–to the poor, the orphan, and the captive, saying to themselves, "We feed you only for the sake of God, seeking neither reward nor thanks from you. We fear from our Lord a horribly distressful Day. (76:8–9)

Muhammad Asad observes how the meaning of "to give food" in this instance "comprises every kind of help and care, both material and moral".[5] Likewise, both Asad and Yusuf Ali broaden the notion of "captive" to include all those "who have no mental or moral resources, or have no one to look after them or are held down in social or moral or economic captivity". Help is to be extended to all who are held "captive" in any sense, regardless of whether they are believers or unbelievers.[6]

While the Qur'an expresses a general concern for the vulnerable within society, there are specific groups which are the object of particular solicitude. Among these are the poor and orphans. Attending to the needs of the poor is mandatory, and obligatory almsgiving in the form of a tax (*zakah*), as well as charity which exceeds that required by this communal obligation, are enjoined on all believers. The spoils taken from those who fight the believers are intended to serve the needs of the community as a whole, with special attention to the needs of the indigent. The sacrifices offered during pilgrimage may be eaten by the pilgrims themselves, but they are intended primarily for the sustenance of the poor.[7] Neglect of one's duties toward the poor is criticized and is considered to be as serious as the neglect of prayer. What is made abundantly clear in all these passages is God's concern for those in society who are powerless, whose situation is precarious, and who are defenseless. Attending to the needs of such people and defending them from exploitation is a constitutive element of one's service to God, and those who do so freely and conscientiously are doing God's will.

A particular form of victimization of the defenseless that is denounced in the Qur'an is the pre-Islamic Arabian practice of female infanticide.[8] In what is likely the first mention of this practice in the text, the seriousness with which God views the killing of one's offspring is made apparent by its inclusion among the eschatological signs of the Last Day:

> When the sun is put out, and when the stars fall down; and when the mountains are blown away ... and when the seas are set on fire ... and when baby girls, buried alive are asked for what crime they were put to death, and when the records of deeds are laid open, and when the sky is stripped away, and when the Hellfire is fiercely flared up, and when Paradise is brought near–on that Day each soul will know what deeds it has brought along. (81:1–3, 8–14)

Another notable passage dealing with infanticide occurs in Surah 6: "Likewise, the pagans' evil associates have made it appealing to them to kill their own children–only leading to their destruction as well as confusion in their faith" (6:137). Muhammad Asad observes how the verse is meant primarily to call attention to the killing of infant girls, but that it also includes the less common practice of the ritual sacrifice of boys.[9] *The Study Quran* mentions how "Although the verses specifically reproach those who engaged in this practice [female infanticide], they can also be read as indicating that all who have been wronged in this world will have the opportunity to demand justice of their oppressors and be vindicated in this life or the next".[10] The murder of children may be a particularly heinous manifestation of the victimization of the innocent, but in decrying the slaying of infants, the Qur'an makes clear how, in all circumstances, God takes the side of the voiceless.

Perhaps the most frequently recurring form of victimization described in the Quran is the persecution of prophets and believers. There are close to one hundred and twenty references to the persecution of God's messengers and prophets, with a sizeable number of additional passages addressed more directly to suffering believers and to the prophet. These two kinds of references are deeply intertwined; more often than not, the descriptions of the plight of earlier messengers is meant to encourage the early community of believers and the prophet Muhammad himself to be patient and to trust in God in the face of oppression.[11] Every community receives a prophet calling the people to acknowledge God, and the Qur'an recounts many instances of peoples and individuals who reject both the message and the messengers: "the people of Noah denied the truth, as did other enemy forces afterwards. Every community plotted against its prophet to seize him" (40:5). In some instances, this hostility takes the form of the slaying of prophets by the people to whom they are sent, "rejecting some and killing others" (2:87). The prophets are sent to warn an ungrateful humanity. While the accounts of their activities are often described as punishment stories, they can, with equal justification, be understood as stories of collective persecution and expulsion, in which God never fails to take the side of the persecuted prophet, who serves as a model and source of hope for the beleaguered believer.

The story of the prophet Moses is paradigmatic; themes of victimization, oppression, and liberation are prominent.[12] God's response to their oppression is to rescue the Israelites

from the violence with which they are threatened: "And We certainly delivered the children of Israel from the humiliating torment of Pharaoh. He was truly a tyrant, a transgressor" (44:30). The frequency with which this intervention by God is recounted within the text attests to the Qur'an's concern for all who are oppressed.[13] Given the universalism of the Qur'an's message, the liberation of the Israelites from bondage is a *topos* representing God's siding with all of history's victims.

Farid Esack finds in the Qur'anic accounts of Moses and the liberation of the Israelites from bondage a "preferential option for the oppressed": "[*Mustad'af*] refers to someone who is oppressed or deemed weak and of no consequence and is treated in an arrogant fashion. The *mustad'afun* are thus those people of 'inferior' social status who are vulnerable, marginalized or oppressed in the socio-economic sense". He further distinguishes between the terms used in the Qur'an to describe the poor, marginalized, and indigent on the one hand, and the *mustad'afun*: "The major difference in the term *mustad'afun* is that someone else is responsible for their condition. One can only be *mustad'afun* as a consequence of the behavior or policies of the arrogant and powerful". In the Qur'an "a preferential option for the *mustad'afun* is made in unambiguous terms". This preferential option "is reflected the particularized identification of God Himself with the oppressed, the lifestyles and methodology of all the Abrahamic prophets, the Qur'anic denunciation of the powerful and the accumulation of wealth, and the Qur'an's message of liberation to women and slaves".[14] The Qur'an repeatedly stresses the gratuitous goodness of God in rescuing and sustaining the Israelites.[15] The liberation of Israel from oppression is a paradigmatic exemplar of the universality of God's concern for victims.[16]

The stories of the prophets are intended to offer encouragement and support to Muhammad and his followers, the early community of believers, who would eventually come to identify themselves as Muslims.[17] This is an important point because it underscores how, at its beginning, the Muslim community was a persecuted minority. The prophet is reminded how "Indeed, messengers before you were rejected but patiently endured rejection and persecution until Our help came to them. And God's promise to help is never broken" (6:34).[18] He and his disciples are hated for no other reason than believing in God (60:1; 85:8). They will be tested by hunger, loss of possessions, expulsion from their homes, and even death, but through patient perseverance and faith in God they will eventually prevail.[19] As was the case with so many of the prophets, their foes may scheme against the believers, but those persecuted will be heard and answered by God: "Remember when you were vastly outnumbered and oppressed in the land, constantly in fear of attacks by your enemy, then He sheltered you, strengthened you with His help, and provided you with good things so perhaps you would be thankful" (8:26). Those rescued by God are not to simply rejoice in their deliverance; they are called upon to cooperate with God in the pursuit of justice and the relieving of oppression. They are never to forget their rescuer and sustainer: "Who responds to the distressed when they cry to Him, relieving their affliction, and Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another god besides God? Yet you are hardly mindful!" (27:62).

2. In God's Cause

The question of human responsibility in bringing about the kind of world God desires compels all those who would raise it to consider what actions are acceptable in order to faithfully bear witness to the sustainer and defender of victims. Furthermore, this necessarily leads to further reflection as to what may be done in order to defend victims, whether in cases of self-defense or intervention on behalf of others. To raise such questions is to contemplate the possibility of the legitimate employment of violence in defense of victims. The Qur'an does not treat violence as a separate theme; it is not interested as much in the nature of violence as in its effects. "Working corruption on earth" is frequently decried in the text, and the phrase often refers to violence and disorder.[20] Violence in the Qur'an is usually discussed in relationship to oppression—both as the cause of this evil and as a response to it. To put this within some context (and to try to dispel the notion

that *jihad* is the central focus of the Qur'an's teaching on the use of force) consider how there are 319 references to oppression in the Qur'an, 173 verses that refer to fighting against injustice and oppression, and 106 examples of enemies attacking without provocation and/or transgressing the limits of what is permitted with regard to accepted standards concerning the use of force. By contrast, "to wage war" occurs six times, retaliation six times, and *jihad* four times.[21] For the Qur'an, the world is not as God intended it to be, so questions about the use of violence revolve around how best to respond to the injustice being committed against the innocent, and considerations of when and how it may be used to establish a just social order. Mohammed Arkoun writes: "The designations of the forms of 'violence' are never named as such but are always aiming at an attitude, or at intolerable conduct that rejects values, knowledge, and the 'limits' fixed by God and his envoy. The processes of composition and the arguments of qur'anic discourse strive to instill the idea of a legitimate 'violence,' humanized in the sense of 'making sacred the human individual' (*tahrim al-nafs*), and to protect him from arbitrary domination, or pointless killing in the pursuit of mere power, booty, and conquest of territory, etc.".[22] This is an important point, which aptly summarizes the Qur'an's attitude toward the use of violence. It underlines how sacredness applies to persons being defended, and not to the violence used to defend them.[23] Violence in the Qur'an may be tolerated, and under certain conditions, even mandated; however, it is not considered sacred in itself. It is easy then, to understand the tensions which run through the Qur'an with regard to the use of violence, since it is simultaneously condemned when in the service of oppression, accepted (within limits) in order to liberate the afflicted, and carefully scrutinized so as not to be guilty of "exceeding all bounds".

Before entering into a discussion of these issues and how the Qur'anic idea of *taqwa* functions in relation to the use of force, a word needs to be said with regard to questions which arise when interpreting the Qur'an's teaching about violence. Given the generally accepted division of surahs into Meccan and Medinan, the references to violence in the Qur'an have tended to be understood diachronically. In this view, there is a movement from an attitude of patient endurance in the face of persecution to a stance in which force is justified in self-defense and in the interest of protecting the oppressed. Many traditional Muslim commentators have then applied the principle of abrogation to these texts, arguing that the later Medinan references abrogate those from the earlier Meccan period. The result of this interpretive strategy is to allow these later texts which permit or even command the use of violence to acquire normative status, while the earlier texts which counsel patience and forbearance are marginalized. However, there are scholars, who, while accepting the traditional Meccan–Medinan periodization with regard to the use of force in the Qur'an, do not necessarily accept the idea of abrogation. Rather than viewing the earlier, more pacific attitudes as having been abrogated, they argue that the changes within the teaching are to be explained by the shifting circumstances confronting Muhammad and his followers. Thus, the acceptance of the use of force is not seen as a universally binding doctrine superseding previous understandings, but as a response to specific situations in which the newly founded community struggles to maintain its existence and to order society in accordance with divine justice. In this interpretation, the option for non-violent solutions remains possible. This understanding is characteristic of those who read these texts synchronically. Rather than mapping them diachronically based upon the life of the prophet and his community, the diverse views on the use of force can be understood as expressing the multiple perspectives being debated simultaneously among the believers.[24] Diachronic and synchronic interpretations are not mutually exclusive; evolutionary views can allow for a multiplicity of perspectives at any given stage of the evolution of the teaching on the use of force, while synchronic explanations do not preclude development over time in which some of the contested views come to eventually dominate the thinking of the community (while not necessarily invalidating the other ideas present in the milieu of the time). Whether one subscribes to a diachronic or to a synchronic understanding, it is

clear that there are multiple voices present in the Qur'an which address the question of whether, when, and how force may be employed.

Another issue which affects the manner in which the Qur'an's statements on violence and fighting are to understood is terminological, as agreement is often lacking regarding the meaning of terms such as "religion", "sacred", and "holy", as well as the meaning of the distinction between the "religious" and the "secular". This confusion and lack of agreement bedevils the discussions surrounding these questions. How else is it possible to explain the strikingly different assessments as to whether *jihad* or warfare are rightly described as "holy war"? The answer to this question hinges almost entirely on the definition of "holy war" being used, and these definitions vary widely. Used in this way, the term *jihad* is distorted through a misunderstanding of its broader meaning: "[The] simple use of *jihad* as a way of describing what Muslims believe about conquest, conversion, and violence is worse than meaningless in an intellectual and cultural environment in which specifics regarding such questions need to be spelled out with the utmost precision and care, rather than masked under catchall terms ... ". The term *jihad* is more accurately rendered as "striving or struggling in the path of God" and it has a far broader meaning than simply "war". There can be forms of striving against injustice which could be accurately described as *jihad*, but which do not involve the use of force. It is also important to distinguish between "war" (*harb*) and "fighting" (*qital*) in the Qur'an.[25] In addition, care must be taken not to read into the Qur'an later developments in Islamic tradition, in which Muslim legal scholars make use of Qur'anic verses in order to justify the territorial expansion of Islam. To define holy war as one which is undertaken "by providing religious justification", without a clear and agreed-upon understanding of "religion", would seem to beg the question. Further problems arise when there are commentators who attribute to the Qur'an the view that warfare is sacred, while others deny this emphatically.[26] Given the limited scope of this essay, these problems cannot be resolved here; however, it is important to at least identify where the tensions lie before discussing specific verses in the text.

Within the Qur'an, there can be found a range of sayings, instructions, admonitions, and exhortations with regard to the use of force in response to injustice and oppression. Addressed to the community of believers during times of trial, several verses advocate patient forbearance in the face of persecution: "O believers! Patiently endure, persevere, stand on guard, and be mindful of God, so you may be successful" (3:200). The community is encouraged to follow the way of patient forbearance, secure in the knowledge that God supports them: "As for those who emigrated in the cause of God after being persecuted, We will surely bless them with a good home in this world...It is they who have patiently endured, and in their Lord they put their trust" (16:41–42). According to some interpreters, the early followers of Muhammad, during their time in Mecca, were forbidden to retaliate with violence against their persecutors.[27] Fortunate and faithful servants are those who bear wrongs patiently and who repay evil with good: "And they are those who endure patiently, seeking their Lord's pleasure, establish prayer, donate from what We have provided for them–secretly and openly–and respond to evil with good. It is they who will have the ultimate abode" and "Good and evil cannot be equal. Respond to evil with what is best, then the one you are in a feud with will be like a close friend. But this cannot be attained except by those who are patient and who are truly fortunate" (13:22; 41:34–35).[28]

Even when a right to retaliation is acknowledged, the way of reconciliation and forgiveness is recommended as the better response. Asad translates 42:40 in a way which suggests an awareness of the dangers of escalation in situations where retaliation is chosen: "But [remember that an attempt at] requiting evil may, too, become an evil: hence, whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with God ... ". Likewise, Sachedina repeatedly emphasizes how cautious the Qur'an is with regard to the use of violence, and he reminds his readers how retaliation may be permitted, but it is never commanded.[29] We find a similar exhortation in 16:125–27: "Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner ... If you retaliate, then let it be equivalent to what you have suffered. But if you patiently endure, it is certainly best

for those who are patient. Be patient O Prophet, for your patience is only with God's help". Firestone takes verses 126 and 127 dealing with retaliation to have been revealed on the occasion of the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud (625 CE), where, according to tradition, the believers (including Muhammad) were incensed at the mutilation inflicted on the bodies of their warriors by their enemies. Wishing to retaliate savagely, these verses were revealed, arguing for restraint and a proportionate response. In this interpretation, verse 125, urging reasonable debate with their opponents, should be understood as separable from the two following verses (since it does not refer to physical violence), and as representative of an earlier, non-violent approach to dealing with conflict between the community of believers and those who rejected their message. Firestone argues further that, rather than having been abrogated by later verses, the approach advocated in verse 125 has simply been ignored. Asad, however, understands verses 126 and 127 as an expansion of the message presented in the previous verse, and he translates the passage in a way which reflects this view: "Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only to the extent of the attack leveled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for [you, since God is with] those who are patient in adversity. Endure, then, with patience [all that they who deny the truth may say]–always remembering that it is none but God who gives you the strength to endure adversity". For Asad, these verses affirm both a commitment to rational debate in matters of religion and an embrace of the injunction of 2:256, forbidding coercion in matters of faith. In his view "believers are admonished to observe self-restraint while arguing with people of another persuasion, and never to offend against decency and intellectual equity. Although retaliation in argument is permissible if one's integrity is impeached by an opponent, the sequence makes it clear that it is morally preferable to renounce it altogether and to bear the unjust attack with patience". While acknowledging that a more aggressive, militaristic stance came to predominate in Islam, and without claiming that the early community was committed to pacifism, these scholars and others like them argue that the more pacific, long-suffering posture advocated in these Qur'anic verses never disappeared, and it remained a part of the tradition throughout the centuries.[30]

That being said, the plight of the early community remained precarious, and eventually the following verse was revealed:

> Permission to fight back is hereby granted to those being fought, for they have been wronged. And God is truly Most Capable of helping them prevail. They are those who have been expelled from their homes for no reason other than proclaiming: 'Our Lord is God.' Had God not repelled the aggression of some people by means of others, destruction would have surely claimed monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which God's name is often mentioned. God will certainly help those who stand up for Him. God is truly All-Powerful, Almighty.[31] (22:39–40)

These verses have been understood traditionally as the first to allow for the use of force by believers, with scholars generally attributing them to either the time of the Hijra (622) or to the beginnings of the community in Medina.[32] Mustansir Mir points out how, in fact, the reader is not told "who gave the permission or what is being permitted" while acknowledging that the context of the surah would indicate the granting of permission to fight in self-defense. He translates verse 39 in a way that does not specify that permission is being given to fight: "Permission is given to those against whom war is being waged, for they have been wronged; and God is fully capable of coming to their aid". The fact that the word "fighting" is not applied explicitly to the actions of those being persecuted (although many translators insert it, as is the case with Khattab above) suggests a hesitancy within the Qur'an about allowing such action. This is further underlined by the absence of any explicit reference to God as the one permitting the believers to take up arms, which is perhaps "a subtle way of saying that God does not wish to be associated with the granting of the permission". Even the grammatical structure of the passage contributes to this impression,

as "the use of the passive voice in the verse ['Permission is hereby granted'] heightens yet further the mood of reluctance in giving the permission to fight". Mir concludes by noting how "The net effect of the construction 'Permission is given' ... and of the absence of specification about the giver of the permission and the content of the permission is to suggest that war has been imposed on Muslims, who are now left with no choice but to fight back".[33] Such fighting is an unfortunate aspect of human existence, whose origin can be found in humanity's refusal to live in accord with divine guidance. Consequently, it may sometimes be necessary (and indeed just) to fight in defense of victims and to end oppression.[34]

Clearly, it is the suffering of "those being fought" which prompts the granting of permission to fight. In identifying those to whom permission has been given in this way, the Qur'an would appear to be making a general statement acknowledging the right of all victims (and not only Muslims) to defend themselves through recourse to the use of force.[35] At the very least, the text reveals an awareness of the need to defend the other "People of the Book" from religious persecution. Here, the Qur'an is addressing a situation that goes beyond difference in belief. People are being expelled from their homes, deprived of their property, reduced to penury, and treated with hostility and violence: "In other words, it is not merely the negative attitude toward religion per se that sanctions the use of force; it is the hostility to which it leads that makes it a prior moral offense and that requires a response with force".[36] As has been already noted, the Qur'an displays acute sensitivity toward those who are oppressed and maltreated, and this concern extends beyond the boundary of the Muslim community. Confronted with the sight of obvious oppression, believers are exhorted not only to defend themselves, but to come to the aid of the defenseless (4:75). Esack writes, "Given the Qur'an's own option for 'the people' in general and for the oppressed in particular, in a context of oppression the highest form of righteousness is praxis in the service of the wronged and the exploited".[37]

However, it also becomes clear that, based upon the evidence found in the Qur'an, the transition from patient endurance to forceful defense was not an easy one, and it appears as if at least some members of the community were reluctant to take up arms: "Fighting has been made obligatory upon you, though you dislike it. Perhaps you dislike something that is good for you, and like something that is bad for you. God knows and you do not know ... For persecution is far worse than killing. And they will not stop fighting you until they turn you away from your faith–if they can" (2:216–17).[38] Again, the passage is reflective of a situation in which the followers of Muhammad are facing an aggressive foe who will not relent. The Arabic word, *fitnah*, translated here as "persecution", can also mean "oppression" "strife" (usually indicating civil disorder), "disorder", "a time of trial or tribulation", "sedition", "tumult", or "temptation to evil". Asad prefers to render *fitnah* as "temptation to evil"; by doing so, he wishes to draw out how the Qur'an's message here is not solely focused on the community's enemies, but is, at the same time, a warning to the believers themselves to avoid falling into the same patterns of behavior they are suffering at the hands of their oppressors: "the idea being that it is not merely the deliberate deniers of spiritual truths who are exposed to such a temptation, but that also people who are otherwise righteous may fall prey to it unless they remain always, and consciously, on their guard against anything that might lead them astray from the right course". Understood in this way, the admonition that persecution is worse than killing stands as a reminder to the believers that, when fighting their enemies, they must remain constantly on guard against the temptation to become persecutors themselves. Michael Bonner makes a similar point, raising the possibility that the resort to war may actually be a form of temptation.[39] The Qur'an itself contains an awareness of the dangers of escalating violence because, in the same surah, the exhortation to fight is accompanied by language which seeks to prevent fighting from spinning out of control:

> Fight in the cause of God only against those who wage war against you, but do not exceed the limits. God does not like transgressors. Kill them wherever

you come upon them and drive them out of the places from which they have driven you out. For persecution (*fitnah*) is far worse than killing. And do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they attack you there. If they do so, then fight them–that is the reward of the disbelievers. But if they cease, then surely God is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Fight against them until there is no more persecution and your devotion will be to God alone. If they stop persecuting you, let there be no hostility except against the aggressors. (2:190–93)

I quote this passage at length because it is a wonderfully balanced summary of much of what the Qur'an has to say about the justification for and practice of fighting. The believers are permitted to defend themselves, but they are prohibited from being aggressors. Unless they are attacked by their persecutors, they are meant to avoid combat near the Kaba as well as during the sacred months in which war was forbidden according to pre-Islamic tradition. Retaliation in war is to be proportionate to the violence inflicted by the enemy. If their opponents cease their hostilities, the believers are to desist as well. The overall justification for this response on the part of the Muslim community is the conviction that "persecution is far worse than killing". Therefore, the believers are to fight "until there is no more persecution and your devotion will be to God alone".

The focus of this essay is on the Qur'an's attitude toward the use of violence in the service of alleviating the plight of the persecuted, wronged, and powerless; it is not a detailed study of all the verses dealing with fighting and war. However, in order to present the diversity of views regarding the employment of force, and to avoid the charge of having avoided some of the Qur'an's more controversial passages, something needs to be said about the "sword" verse from surah 9.[40]

"But once the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists who violated their treaties wherever you come upon them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them on every way. But if they repent, perform prayers, and pay alms-tax, then set them free. Indeed, God is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (9:5). A second, similar verse is believed by some to be aimed at People of the Book: "Fight those who do not believe in God or the Last Day, nor comply with what God and His Messenger have forbidden, nor embrace the religion of truth from among those who were given the Scripture, until they pay the tax willingly submitting, fully humbled" (9:29). These verses have been the object of extensive commentary and the source of much controversy. Most of the controversy revolves around the question as to whether these two verses abrogate earlier verses that counsel greater restraint in responding to enemies. Much depends then on the interpreter's attitude toward the principle of abrogation, and whether the principle is applicable in this case. As an illustration of the some of the consequences that can follow from the acceptance of abrogation with regard to 9:5 and 9:29, those who argue in favor of abrogation say that the verses supersede two other important verses which advocate a less aggressive stance. Surah 8:61 exhorts believers to incline to peace if their enemies do likewise, trusting that God will sustain them even if their foes are insincere. Likewise, Surah 2:190–95 warns against aggressive behavior, insists upon proportionate response to attack, and cautions Muslims that if the enemy desists, then they must do the same. If then, the message of 9:5 and 9:29 is taken to be the final word with regard to the use of force, these earlier verses can be more easily ignored. However, there are well-regarded interpreters who do not agree that these verses abrogate previous statements about fighting, and who further argue that the meaning of verses does not violate the fundamental principles of non-aggression and self-defense present in the Qur'an.[41] Rather than getting bogged down in arguments about which verses abrogate others, these scholars insist that the Qur'an must be read holistically, and that specific verses are to be understood in the context in which they arise and in relationship to similar verses in the text. From this hermeneutical perspective, it can then be maintained that, on the question of the use of force, it is the message of restraint that is most characteristic of the Qur'an as a whole.

For example, commenting on 9:5 and 9:29, Asad writes: "every verse in the Qur'an must be read and interpreted against the background of the Qur'an as a whole" and "In

accordance with the fundamental principle . . . that all of its (the Qur'an's) statements and ordinances are mutually complementary and cannot, therefore, be correctly understood unless they are considered as parts of one integral whole, this verse, too, must be read in the context of the clear-cut Qur'anic rule that war is permitted only in self-defense". To read these verses holistically would mean to consider them in light of other relevant and fundamental Qur'anic ordinances: that forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited (2:256); that unprovoked aggression is forbidden (2:190); that the believers are only justified in responding to the aggression committed by their foes in a proportionate manner (4:91); and that, if the enemy should cease hostilities, Muslims must do the same.[42] Muhammad Abdel Haleem places 9:5 in its specific context in order to argue against its being used as a general rule: "The main clause of the sentence "kill the polytheists" is singled out by some Western scholars to represent the Islamic attitude to war; even some Muslims take this view and allege that this verse abrogated other verses on war. This is pure fantasy, isolating and decontextualizing a small part of a sentence". Asma Afsaruddin concurs:

> Contemporary polemical literature that discusses Qur'an 9:5–whether produced by Islamist militants or some Western orientalist scholars–invariably asserts a mythical scholarly consensus on the abrogating status of the so-called sword verse, whereby numerous Qur'anic verses that call upon Muslims to establish kind and respectful relations with peaceful non-Muslims would be nullified. A survey of some of the most influential Qur'an commentaries of the premodern period easily disproves this assertion.

Haleem explains how, in context of 9:1–15, the verse is an example of the community of believers acting in self-defense against an enemy determined to force them to abandon their faith. The polytheists are not being fought because they are polytheists, but because they have repeatedly broken their treaties with Muslims, aided others against Muslims, attacked them, barred others from becoming Muslim, and expelled Muslims from their homes and places of worship. As Haleem makes clear, verse 7 cautions the believers that they are to honor treaties with polytheists who have not broken their agreements or who wish to live in peace with Muslims.[43] Verse 9:29 may be understood similarly; in fact, some scholars would argue that it was originally directed at polytheists, and that an earlier version may not have even included a reference to the People of the Book. The translation of 9:29 by Mustafa Khattab (cited above) certainly gives the impression that the passage is directed at polytheists (and not at Christians and Jews), and, in his commentary on the passage, he states explicitly that it refers to pagans who have violated their treaties with Muslims. This would in fact help to explain the oddity of referring to Jews and Christians as people who do not believe in God or the Last Day, since these beliefs are central to both traditions.[44] Another possible reading of the verse is that the People of the Book mentioned here exhibits the same hostility toward the Muslim community as the polytheists mentioned in 9:5. This is the view of Asad, who argues that those referred to were aggressors who were harassing Muslims. He argues that their refusal to forbid what "God and His Apostle have forbidden" is actually a reference to their unprovoked aggression, since not only Muhammad but the entire line of apostles had forbidden such violent actions. These acts of aggression are taken as evidence that these are false Christians and Jews, who may therefore be fought against, since "they deny their own professed beliefs by committing aggression against the followers of the Qur'an".[45] In the view of many contemporary interpreters, then, verses 9:5 and 9:29 are not manifestos supporting conquest and forced conversion to Islam, but rather directions given for very specific circumstances in which the early community takes up arms in defense against those who have betrayed and attacked them. They can, therefore, be read as falling within the more general Qur'anic rubric which limits the use of force to self-defense or to those circumstances where there exists a moral obligation to act on behalf of the oppressed.

Whether read diachronically or synchronically, there is no question that the Qur'an presents a range of views with regard to the use of force in defense of victims—whether

those victims are the defenseless, the oppressed, God's prophets and messengers, those persecuted for their faith, or the fledgling community itself. At times, the Qur'an advises patience in the face of persecution, while other parts of the text gives permission to fight against those who attack the community. Other verses reflect a reluctance on the part of at least some in the community to resort to violence; these are matched by verses that encourage the reluctant to join the battle on behalf of the persecuted and in the interest of self-defense. In nearly all instances, the believers are cautioned to employ restraint when engaging in fighting. Given this range of attitudes within the text, it can be very tempting to fall into the trap of trying to extract *the* doctrine of the Qur'an concerning the use of force by taking verses out of context, selecting only those which support the interpreter's position, or selectively employing the principle of abrogation in order to arrive at one's desired result. This citing and juxtaposing of alleged proof texts consumes a great deal of time and energy on the part of all parties involved in these debates and is generally no more fruitful than the interminable quarrels that so often characterize similar debates among those who take the Bible as their sacred text. Adopting this approach reduces the Qur'an to a collection of sayings, ordinances, and exhortations to be drawn upon in order to defend one's position or to derive rules to apply to one's particular circumstances. In the process, the integrity and coherence of the text as a whole is called into question. While there is no simple solution to this problem, the Qur'an contains within itself a key to enable its readers to grasp an underlying unity amidst the multiplicity of surahs and verses. That key is the idea of *taqwa*. As such, understanding the meaning and role of *taqwa* can be immensely helpful in making sense of the disparate strands within the Qur'an which deal with the use of force.

3. The Role of *Taqwa*

"Perhaps the most important single term in the Qur'an" is how Fazlur Rahman describes *taqwa*.[46] For Toshihiko Izutsu, *taqwa* "must act as the determining motive of all conduct of the religious man, nay rather it must determine the whole of human existence". It is the "most fundamental motif" of Islam, "that underlies all its aspects and determines its basic mood". Along with thankfulness, *taqwa* is considered to be the proper reaction to God's revelation.[47]

The term is variously translated as piety, mindfulness of God, fear of God, Godliness, reverence, and Godwary. For purposes of this essay, I follow Muhammad Asad and render the term as "God-consciousness". Part of the reason for this is that a translation such as God-consciousness (or mindfulness of God) avoids both the danger of limiting the term to religious ritual or prayer, as well as avoiding the misunderstandings involved when rendering *taqwa* as fear of God. While fear as a human emotion (in the sense of being afraid of something or someone) is not entirely alien to this idea, the fundamental sense of *taqwa* is an awareness of always living in the presence of the mystery of mercy and awe that is referred to by the word Allah/God. Izutsu captures this well:

> Of course it should be kept in mind that this emotion of 'fear' meant in this case far more than being afraid of punishment . . . [The] deep ethico-religious value of the fear of God, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, is largely due to the fact that it cannot but arouse in the mind of the believer a clear consciousness of the tremendous seriousness of life and thus incite him to moral earnestness and responsibility.[48]

Rahman comments that while translations such as "fear of God" and "piety" are not wrong, they can be misleading. Explaining how the root of the word means "to guard or protect against something", he adds that *taqwa* can be understood as protecting oneself "against the harmful or evil consequences of one's conduct". He concludes by saying that:

> If by "fear of God one means fear of the consequences of one's actions–whether in this world or the next (fear of punishment of the Last Day)–one is absolutely right. In other words, it is the fear that comes from an acute sense of responsibility,

here and in the hereafter, and not the fear of a wolf or of an uncanny tyrant, for the God of the Qur'an has unbounded mercy–although He also wields dire punishment, both in this world and in the hereafter.[49]

Both Izutsu and Rahman emphasize the prominence of the eschatological tone that often accompanies references to *taqwa* in the Qur'an. There are at least fifty instances in which *taqwa* is associated with the Last Day, resurrection, or the afterlife. Yet, as both authors insist, those who possess *taqwa* are not motivated by the desire to avoid punishment from God after death. They are spared punishment in the next world because they are persons who, throughout their lives, have cultivated *taqwa* in themselves as a positive value, not as a shield against hellfire. After warning of hellfire, Surah 92 concludes with the following praise of the those who embody *taqwa*: "For distant from it [hellfire] shall remain he who is truly conscious of God: he that spends his possessions on others so that he might grow in purity–not as payment for favours received, but only out of a longing for the countenance of his Sustainer, the All-Highest: and such, indeed, in time shall be well-pleased (92:17–21).[50] In light of this passage, it is easy to understand why Rahman attributes such importance to *taqwa*:

> [The] fully integrated and whole personality of man, the kind of 'stability' which is formed after all the positive elements are drawn in. Considering all the verses in the Qur'an related to this concept, perhaps the best way to define *taqwa* is to say that, whereas action belongs to man, real and effective judgment upon that action, as well as the standard whereby that action is to be judged, lie outside of him ... When a man or a society is fully conscious of this while conducting himself or itself, he or it has true *taqwa*.[51]

The emphasis here is on integration and wholeness rather than on the capacity to follow rules. *Taqwa* does not mean that one is constantly thinking *about* God when considering how to act, nor is it mainly a matter of pausing in the midst of particular situations to ask oneself what the Qur'an or the Prophet have to say about what to do in such circumstances. God-consciousness is a deep, internalized, and implicit awareness of God that, in a fully integrated and actualized person accompanies all that he or she does, and functions as a form of guidance. It is immanent in its actualization and transcendent in its source.

A splendid and frequently cited description of *taqwa* occurs in Surah 2:177:

> True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west– but truly pious is he who believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance–however much he himself may cherish it–upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues; and [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they who have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of God.

This passage beautifully summarizes the meaning of *taqwa* as it manifests itself in and through human persons. Striking also is the explicit connection that is made between *taqwa*, attentiveness to the indigent, liberation from bondage, and the counsel of patience in the midst of hardship and peril. Surah 3:133–35 is equally expressive of how *taqwa* shines forth in the lives of those who are devoted to making God's desires their own:

> And vie with one another to attain to your Sustainer's forgiveness and to a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious who spend in His way in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good; and who when they have committed a shameful deed or have [otherwise] sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be

forgiven–for who but God could forgive sins?–and do not knowingly persist in doing whatever [wrong] they may have done.

Taqwa does not confer perfection, but an abiding awareness that enables persons to understand the ways in which they have sinned and to then seek forgiveness. Especially noteworthy in this passage is the observation that, in falling away from *taqwa*, people are departing from their true selves as oriented toward God. In other words, we are most ourselves when our thoughts and deeds have their origin in God-consciousness. *Taqwa* is the basis of human authenticity, and as such, it is cited as the source of happiness, nobility, human fraternity, justice, and the ability to discern what is true and false.[52]

In order to understand the relationship between God-consciousness and the use of force, it is important to have a sense of the Arabian context within which Islam arose. In his writings on the Qur'an, Izutsu underscores the intensely competitive, rivalry-ridden nature of pre-Islamic Arabian society. He describes how this period (referred to as *jahiliyah* or Time of Ignorance) was not characterized primarily by "ignorance" but by:

[The] keenest sense of tribal honor, the unyielding spirit of rivalry and arrogance, and all the rough and rude practices coming from an extremely passionate temper . . . notoriously passionate people who may be moved to any extremes on the smallest provocation . . . From the standpoint of Islam, the *jahiliyah* was a blind, savage passion . . . And it was this dark, blind passion that had inspired endless blood feuds, and caused countless miseries and disasters in the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs.[53]

According to Tamin Ansary, "In this part of the world, small-scale warfare was endemic . . . Add the Arabian tradition of blood feuds lasting for generations, add also the tapestry of fragile tribal alliances that marked the peninsula at this time, and you have a world seething with constant, ubiquitous violence".[54] Clearly, what is being described is a never-ending cycle of ever-increasing, passion-driven violence, devoid of restraining influences. Izutsu also points out how the spirit of *jahiliyah* is not restricted to a particular historical period (although this is how later Islamic tradition came to view it); rather, in its original meaning, it was intended to describe a danger inherent in all human relationships, i.e., the danger of an escalating violence capable of engulfing and ultimately destroying a society.[55] This may help to explain why the Qur'an justifies the use of force against an aggressive, unrelenting enemy when it states that "strife is worse than slaying" (2:191).[56] This was the societal context in which the Qur'anic understanding of *taqwa* made its appearance. Surah 49:13 reveals the intended transformation to be wrought by the new faith: "Behold, we have created you all out of male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him". In this passage, the differentiation among peoples and tribes exists as an opportunity for a mutually enriching encounter rather than as a source of unending strife and conflict. The most radical change announced here is in the meaning of what it means to be noble (*karim*): "The combination of nobility and reverence marks a remarkable transition from the attitudes of pre-Islamic Arabia in which reverence (*taqwa*) and nobility were considered polar opposites".[57] To be considered noble in Arabia in pre-Islamic times meant, first of all, to be of noble lineage. In terms of personal characteristics, it meant being generous (an aspect of the idea that was retained in Islam), but also being easily provoked into the use of retaliatory violence in order to settle scores and to uphold one's honor or the honor of one's kin. With the coming of Islam, however, what now counts as nobility is the possession of God-consciousness. Izutsu observes: "We can hardly overemphasize the revolutionary nature of this attempt to re-evaluate semantically an old moral word. Already in the day of *Jahiliyah karim* was one of the highest value-words, meaning roughly both nobility of birth and generosity. But no one before Islam could have thought of defining 'nobility' in terms of 'fear of God' [*taqwa*]".[58]

It remains to consider the implications of *taqwa* with regard to the possible use of force. Given the pre-Islamic context just described, it should not come as a surprise that God-consciousness is frequently associated with a counsel of restraint when confronted with a temptation to resort to violence.[59] In Surah 22:39–40, the community of believers was given permission to resort to force when under attack. However, this permission is nearly always qualified by multiple passages which associate God-consciousness with forbearance in the face of hardship.[60] Surah 2:177 has already been cited above; there, God-consciousness is identified with those who "are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril". Believers may respond in kind to aggression, but "to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for you, since God is with those who are patient in adversity . . . for God is with those who are conscious of Him and are doers of good withal" (16:126, 128). In 2:91, Muslims are told that they may fight because "oppression [or strife] is worse than killing"; however, they are warned in the preceding verse that they are only to use force when attacked, and that God does not love aggressors. The brake against aggression is then directly linked to the presence of *taqwa*: "Thus if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you–but remain conscious of God, and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him" (2:194). This exhortation should not be construed as telling the believers that God approves of whatever they do in war; rather, it serves as a warning to them that, without God-consciousness, they are liable to bring destruction on themselves through excessive zeal for retaliation and revenge. The prophet Hud addresses just such a warning to his people, who were renowned for their cruelty and their unrestrained violence in war. Within eight brief verses (26:124–32), the people of Ad are exhorted to be conscious of God four times; without the presence of *taqwa*, their violence will know no limits and they will continue to sin against others as well as against themselves. For Asad, this exemplifies "a Qur'anic prohibition, valid for all times, of all unnecessary cruelty in warfare, coupled with the positive, clearly implied injunction to subordinate every act of war–as well as the decision to wage war as such–to moral considerations and restraints".[61] It is *taqwa* that serves as the source of such moral consideration and restraint. *Taqwa* always functions as a reminder that, in cases where it may be necessary to resort to violence in self-defense, the response is to be strictly proportional to the act of aggression.[62] This applies in exactly the same way to the so-called "sword verse" where it is made clear that treaties are to be honored and that violence is to end as soon as the aggressors relent. Here too, all the qualifications introduced with the goal of preventing an escalation of violence are prefaced with the observation that "verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him (9:4), as well as repeated reminders that God is "much-forgiving" and a "dispenser of grace". Transformed by this grace, it is characteristic of the God-conscious that "they hold in check their anger and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good" (3:134). In instance after instance in the Qur'an, warnings about the use of force and exhortations toward restraint are accompanied by invocations of *taqwa*. God-consciousness must always be present, both when contemplating the use of force and in the midst of fighting in order to prevent the escalation of violence.

It would be a misunderstanding, however, to equate God-consciousness only with hesitancy regarding the use of force. As noted earlier, there existed among some members of the early Muslim community strong reservations about the resort to violence. Reasons for this hesitancy varied: at times, it was considered to be an inappropriate response to a particular situation; at other times, it may have been a matter of principle; and in many instances, the reluctance arose from an unwillingness to take up arms against members of their kin. In these circumstances, an appeal to *taqwa* formed the basis of an exhortation to the doubtful to take up arms in the interests of religious freedom and defending the innocent. Recall 22:39, in which "permission is given" to respond to aggressors and to protect churches, mosques, and synagogues from being destroyed. This verse is preceded by seven verses which clarify that the goal of all worship is the cultivation of God-consciousness in the believer. It is difficult to believe that this is a coincidence; it makes far more sense to imagine that the reason for this sequence is that, even when the use of force can be justified,

it must always have its source in a profound sense of ones responsibility before God to protect the community from destruction and to preserve the freedom to worship, and not in the human desire for retaliation or vengeance. In cases such as this, God-consciousness is not an incitement to violence for those already predisposed toward retaliation, but an awareness of the sad reality that, if the innocent are to be protected, there may be times when the use of force is justified.

Similarly, when the community's very existence is in question, and enemies are determined to eradicate worship of the one God, all are summoned to fight: "Fighting is ordained for you, even though it is hateful to you . . . since oppression is more awesome than killing. [Your enemies] will not cease to fight against you till they have turned you away from your faith, if they can" (2:16–17). In this situation, the eschatological dimension of *taqwa* is invoked in a way that relativizes the value of life in this world in comparison with the life to come: "Unto those who are bent on denying the truth, the life of this world [alone] seems goodly; hence they scoff at those who have attained to faith: but they who are conscious of God shall be above them on Resurrection Day" (2:12). This judgment is not rooted in any sense of otherworldliness or denial of the goodness of earthly life, but in the realization that God-consciousness places life in an eschatological context, wherein risking one's life in order to fight against oppression is a higher calling and more in accord with God's desires than self-preservation. Surah 4:75–77 makes this explicit:

> And how could you refuse to fight in the cause of God and of the utterly helpless men and women and children who are crying, "O Our Sustainer! Lead us forth [to freedom] out of this land whose people are oppressors . . . Art thou not aware of those who have been told, "Curb your hands, and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues"? But as soon as fighting [in God's cause] is ordained for them, lo, some of them stand in awe of men as one should stand in awe of God . . . and say, "O Our Sustainer! Why hast thou ordained fighting for us? If only Thou hadst granted us a delay for a little while!" Say; "Brief is the enjoyment of this world, whereas the life to come is the best for all who are conscious of God . . .

For the most part, God-consciousness serves as a restraining influence on human violence, given the propensity of violence to escalate and to claim for itself the name of justice, when it is in fact often nothing more than an expression of anger, rivalry, and the desire for vengeance. Nevertheless, Muslims are not Quakers and, according to the Qur'an, there are times when it is necessary to employ force in order to come to the aid of victims. God-consciousness plays a role here as well, balancing the need to limit violence against the moral responsibility to act to alleviate oppression.

Hopefully it has been become clear by this point that *taqwa* is not a matter of applying rules to situations, or even of internalizing a set of ordinances. *Taqwa* works at a deeper level, where persons are open to allowing God's desires to become their own. In other words, *taqwa* is the goal of ongoing conversion of mind and heart. This is evident from several passages in the Qur'an, particularly in 5:2 and 5:8: "And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression: but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity; and remain conscious of God: for behold, God is severe in retribution" (5:2) and "[Never] let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do" (5:8). An important example of the transformative influence of *taqwa* is recorded in Surah 48, which reflects the circumstances surrounding the Truce of Hudaybiyyah in 628. This truce established peace between the Muslim community in Medina and the still predominantly pagan city of Mecca. The treaty that produced the truce was controversial and created division among the Muslims, some of whom thought that Muhammad and his associates had been far too yielding and conciliatory. Verse 26 describes the intransigence of the Meccans, but then goes on to indicate the source of the Muslim negotiators' willingness to compromise: "Whereas

they who are bent on denying the truth harbored a stubborn disdain in their hearts–the stubborn disdain [born] of ignorance–God bestowed from on high His [gift of] inner peace upon His Apostle and the believers, and bound them to the spirit of God-consciousness: for they were most worthy of this [divine gift], and deserved it well". Muhammad and his companions do not come to the meeting with a list of demands or even with an agreed upon strategy; gifted with God-consciousness, they are able to set aside their pride, their anger, and their desire to win, in order to pursue peace.

This would seem to be a fitting image with which to conclude this essay, i.e., an image of the Prophet and his followers defying expectations through the grace of God-consciousness. It is fitting as well because it exemplifies how *taqwa* operates, not at the level of law and command, but by means of the transformation of persons. In many ways, *taqwa* functions within the Qur'an, much like the role of love in St. Augustine's famous phrase, "Love, and do as you will". In the context of the sermon in which it is given, the similarity in meaning is striking:

> This is what I insist upon: human actions can only be understood by their root in love. All kinds of actions might appear good without proceeding from the root of love. Remember, thorns also have flowers: some actions seem truly savage but are done for the sake of discipline motivated by love. Once and for all, I give you this one short command: love, and do what you will. If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good . . . [63]

One could easily substitute "taqwa" for "love" in this excerpt with little or no change in meaning. Those familiar with Augustine know that his views were quite compatible with the Qur'anic belief that terrible harm would befall the innocent, and that churches, mosques, and synagogues would be destroyed unless "God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another" (22:40). For Augustine, a Christian general will engage in war when necessary, but without being in any way motivated by hatred or a desire for revenge. Likewise, the early Muslim community may take up arms in self-defense and to remove oppression as long as the believers possess hearts and minds illuminated by God-consciousness. It is obvious that, in both cases, the decision to use force is taken reluctantly and with every intention of restoring peace and protecting the defenseless.

That being said, the Qur'an has no illusions about the role of God-consciousness. It is not magic. It does not confer infallibility on those who possess it, and sometimes it may be claimed by those who do not possess it in order to justify their aggressive schemes. The Qur'an makes clear that God-consciousness is a gift, but one that can and must be cultivated by prayer, fasting, and charity.[64] The kind of conversion required to allow God-conscious to take hold of one's heart and mind is a life-long process, involving ongoing repentance and forgiveness.[65] Some may find the idea of *taqwa* too vague and ineffectual to have any relevance with regard to questions about the use of force. However, this is to forget that *persons* conduct wars and engage in fighting. The message of the Qur'an is that persons possessed of *taqwa* will be least likely to resort to such actions, precisely because their hearts and minds reflect the reality of a God who is merciful and compassionate. The Qur'an affirms that there is such a thing as human authenticity, and that it depends on actualizing and deepening one's relationship with God. It is in this sense that it is possible to understand *taqwa* as the single most important term in the Qur'an, since all the ordinances, exhortations, commands, stories, and sayings within the text are intended to enable the reader to grow in God-consciousness and must, therefore, be referred back to God-consciousness as their goal.

As an example of how *taqwa* has concrete implications with regard to questions about fighting, consider how, taking *taqwa* into consideration, the whole issue of abrogation is relativized and relegated to a position of secondary importance. In light of God-consciousness, those who would prioritize the "sword" verse in the name of abrogation would be intel-

lectually dishonest if they ignored the strict qualifications on fighting imposed by *taqwa* both in Surah 9 and, in many instances, wherever the question of fighting arises in the Qur'an. Throughout the Qur'an, in those texts that allow or advocate the use of force, God-consciousness always acts as a moderating influence and, in those places where some members of the community may be reluctant to take up arms, it helps to move them to action in order to respond to oppression. Which verses came first, and which verses abrogate others no longer counts for much, since God-consciousness is always present as balance and restraint. It provides a flexible standard rooted in ongoing conversion; a standard that is capable of dealing with changing situations because those who possess it have allowed themselves to be transformed by God and have become most fully themselves, i.e., persons capable of reflecting the mercy and compassion of their Maker. It may be well to be reminded that the written text of the Qur'an is a series of marks on a page. These marks and the text they form "say" nothing apart from the human interpreter. Once this is understood, the key questions are no longer who can cite verses more accurately, or memorize bits of text, or apply rules taken out of context to justify their violence. Instead, the most important question concerns the human authenticity of the interpreter. Here, God-consciousness is key.

Notes

[1]   2:20, 83, 177, 184, 215, 220, 271, 273; 4:2, 6, 8–10, 36, 127; 9:60; 17:26, 34; 22:28; 30:38; 56:73; 68:24; 69:34; 70:25; 74:44; 76:8–9; 89:17–18; 90:13–16; 93:6–10; 107:1–7. See also (Esack 2006, pp. 97, 99, 102; Rahemtulla 2018; Rahman 2009).

[2]   (Khattab 2016). Unless otherwise noted, quotations of the Qur'an are taken from this translation.

[3]   (Asad 2003), 90:13 n. 7.(Ali 2012) 90:13 n. 6140.

[4]   Asad, 2:177 n. 146; 8:67 n. 72; 16:71 n. 80; Yusuf Ali, 2:177 n. 179; 8:67 n. 1234; (Nasr 2015), 16:71. See also Rahman, *Major Themes*, 48.

[5]   Asad, 76:8 n. 10.

[6]   Yusuf Ali, 76:8 n. 5839; Asad 76:8 n. 11.

[7]   Among the places where almsgiving is mentioned are: 2:43, 83, 110, 177, 277; 4:77, 162; 9:5, 11, 18, 71; 22: 41, 78; 24:37, 56; 41:7; 58:13; 73:20; 98:5. See also *Study Quran*, 8:41; 59:7; Asad, 22:28 n. 41

[8]   Places where these practices are mentioned include: 6:137, 140, 151; 16:56–59; 17:31; 60:12; 70:11–14 and 81:8–9.

[9]   Asad, 6:137 n.123.

[10]   *Study Quran*, 81:8–9 n. 8, 9.

[11]   (Tottoli 2002).

[12]   (Esack 2006, pp. 102, 194–205).

[13]   Also 2:49–50; 7:137; 10:90–93; 17:103–104; 20: 46, 80; 26:15–17, 59–66; 28:5; 40:45.

[14]   (Esack 2006, pp. 98–99).

[15]   2:51–74; 5:24; 7:138–56; 20:85–97.

[16]   (Esack 2006, pp. 202–3).

[17]   (Donner 2010).

[18]   Also 3:184; 6:10; 8:30; 13:32; 21:41; 35:4; 38:12; 40:5; 60:1–2.

[19]   2:155–57, 214, 286; 3:195; 5:11; 12:110; 16:41,110; 18:9–26; 22:58, 60; 33:48; 59:8; 60:1–2, 9.

[20]   2:30, 60, 72, 205; 5:64; 8:25,73; 13:25; 26:183; 27:48–49; 28:4, 77, 83; 30:41; 38:28; 47:22; 50:25; 59:14.

[21]   (Arkoun 2003).

[22]   Arkoun, "Violence," 433. Arkoun places "violence" in quotes to indicate the already noted point that the Qur'an does not a single word that could be translated as such, and consequently it does not treat violence as a separate theme.

[23]   (Abu-Nimer and Badawi 2011, p. 158; Afsaruddin 2018, p. 163).

24 For descriptions of the traditional view see: (Afsaruddin 2013).

(Firestone 1999; Bonner 2008). For criticism of this view as well as that of abrogation: Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 154–59; (Afsaruddin 2010; Dagli 1809); Firestone, *Jihad*, 49–51; (Haleem 1999; Musa 2012; Sachedina 1990). For a synchronic treatment of the relevant verses on the use of force: Firestone, *Jihad*, 67–91.

25 Dagli, "Conquest and Conversion,"1806. See also Abu-Nimer and Badawi, "Alternatives to War and Violence," 160; Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 147–48; Afsaruddin, "Recovering the Early Semantic Purview of *Jihad*," 40; Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God*, 1–2, 268–69; Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 21–22; Firestone, *Jihad*, 16–17; Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 64–68; (Landau-Tasseron 2003, pp. 35–42); Musa, "Qur'anically-Based Articulation of 'Just War,'" 28–29; Sachedina, "The Development of *Jihad*," 37.

26 Abu-Nimer and Badawi, "Alternatives to War and Violence," 160; Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 148, 153–54, 159; Afsaruddin, "Recovering the Early Semantic Purview of *Jihad*," 41, 48–49, 57–58; Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God*, 1–3; Dagli, "Conquest and Conversion," 1805; Firestone, *Jihad*, 15; Landau-Tasseron, "Jihad," 42; Sachedina, "The Development of *Jihad*, 36, 38; (Sachedina 1996; Johnson 1997). As examples of the wide range of perspectives on these matters, consider how the titles of at least two significant studies of jihad and warfare in Islam refer to the term "holy war"–Firestone, *Jihad: The Origins of Holy War in Islam* and James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*. To be fair, both authors acknowledge the problems involved in applying this term to *jihad* and warfare in Islam (Firestone, 15; Turner Johnson, 25–26). Contrast this with the categorical rejection of such usage by other scholars, such as Afsaruddin ("[The] military *jihad* in the Qur'an itself is most categorically not holy war that is fought to impose or even propagate Islam . . . ," *Path*, 280; "At the semantic level, the facile translation of jihad into English as holy war, as is common in some scholarly and nonscholarly discourses, constitutes a major misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the term's Qur'anic usage," *Jihad*, 41) and Haleem ("[Jihad] does not mean 'Holy War.' 'Holy War' does not exist as a term in Arabic, and its translation into Arabic sounds quite alien," 64). Similarly, Landau-Tasseron writes of "the sacredness of Islamic warfare," explaining how, even though both *jihad* and the more general term for warfare (*harb*) are "disparate concepts . . . both are endowed with sanctity" (42); while Afsaruddin maintains that "Violence is never redemptive in the Qur'an nor is it sacred . . . " (*Islam and Violence*, 163). As already mentioned, a contributing factor to confusion in these matters has to do with the problematic use of the term "religion." More specifically, the "myth of religious violence," would have us believe that the use of force on behalf of "religion" is especially dangerous and fanatical compared to the "secular" violence of the state. See (Cavanaugh 2009, 2018).

27 Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 148; Afsaruddin, "Recovering the Early Semantic Purview of *Jihad*," 42–43; Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God*, 34; Dagli, "Conquest and Conversion," 1806; Firestone, *Jihad*, 54; Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 63; John Kelsay, "jihad" "nonviolence," in (Bowering 2013); Landau-Tasseron, "Jihad," 40; (Tibi 1996).

28 Also 2:109; 16:110, 126–27; 25:75; 29:59; 33:48; 39:10; 47:31.

29 Asad adds by way of commentary: "In other words, successful struggle against tyranny . . . often tends to degenerate into a similarly tyrannical attitude towards the erstwhile oppressors. Hence, most of the classical commentators . . . stress the absolute prohibition of 'going beyond what is right' when defending oneself against tyranny and oppression" (42:40n.40). Sachedina, "Justification," 140.

30 Firestone, *Jihad*, 52–53; Asad, 16:125–27 n.149–50; Abu-Nimer and Badawi, "Alternatives to War and Violence," 158–63; Ahmed Afzaal, "nonviolence," in (Bowering 2013, p. 396); Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 148; "Recovering the Early Semantic Purview of *Jihad*," 50–51.

31 Also 22:60; 26:227.

32 Asad, 22:39 n.57; *Study Quran*, 22:39 n.39, 1807; Firestone, *Jihad*, 54; (Hashmi 1996).

33 (Mir 2008). Afsaruddin makes a similar point: "It should be noted that the Arabic uses the passive verb (*yuqataluna*; literally, "those who are fought against") instead of the active (*yuqatiluna*; literally "those who fight") in Qur'an 22:39 . . . The passive verb *yuqataluna* in the verse therefore clearly refers to fighting back *only after* one has been attacked. Recourse to defensive fighting was established in these verses for Muslims not for the sake of propagating their religion but for the protection of their lives and property," (Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 148; *Striving in the Path of God*, 42, pp. 271–72).

34 Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 158; (Arkoun 1994, p. 58); Hashmi, "Interpreting the Islamic Ethics of War and Peace," 148, 151; Musa, "Qur'anically-Based Articulation of 'Just War,'" 32–35; Sachedina, "Justification," 124, 130, 133, 155; (Sizgorich 2013, p. 588).

35 Hashmi, "Ethics of War and Peace," 150.

36 Sachedina, "Justification," 126.

37 Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism*, 193. See also Afsaruddin, "Recovering," 44–45; Bonner, *Jihad*, 31; Musa, "Just War," 32, 35; Sachedina, "Justification," 129.

38 Firestone, *Jihad*, 67, 77–84; Afsaruddin, *Striving*, 34. Other references which appear to be directed against those who resisted the call to fight: 3:156,167; 4:75, 77, 95; 9:38.

39 Asad, 8:25 n.25; Bonner, *Jihad*, 27 n.17; Also, Afsaruddin, "Recovering," 44; Firestone, *Jihad*, 55, 58–59, 85–88, 160 n.65, 160–61 n.75; Sachedina, "Development of *Jihad*, 39; "Justification," 124–25, 131, 151–52.

40	In fact, the word "sword" appears neither in these verses nor anywhere else in the Qur'an. See Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 67–68.
41	For a discussion of these issues see Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 158–61.
42	Asad, notes 9 and 40.
43	Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an*, 67–68; Afsaruddin, "Islam and Violence," 156.
44	According to Firestone, "the reference to Peoples of the Book not believing in God or the Last Day seems odd since both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity hold these two beliefs as essential to their religious systems. This reference leads me to suggest that an early version may not have included the phrase . . . but may have represented a lenient position with regard to idolaters . . . Firestone, *Jihad*, 89.
45	Asad, 9:29 n. 41
46	Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 28.
47	(Izutsu 2002, pp. 53, 195, 200).
48	Ibid., 54.
49	Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 29. See also (Izutsu 2002, pp. 195–96).
50	The remaining citations of the Qur'an are taken from the Asad translation, which consistently renders *taqwa* as "God-consciousness" or as in some way remaining conscious of God.
51	Rahman, *Major Themes*, 28–29.
52	2:189; 10:63–64; 16:30 (happiness); 2:180; 5:8; 9:7; 26:181–84 (justice); 49:13 (source of nobility and human fraternity); 8:29; 10:31–32; 21:48; 39:33 (truth and falsehood)
53	(Izutsu 2002, pp. 201–7, 210).
54	(Ansary 2009).
55	(Izutsu 2002, p. 201).
56	*The Study Quran*. The word being translated as "strife" here is *fitnah*, which, as noted earlier, can also be translated as persecution, discord, dissension, oppression, sedition, or civil war.
57	*The Study Quran*, 49:13 n.13
58	(Izutsu 2002, p. 54).
59	Among the verses that associate *taqwa* with restraint are 2:178–79, 190; 3:133–35; 4:94; 5:2,100; 9:4–6; 26:130–32, 150–52, 227; 48:26.
60	On patience in adversity: 2:177–78; 3:15–17, 120, 125, 172, 200; 7:128; 11:49; 16:30,127–28; 20:130–32; 26:227.
61	Asad, 26:124–32, n. 58.
62	On God-consciousness and war: 2:190–194; 3:123; 4:77; 9:4, 36,122–23; 26:227; 48:24–26.
63	Aurelius Augustinus *Sermon on 1 John 4:4–12*. Abridged, modernized and introduced by Stephen Tomkins. Edited and prepared for the web by Dan Graves. Available online: https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/augustine (accessed on 26 December 2021).
64	2:183; 3:134; 6:72; 7:156; 51:19; 64:16; 92:17–18.
65	3:15–17, 134–36;7:156; 8:29; 49:12; 50:33; 57:28; 65:5; 74:56.

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Article

Jawdat Saʿid and the Islamic Theology and Practice of Peace

Rüdiger Lohlker

Oriental Institute, Vienna University, 1010 Vienna, Austria; ruediger.lohlker@univie.ac.at

Abstract: Among the leading Islamic thinkers and activists promoting a theology of peace based on the Qurʾanic revelation is Jawdat Saʿid. Framing his role by an analysis following the conceptualization of Shahab Ahmed the Qurʾanic context of the ideas of Saʿid are presented, and these ideas are contextualized within the recent Syrian revolution before it turned into civil war. Fundamental ideas of the theology of Saʿid help to explain the thoughts of a lesser known activist of nonviolent action based on a specific and revolutionary interpretation of the Qurʾan.

Keywords: Jawdat Saʿid; Syria; nonviolence; Islam; Abel; Cain

1. Introduction

The violent turn of the Syrian revolution has often been described; the nonviolent activism, of more importance, at the beginning of it has been less described. A driving force during the early period were local committees (Perlman 2019), e.g., the Local Coordination Committees (Marei 2020). These committees created a new national community (cf. Ismail 2011) that may be compared to the new communities envisioned by Jawdat Saʿid (cf. below). Saʿid was an important thinker inspiring the nonviolent beginnings and local committees whose influence reached out well beyond Syria. Jawdat Saʿid and his recent role in the Arab and Islamic world have to be understood in the context of the Syrian Revolution[1]:

> "The Syrian Revolution began nonviolently. The vast majority of participants maintained nonviolence as their path to pursue regime change and a democratic Syria, until an armed flank emerged in August 2011. Since then, the revolution has morphed. The original uprising began at the grassroots, and solidarity across lines of sect, religion, and ethnicity was strong among the grassroots population. However, from midsummer to autumn, 2011, armed resistance developed; political bodies formed to represent the revolution outside Syria; and political Islamists of various sorts entered the uprising scene. Since then, armed resistance has overshadowed nonviolent Syria. It should not be a surprise to find that nonviolent resistance diminishes after the emergence of an armed resistance. What is remarkable is that nonviolent resistance in Syria has continued, despite being overshadowed by the raging battle between the regime and the militarized flank of the revolution, and despite being beleaguered by tensions with the armed resistance." (Kahf 2014, pp. 1–2)

To include the influence of Jawdat Saʿid on the early Syrian revolution in our considerations, we have to mention that in 1998, the town of Daraya in the countryside of Damascus took Saʿid's ideas about nonviolence as a starting point for their activities. However, in 2003, these young people were targeted by governmental persecution. The members of this group organized a series of multicultural seminars on nonviolence in the city of Homs. Their collective was not a religious one but spiritual–ethical and intersected with the circles of the followers of Saʿid (Kahf 2014, p. 1).

The nonviolent way of actions in this Syrian revolution was inspired—among other factors—by the ideas of Jawdat Saʿid. The opening sentence of the main page of this Syrian

thinker and author reads: "We live in a world in which four-fifths of its population live in frustration while the other fifth lives in fear."[2] Thus, we may not talk about ideas but about a practical perception of the world based on the need to erase inequalities affecting our societies leading to violence.

There are few studies on this Syrian author and activist who has a unique position in contemporary Islam (Müller 2010; Kahf 2014; Lohlker 2016; Murtaza 2016; Ollivry-Dumairieh 2016; Rak 2016; Belhaj 2017; Zecca 2020). As an activist, he participated in the nonviolent opposition in Syria in 2011. In 2013, he had to migrate to Turkey. His writings, however, are still read in the Arab world (and sometimes beyond).

The corpus we are using for our analysis is the comprehensive set of original writings and videos at *jawdatsaid.net*. To give an overview, we may mention (a) several books, (b) many articles, (c) videos (e.g., lectures illustrated with background pictures), (d) audio files (most of them from 2007 and 2008), (e) other articles in journals, (f) interviews in journals, and g) contemporary Islamic issues. Some books in English and French are available, but the bulk of the material is written and produced in Arabic.

Methodologically speaking, this study of the ideas of Jawdat Saʿid performs a close reading of selected texts by Saʿid to explore his way of thinking. These texts are framed by the approach developed by Shahab Ahmed (cf. below). The style of this article is rhizomatic (cf. Lohlker 2021, p. 122), allowing for a precise presentation and reconstruction of the ideas of Saʿid using the quotations as points of intersection between the ideas presented. We are aware that may be not understandable to readers expecting conventional narratives, but this way of presenting Saʿid is well in line with advanced philosophical approaches and sampling as a method of artistic research (cf. Navas 2012).

2. Biography

Who is Jawdat Saʿid? The best short biography was written by Crow[3]:

"Jawdat Saʿid was born in 1931 in the Circassian village of Biʾr ʿAjam, south of Qunaytra in the Golan Heights. His family (named Tsai) was part of the wave of Circassian immigration from Russian territory into the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire in the late nineteenth century. At the age of fifteen he was sent to study in Cairo at the prestigious Al-Azhar University, graduating in 1957 with both a university degree in Arabic literature and a diploma in education. After returning to Syria he taught for over ten years, first in the Dar al-Muʾallimin (Teachers' College) in Damascus and then in high schools in and around Damascus, including teaching "morale" in military schools (e.g., in the city of Homs in central Syria). Increasingly, he found himself demoted to less prestigious schools. In 1968, Saʿid was dismissed from his government employment as a teacher, due to his advocacy of ideas on Islamic peace and their implications for radical social transformation, for his published views (his first book appeared in 1966), and for his activism through lecturing in mosques, civic centers, and within Syrian intellectual and social circles. In 1968 he was imprisoned by the Syrian authorities for a year and a half. He has been to prison under the Baʿth regime five times, usually for periods of several months, the last time being in 1973. During the early 1980s, when the Syrian Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brethren) were actively opposing President Asad's regime, he was often interrogated and watched, although he has never been a member of the Muslim Brethren. For well over a decade he chose to live in voluntary internal exile, working in Tolstoy-like fashion at his family's apiary in Biʾr ʿAjam. This exemplifies his conviction that intellectual freedom must be linked to gainful work. His withdrawal from active social engagement, coinciding with the clash between the Islamist opposition and the Syrian government, was motivated by his understanding of the Islamic requirement to avoid fitnah or civil discord and violence. Since the early 1990s, Saʿid has gradually become more active within Syria, cultivating contacts and engaging in dialogue with a wide spectrum of

religious, political, and social trends within the Sunni religious establishment [. . .], with Communists, Arab nationalists, and the Union of Arab Writers [. . .]. This reflects Saʿid's commitment to accepting other viewpoints, fostering a more secure sense of community and common purpose among Arab Muslims, and tolerating the pursuit of different directions in finding solutions." (Crow 2000, pp. 64–65)

His stay in Egypt from 1946 to 1958 was (cf. below) crucial for the intellectual development of Saʿid. Important writers influencing him were Abu A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979 CE), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897 CE), Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905 CE), Rashid Rida (d. 1935 CE), Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273 CE), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350 CE), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 CE), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 CE), i.e., many of the important thinkers of Sunni Islam. More important were Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938 CE) and Malik Bennabi (d. 1973 CE), two of the most influential thinkers of the modern Islamic world.

After staying in Egypt, he traveled to Saudi Arabia and then the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria; then he traveled to Iraq, India, and Pakistan. Thus, he gained first-hand knowledge of many parts of the Islamic world. He also met the influential Islamic scholar Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadvi (d. 1999 CE) in India. Thus, we may sketch his influences before finally returning to Syria (cf. above).[4]

3. A Shahabian Approach

We will situate the ideas and practice of Jawdat Saʿid in the Con-Text of revelation. Following Shahab Ahmed, this hermeneutical engagement is based on the previous hermeneutical engagement being present as Islam (cf. Ahmed 2016, p. 356). Ahmed writes:

"Con-Text is thus the entire accumulated *lexicon of means and meanings of Islam* that has been historically generated and recorded up to any given moment: it is the full *historical vocabulary of Islam* at any given moment. When a Muslim seeks to make meaning in *terms of Islam*, he necessarily does so in engagement with and by use of the existing *terms of engagement*—that is, in engagement with and by use of the existing *vocabulary of Islam*. The vocabulary of Islam registers, denotes and makes available the meanings of previous hermeneutical engagement; the meanings of previous hermeneutical engagements are, in other words, discernibly embedded in the semantic units of this existing vocabulary of forms. Thus, in a given time or place, for the meaning of an act or utterance to be *recognizable in terms of Islam* it must be expressed in the vocabulary of Con-Text." (Ahmed 2016, p. 357)

Other important terms for the analysis of Ahmed are Pre-Text and Text. Pre-Text is not to be understood as chronologically prior to the Text of the revelation/the Qurʿān; it is ontologically and alethically before it but encompasses "the Unseen Pre-Text of the Revelation" (Ahmed 2016, p. 347) as being continuously present in the world and in Islam. The hermeneutical engagement with the Text/the Qurʿān takes place in the world of the Unseen of the Pre-Text and is made livable in the Con-Text. The Con-Text can be attributed and traced to the Text and Pre-Text and provides the web of meaning(s) by which Muslims live their hermeneutical engagement with Revelation (Ahmed 2016, pp. 358–59)

Taking up this framework, we may start to analyze the ideas and practice of Jawdat Saʿid as an example of hermeneutical engagement with the Revelation. In the context of modern Islamic thought in the Arab world, his position is specific but present until today, contrary to the impression that violent and fundamentalist ideas are dominating the field of discussion.

Returning to the problem of societal change addressed in the beginning, we may refer to Zecca, who wrote in her review of an anthology of translations of writings of Jawdat Saʿid in Italian that his ideas may be analyzed as a reaction to the conditions of the contemporary Arab world and its despotic regimes. Hence, change of this situation is a core idea of Saʿid:

"Saʿid defends the possibility of a pacific change which should establish democratic political systems based upon human rights. It is impossible, according to Saʿid, for war to be a vector of change, especially because he considers violence, as a mode of action, anachronistic in relation to the evolution of humanity within our time. It defines the man who resorts to violent action as someone who lives in an 'abrogated time'. He compares young men sent to war to the human sacrifices of ancient populations [. . .] and, referring to the endless status of war of the Arab states, he underlines the stupidity of governments who continue to buy weapons from Occidental companies in order to fight one against the others [. . .]. Appealing to the unity of the Muslim world, Saʿid exhorts to the end of arms trade, also comparing weapons to fetishes of the Jahilīyya (pre-Islamic or ignorance) period [. . .]." (Zecca 2020, p. 215)

These remarks hint at the subterranean linkages of the ideas of Jawdat Saʿid to the Arab revolutions after 2010, mentioned before. Hence, the impact of Jawdat Saʿid was the need to change the situation of Arab societies and the Islamic world. To develop this idea, he began to rethink shared notions of what being Islamic means.

During and after his stay in Cairo at the al-Azhar university, he was deeply involved in the contemporary discussion in the Arab and Islamic world. His main persons of reference were Muhammad Iqbal (Hillier and Koshul 2015; Majeed 2009) and Malik Bennabi (Seniguer 2014; Sherif 2018). Unlike the move of Syrian opposition toward a violent strategy in the 1960s, he published his first book in the year 1966 when Sayyid Qutb, famous for his book *Milestones*, a programmatic work of the first wave of modern violent Jihadism, was executed. Saʿid's book may be read as an answer to this text that was based on the experience of the repressive regime in Egypt (cf. below). A writer and activist in a likewise repressive context in Syria was able to create a theory of nonviolence understood as an integral part of Islam. This may be proof that the results of the hermeneutic engagement with the Qur'anic revelation may be even contradictory, as Shahab Ahmed wrote.

4. The Path of Adam's First Son

The first book of Jawdat Saʿid[5] we mentioned is *The Path of Adam's First Son: The Problem of Violence in Islamic Activism* (cf. Menghini 2019, p. 58; Saʿid 1993). In another text, Saʿid mentioned that the first he publicly spoke about *The Path of Adam's Son*[6] was in 1965 during the Friday prayer during the month of Ramadan. He describes the emergence of this idea during his time as a student at the University of al-Azhar, where he experienced the incertitude and upheaval of the Arab and Islamic world (Saʿid n.d.). Which kind of theory emerged from this situation? The relationship of law and religion in the Muslim community has to be constructive and dynamic. It should not follow the method of imitation and blind acceptance (*taqlid*) that, for Saʿid, has been a decisive factor of the decline of the Islamic world as a whole.

"In this case Saʿid was strongly influenced by another great Muslim thinker of Jewish descent Muhammad Asad (1900–1992), who commented in his highly acclaimed book *Islam at the Crossroads*, that whereas Islam was a perfect system for mankind, it was its believers who failed to live according to its message.

One recurring theme in Saʿid's thought is the need to observe laws, which constitute a profound part of knowledge, he believes. He particularly strongly stresses the notion of change which needs to occur, quoting the *Qur'ān*: *Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change that what is in their souls.* Law allows duties, obligations, and freedoms to be established, but it is injustice that destroys societies. It is humans that are faulty, not the law itself. Law is supposed to protect everyone. In the cycle of history, people relinquish their right to protection and leave it to the law. Saʿid warns that when a person gets his right to self-protection, by which he means any kind of violent means, the individual once again becomes part of the law of the jungle, force. Law on the other hand is

opposed to violence. The question one needs to ask is when exactly did the shift between the law of violence and dialogue take place?" (Rak 2016, pp. 35–36)[7]

The theory he presents is to be found in his book *The First Son of Adam*. We will follow the presentation of Rak. The starting point of the book is the story of Cain (Qabil) and Abel (Habil) as told in the Qur'an—another case of hermeneutic engagement with the text of the revelation. It reads:

"And recite unto them, with truth, the account of Adam's two sons, when they offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of them, though not accepted from the other. One said: 'I will surely slay you!' [The other] said: 'God accepts only from the reverent. Even if you stretch forth your hand against me to slay me, I shall not stretch forth my hand against you to slay you. Truly I fear God, Lord of the worlds. I desire you should be burdened with my sin and your sin and so become one of the inhabitants of the fire. Such is the recompense of the wrongdoers.' Then his soul prompted him to slay his brother, and he slew him, and thus became to be among the losers. Then God sent a crow, scratching the earth, to show him how he might conceal his brother's nakedness. He said, 'Oh, woe unto me! Am I not able to be even as this crow and conceal my brother's nakedness?' And he came to be among the remorseful." (Sura 5, *al-māʾida*, pp. 27–31)[8]

Abel refraining from slaying his brother materialized the philosophy of nonviolence so dear to Saʿid. The ultimate result of Cain slaying Abel is the grief and sorrow of Cain as described by Saʿid. Thus, Habil brings the historical shift in human behavior by not acting violently.

"Humanity arises from violence, the period of muscles—as Saʿid states—to the period of mind and comprehension, leading it to grant moral values a growing presence in one's actions. The choice between the right and wrong actions is still voluntary, but in Abel's choice to act against violent methods one can notice the introduction of the law of dialogue, openness to the Other that is visible in acts of moral responsibility, which is one of the key factors driving human nature in its decisions. A different decision, that made by Abel, would only bring human regression. God by creating people and granting them the role of being His viceregents on earth expects that humankind will finally start acting according to the role that is presented to them. The shift in authority, first based on violence, later leads to comprehension. Saʿid sees this as an evolution from the law of the jungle to the law of understanding. This behaviour is full of trust in human evolution. Violent actions are perceived as a form of regression understood as blasphemy, which is considered a major crime in Islam because it means acting against nature and God's order." (Rak 2016, p. 36)

For Saʿid, knowledge and nonviolence is to be understood from a Qur'anic perspective. However, it is necessary to move beyond the realm of texts and include the historical experiences of humanity. Yet he understands the human fallibility and tendency to misinterpret, especially, the messages of the prophets. However, experience may help to find a way out. Saʿid argues for the need for a diversity of readings. Following the example of the ancestors would lead to what is called *taqlid*, blind acceptance of former views, restricting openness, diversity, and progress in Muslim thought. He points to Iqbal's idea of the difference between religion and the human understanding of religion. Experience is vital to a true understanding of religion (Rak 2016, p. 38). The concept of the need for experience may be regarded as another Islamic legitimation of nonviolent activism conceptualized by Saʿid to create a new history. Saʿid shies not away from controversial points when criticizing the Muslim orthodoxy. Racism or ethnocentrism stem, according to Saʿid, from the denial

"of the possibility of prophecy to other religious and cultural figures. It is interesting to note the many quotations he himself uses throughout his writings from other than Islamic sources." (Rak 2016, p. 39)

Two important other concepts are equity and justice. Equity is for Saʿid the perfect realization of *tawhid* or believing in one God and unity, a narrow path.[9] Justice, on the other hand, is best exemplified by the Qurʾanic saying "There is no coercion in religion." (cf below).

"Equity for him means no more than the process of denunciation of tyranny and the act of prohibiting religious coercion. It is interesting to note that Saʿid sees tyranny as a specific case of breaching the teachings of Islam—and calls it an example of polytheism, an unforgivable sin. According to Saʿid, the call for equality is vital for human prosperity. The main problem of mankind is connected to the rejection of the need for equality, or equity, which can give some people the feeling of superiority, a nearly godlike position among others. This superiority is embedded in the arrogance of people, which is an obstacle not only in building everyday relations but, in the believers' eyes, may also prevent one from entering paradise in the hereafter." (Rak 2016, p. 39)

Rak sketches the concept of Malik Bennabi that there is a certain state of mind or the *conditio humana* allowing for the emerging of a disposition to be colonized. This state of mind creates the conditions for being colonized. The root causes are the weakness and apathy emerging in Arab societies including the loss of communities dispersed into assemblies of individuals (cf. below). For Saʿid, the vital element of the story of Habil he refers to is the ability to end oppression and to build a new society based on equal rights. To use an argument of Saʿid (1993), nonviolence means a shift to the nervous system from the muscular system. The main example for Saʿid are the prophets addressing the minds of people and not their bodies. This means that no physical actions are needed (Rak 2016, p. 40). Physical action will be needed when change to a nonviolent society has to take place (cf. below).

Nonviolence is, for Saʿid, an act and idea of freedom since it can be traced back to disobedience, "the negation of the need to take harmful action against another. A disobedience to the *culture of muscles* as he calls it" (Rak 2016, p. 40). *Not* engaging in violence is the final proof of intellectual freedom.

5. Change

Saʿid stresses the need for individual and societal change in his book referring in its title to sura 13, *al-raʿd*, 11: "Truly God alters not what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves."[10] The title is: *Until They Alter What Is in Themselves*.[11] The interdependence of individual and collective change as spiritually inspired is described by Saʿid as a dual change. The first change is that instilled by God in his creation; the second one, that of the humans, is inspired by God, "a gift from God". Humans will be able to realize this inspiration when they are willing (cf. below) to change themselves. The change, however, is relevant for the individuals. It is a collective change of an entity composed of these individuals.

In this book, Saʿid directly criticizes some thoughts of Sayyid Qutb, one of the forefathers of modern-day Jihadism. This indicates the involvement of Saʿid in the ongoing discussions in the Arab and Islamic world of this period. Sayyid Qutb may be regarded as the paragon of the movement advocating the use of force and coercion against all other Muslims and non-Muslims.

The denial of coercion (*ikrāh*) is—as mentioned before—crucial for *The Path of the First Son of Adam*. This concept is further discussed in other texts that may help us understand the hermeneutic engagement of Saʿid with the Qurʾanic revelation and to situate him in the contemporary landscape of Islamic discourses

6. Lā ikrāh fi 'd-dīn

A Qur'anic verse discussed by Saʿid especially is Sure 2, *al-baqara*, 256. Usually, the shortened version is used: "There is no coercion in religion."[12]

"The tempter to error (*tāghūt*)[13] is the one who brings coercion (*ikrāh*). Hence, it is ordered not to believe in the tempter. The believers are told to believe in God for whom it is true that there is no coercion in His religion (*dīn*).[14] He is not afraid of suffering defeat from renouncing coercion. He trusts in textual logic (*mantiq*), in the humans (*insān*) and in God in whose religion is no kind of coercion.

"As to coercion in religion, the removal of coercion is of its most important chapters, more important than all the other chapters. In particular, politics (*siyāsa*) based on coercion is no [true] leadership. There is no truth (*rushd*) but error (*ghayy*)[15] and deceit. [. . .] According to the strength of coercion truth is far away and the Shari'a[16] is defective or not existing at all. [. . .] It may be said that according to the advice of the Qur'an to watch out in the future since adopting coercion[17] since the history of this issue is pitch-black." (Saʿid 1998)

Since Jawdat Saʿid mentions the West as a paradigm for adopting coercion and making it *the* source of predominance, we may identify one element of the Pre-Text of this interpretation. The other main element is the tyranny of the contemporary Arab world. The references to the Qur'anic revelation are easily identifiable. These presuppositions and the reference of the Qur'anic revelation enable the believers to make a deliberate choice for the devotion of the Qur'anic injunction to resist oppression and coercion. This kind of resistance is, for Saʿid, legitimate if it does not lead to coercion and violence. Hence, these paragraphs make the call to nonviolent resistance based on the Qur'anic revelation visible. The framework for the nonviolent opposition in Syria mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is laid out.

The crucial factors that will enable the change needed in society, especially Muslim societies, are described by Saʿid as a manifold endeavor: work or activism (*'amal*), will (*irāda*), ability (*qudra*), and the application of these principles. They are sketched in a book[18] called *al-'Amal: Qudra wa-Irada* or *Work as Ability and Will* (Saʿid 1984).

7. Work as Ability and Will

Since the will to choose a nonviolent path to action without turning to coercion is essential for the theories of Saʿid, we have to turn to this book. Saʿid compares the spirit of God with the will of humans. Thus, he argues:

"This is to demonstrate that the body's spirit is its will; once the will is lost, then the body must die—it decomposes in the *same* way as the individual body decomposes and reverts to its constituent elements. When the community decomposes, its individuals, having lost the common will, will revert to their primitive interests: struggling to preserve their individual lives, not caring about the development of society. It will be an aggregate of individuals, each unto himself/herself. Indeed, the community comes into being at the time its individuals have wills that go beyond themselves as individuals and encompass the others—It is then that the society begins to exist as a body; and it is then that it is true of it to apply the Verse of the Qur'an: "To every people is a term appointed"; (10:49). It is when this happens that you imagine an *ummah* with a span of life, like an individual. The bond that brings a society together is a will that unites the individuals: one faith, one aim, one ideal . . . An ideal is the spirit of the society." (Saʿid 1984, p. 175)

Saʿid's idea of will includes the need to uphold a common will lived in a society inspired by the existence of a community that embodies a super-individual spirit. For Saʿid this community is the Muslim *ummah* as the ideal community. This ideal community Saʿid is talking about is, for him, the nonviolent society he envisions. This community is

embedded in the Islamic worldview of Saʿid and may be illustrated by one example. Saʿid distinguishes between two groups:

> "In Islamic tradition, we contrast two groups, the *faqihs* (scholars of Islamic legislation and rulings), and the Sufis. The latter identify themselves as the 'people of the will, or sincerity', and they designate the Sufi learner as the '*murid*, i.e., the searcher for the Truth'. To them, the illiterate, the most ignorant, can ascend to a supreme level of sincerity and will. I find this a very good application of our theoretical discussion of the will: it indicates that the will can rise to a very high level even in the illiterate and the children, both female and male, as may be attested by their willingness to offer their money and life." (Saʿid 1998, p. 283)

Hence, the will to change the personal life and society to a nonviolent one is open to every human willing to act accordingly. One author writing on Saʿid voices some criticism.

8. Criticizing Saʿid

Menghini wrote in his article on Saʿid that Saʿid's theory of Habil's path, his contextualization of nonviolence, and his exposition of the revolutionary potential of the Islamic idea of the one God (*tawhid*) as part of Saʿid's theology of nonviolence allow for a deep understanding of his ideas. Menghini, nevertheless, identifies some points to be criticized concerning his argumentation and practicability. Saʿid's selection of passages from the Qur'an and Hadith is not—according to Menghini—sufficiently explained and allegedly arbitrary. Menghini argues that there are other interpretations of these passages available (Menghini 2019, p. 56).

This kind of criticism is an example of a misunderstanding of the creative hermeneutical engagement with the Qur'anic revelation as a defective form of scholarly writing. The way of writing of an Islamic activist and believer is to be understood in internal terms as a coherent set of ideas aiming at establishing a theory of nonviolence based on the Islamic tradition. A criticism of the arbitrariness of the selection of Qur'anic and Hadith passages quote by Saʿid reveals a misunderstanding of the hermeneutical approach of Saʿid and is assuming a structure of the Qur'an and Hadith similar to a European novel of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, taking *one* book as representing all of the thoughts of one author reveals an underlying Orientalist worldview, assuming that the system of being Islamic of this author can be derived from just *one* source. Menghini is referring to the fundamentalist writer Abu A'la Mawdudi[19] as presenting another interpretation than Saʿid and ignoring the diversity of Islamic interpretations of sources.

This difference in interpretation demands that Saʿid provide a more structured explanation of the reasoning behind his interpretation of this passage. The same can be said about other passages he chose to include in his argument, especially those where alternative readings suggest that nonviolence may be more of a response to circumstances than conscious adherence to Habil's path. When the Prophet Muhammad, for example, invited Muslims to be patient and not use violence against polytheists in Mecca, the reason could be connected with the equilibrium of forces specific to that moment, more than with a conscious choice of nonviolence. The non-Muslims in Mecca were much stronger than the Muslims, and so the choice to not confront them with force could have been made by a strategic circumstantial justification.

The criticism goes on to assume that Saʿid should have to write a book based on academic definitions. Reading Saʿid, we have to bear in mind that these texts (and videos) of an Islamic activist are *not* academic texts on early Islamic history. The demands that these texts have to follow the rules of another field of intellectual production are absurd. The absurdity is multiplied by other demands for definitions and explanations:

> "For instance, when explaining how the distinctive society will be created, Saʿid does not define what is meant by 'society'. Is this society simply Islamic, or should it be defined in terms of reach on a national or global scale?" (Menghini 2019, p. 57)

Although we might say that the critique of Menghini may be excused as a published by journal of undergraduate students, it reveals some methodological shortcomings detected in more elaborate scholarly works. Worse, it is one of the few articles analyzing a book of Saʿid available.[20] Thus, this article may be regarded as a paradigmatic case. Nevertheless, Menghini continues:

> "the relevance of Saʿid's work is clearly demonstrated in his innovative position on, and interpretation of, the principle of nonviolence. In constructing Habil's path as a new *madhhab* modeled on the lives of the prophets, Saʿid shows how nonviolence is a recurring theme throughout the history of Islam. As such, he makes a convincing argument that nonviolence is truly an "Islamic" principle. [. . .] Moreover, Saʿid's theorization of nonviolence as a methodology sets him apart from many other philosophers both inside and outside the Islamic world." (Menghini 2019, p. 57)

This leads us to look at the context of Islamic ideas of nonviolence. Despite the overwhelming literature on states, groups, and individuals promoting military Jihad as an Islamic duty, there is a sector of Islamic thought and activism promoting nonviolent activism. We may just mention the Pashtun activist and leader of the *Khudai Khidmatgaran* Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Easwaran 2002) or the Indian writer Wahiduddin Khan (Omar 2008a, 2008b). For our context, the Syrian writer and activist Afra Jalabi, who integrated the ideas of Jawdat Saʿid in her thought, is important (Jalabi 2018). She is the scion of a family of nonviolent activists.

9. Conclusions

Jawdat Saʿid's nonviolent reading of the Qur'an and his engagement with the Qur'anic revelation is a paradigmatic case to illustrate the many ways Muslims can engage with the revelation and—in his case—turn it into a tool for nonviolent activism.[21] Leaving aside the question of religious truth, the ideas of Saʿid maybe the heritage of the beginnings of the Syrian resistance before it was turned into violence and part of the heritage of this historical moment to further the development of nonviolent ideas and practices as a legacy for humanity. It is *not* a study on *Syrian* ideas. It is a study on part of the global discussion on nonviolence. Saʿid, e.g., has been lecturing in many countries and to global media.[22] His global approach can be understood by videos on his ideas. Thus, he is a Syrian thinker but not limited to Syria in his worldviews.[23]

Further analysis of Jawdat Saʿid's thinking and practice will have to identify the sources of his ideas and the difference in presentation in writings, audio–visual presentations, commentaries, and other ways to convey his ideas.

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Notes

1   We intentionally refrain from trying to give a bibliography of the recent Syrian development since this article is focused on the ideas of one Syrian thinker and activist. The following quotation gives an outline of the Syrian revolution.

2   https://www.jawdatsaid.net/en/index.php/Main_Page (accessed on 14 December 2021).

3   The best visual biography is *Jawdat Saʿid Twitter Channel* (2021). The exact birth date given in the video is 31 January 1931.

4   The video *Jawdat Saʿid Twitter Channel* (2021) shows a picture of Saʿid reading and a picture of Gandhi at the bookshelves in the background.

5   A study of all publications, interviews, videos, etc. is far beyond the scope of an article. Unfortunately, current research is far away from producing a book-length study that would be needed. However, this article is an overview using carefully selected texts to give an outline of the ideas of Saʿid.

6   Evidently, Abu-Nimer is wrong when stating that Saʿid did use civilian Jihad instead of the Arabic expression *la ʿunf* (Abu-Nimer 2018, p. 251).

7   Rak refers to Saʿid (n.d.).

8   I am using the translation (Nasr et al. 2015, pp. 289–91; Cf. Saʿid 1993, p. 77).

9   Saʿid is referring to the Gospel of Matthew.

10   I am using the translation (Nasr et al. 2015, p. 618).

11   Saʿid (n.d.). The foreword to this book is contributed by Malik Bennabi.

12   I am using the translation (Nasr et al. 2015, p. 111).

13   This is a direct reference to the wording of the Qurʾanic verse quoted above.

14   Historically speaking, the semantics of *dīn* changed (Lohlker 2022). In modern times it may be accepted to translate dīn as religion.

15   This is a direct reference to the wording of the Qurʾanic verse quoted above.

16   i.e., the rules of good human behavior. Saʿid is reappropriating it from fundamentalist interpretations.

17   An allusion to the Qurʾanic verse quoted here may be assumed.

18   Often referring to scientific metaphors. Saʿid discusses the relation of scientific knowledge and peace in (Saʿid n.d.).

19   Who was one influence of young Jawdat Saʿid (cf. above).

20   We are aware of volumes such as (al-Marzūqī et al. 2006).

21   It may also be read as a contribution "to a theory of nonviolence and peacebuilding principles and values from an Islamic perspective and within an Islamic context." (Abu-Nimer 2001, p. 218).

22   The audio files at https://jawdatsaid.net/ (accessed on 20 December 2021) provide many examples for this outreach.

23   e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbCwozvK8E (accessed on 2 February 2022); the translation was performed by Afra Jalabi (cf. above).

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Article

Islamic Hermeneutics of Nonviolence: Key Concepts and Methodological Steps

Adnane Mokrani [1,2]

1   The Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose (FSCIRE), The Giorgio La Pira Library and Research Centre on the History and Doctrines of Islam, 90137 Palermo, Italy; amokrania@hotmail.com
2   Gregorian Centre for Interreligious Studies, Pontifical Gregorian University, 00187 Rome, Italy

Abstract: The article traces the key concepts and methodological steps that make an Islamic theology of nonviolence plausible. It offers the tools for a critical reading of classical texts, "sacred" history, and globalized modernity. The article deals with the theology of nonviolence as part of modern and contemporary theologies: those of religious pluralism, feminism and liberation, which are interconnected and share the same hermeneutical knots and challenges. Nonviolence theology can be considered the big umbrella that includes all these aspects. It is a postcolonial approach, nurtured by Sufism, that aims to liberate theology from past and present power claims and build the bases for radical reform.

Keywords: nonviolence; Islamic theology; hermeneutics; Tafsīr; Qurʾānic exegesis; Islamic reform; modernity; history

1. In Search of the Lasting Good Things

Contemporary Muslims find themselves between two eras that are increasingly becoming distant from each other: the time of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions and modern time with its questions and challenges. According to Islamic doctrine, Muḥammad is not the founder of Islam but a reformer, just as other Prophets before him were. The "Seal of the Prophets", (Q 33, 40), did not seal the bond between Earth and Heaven, which continues to exist through the religious experience and the exegesis, the renewed understanding of God's Word and Will. To move from one period to another using a renovated translation is a vital need for faith. To guarantee an exegetical process faithful to the necessities of the two epochs, the believer needs to take recourse to an ensemble of subjective and objective conditions, which are the focus of this article. Let us first take an example from the Qurʾān concerning one historical gap:

> Do not marry [women] who associate [partners with God] until they believe: a believing slave woman is certainly better than a woman who associates, even though she may please you. And do not give your women in marriage to [men] who associate until they believe: a believing slave is certainly better than [a man] who associates, even though he may please you. (Q 2, 221)[1]

The verse raises a problem that contemporary Muslims encounter when confronted with the challenge of modernity. They are faced with a text revealed fifteen centuries ago in linguistic, cultural, social, economic and political contexts that differ substantially from the current circumstances. Slavery, for example, is no longer acceptable today. It is seen as one of the worst historical tragedies, even though our world still contains hidden forms of enslavement. Religions and Scriptures, including the Bible and the Qurʾān, did not eliminate slavery, but, at best, they prepared the path towards liberation, leaving the final decision to man and his economic development and culture; however, historical attempts to justify and defend slavery in the name of God existed.

Anyone who takes modernity seriously is aware of the challenges caused by the time gap. As for the traditional or conservative believer, whoever contents himself with the pre-modern interpretations considers the historical forms to be the true guarantee of the Scripture's value, without which it would hold no sense. Or he might prefer to be selective, avoiding the prickly topics, given that they are "exceptional", in this way refuting slavery and accepting polygamy (Q 4, 3) and a non-egalitarian inheritance (Q 4, 11, 176).

Slavery is a clear example that concerns the gap between past and present. The urgent question is: How can this verse speak to me here and now? Is the text definitively obsolete and caduc? In this case, its value today would be merely historical. Perhaps this would be a particularly extreme modernist perspective, selecting those elements of the text that are still "valuable" and rejecting those elements that go against the grain of the march of time. A more coherent approach would rather pay attention to the entire text than be selective. From the religious point of view, we have no access to a *revised* edition of the Qurʾān. It is entirely the "Word of God", even if not all the verses have the same value. The Qurʾān itself criticizes selective reading:

Do you then believe in one part of the book and reject the rest? (Q 2, 85)

It is inevitable to have to make a distinction between the value itself and the historical form in which the value was revealed for the first time in order to avoid an arbitrary selection or a literalist reading. In other terms, the distinction between the essential and the accidental is the first condition for modern faithfulness. This distinction itself is an act of interpretation that should not be merely a compromise of adaptation to the pressure of modernity.

(Q 2, 221) could tell us today that the value of the human being does not depend on his or her social class but on what he or she has in the heart and conscience. The text used the social categories of the time as an illustrative example that conveys the idea. The holistic liberation of the human being is a moral finality and a hermeneutical horizon that will be gradually discovered in the course of history, despite regressions.

2. New Hermeneutics for New Theologies

The key challenge for new Islamic theologies is mainly hermeneutical, that is to say, by creating new Islamic theologies that try to resolve the problems that have emerged from modernity, such as the theology of religious pluralism, nonviolence theology, feminist theology and liberation theology. They can be considered a single theology having different facets. Religious exclusivism can be transformed into violence, as violence against women is at the heart of feminist theology, which offers new tools for the theology of religious pluralism (cf. Tanner 2014). The integral theology of religious diversity is nonviolent, ecological, feminist, and interreligious at the same time. Those who accept diversity are reconciled with themselves and the social and natural environment in which they live.

Nonviolence cannot be reduced to political activism in resisting colonialism or dictatorship. Instead, it is an all-inclusive way of thinking and living that requires disarming theology. Theology can be an expression or an instrument of power. Nonviolent theology aims to liberate theology from power ambitions and to orient it to the service of all humanity, in particular the poor and the oppressed. In this case, religion's mission is seen as an act of humanization and liberation from all forms of violence. Nonviolent liberation is not a mere social movement of external change: it departs first of all from an inner transformation and conversion. This means that all these theologies require a mystical dimension. Mystical theology and hermeneutics are an essential part of this project for reform.

As mentioned above, theologians are interested in the theological meaning of the Qurʾān, which goes beyond the historical forms. The text speaks not only to its original audience but to the present and it opens horizons for the future. It is meaningful for me in my new historical context. The theologian is interested precisely in the historical *passage* of meaningfulness between the past generations and the current ones, as cultural mediation and translation. This constructive mediation is the theologian's challenging function and mission. The Qurʾānic text, historically and currently, is interpreted in different, even conflictual ways. "Qurʾānic interpretation takes place in power fields" (Pink 2019, p. 7) and is used to justify contradictory tendencies and ideologies:

<div align="center">

Violent verses/Nonviolent verses

Pluralistic verses/Exclusivist verses

Egalitarian verses/Patriarchal verses

</div>

3. Faith Assumptions and General Principles

Before discussing the attempts to resolve the hermeneutical contradictions mentioned, let us consider some presuppositions and principles from the believer's point of view. They are fundamental principles highlighting the text's status and function.

3.1. The Author's Wisdom and the Text's Unity

Faith in God's Unity is reflected in the assumption of text's unity, as this verse indicates:

Will they not think about this Qurʾān? If it had been from anyone other than God, they would have found much inconsistency in it. (Q 4, 82)

The pressing question is: What is it that permits the belief in the existence of the pearl within the shell? How can Muslims believe in a meaning that transcends historical and cultural limits? It is the faith in the Author's Wisdom and Guidance. It is an act of faith that makes the believer both a worshipper and a seeker of knowledge. Behind the words lie the Creator's Word that the believer intends to understand and follow in order to become an active tool of it in life and history, the living word on Earth. This faith requires that the believing reader does not content himself or herself with a fragmentary reading, given that the Will of God is diffused throughout the entire text, albeit to differing degrees. The principle of "hermeneutical charity" tends to harmonize what seems contradictory. The bridge between the first historical moment of revelation and the present day is the faith that the text is "the Word of God" and that this Word concerns living persons, here and now. If this were not so, the importance of the text would be enclosed in a literal, aesthetic, or historical value. It would lose its religious significance as a force that transforms human beings and deepens their humanity.

Literary masterpieces of profound humanity possess something of that contagious and stimulating power. Literature can be a liberating force when faced with the hegemony of totalitarian thought. The treasures of world literature retain their power of influence over all sorts of readers from vastly different eras and cultures. Hence, the Scripture impacts uniquely and durably more than all other texts; however, it is legitimate to ask: to what degree is the holy text an instrument of liberation and a tool for intensifying our conception of humanity, or is it an obstacle to freedom? Freedom can be a hermeneutical criterion when divine guidance is understood as liberation, not manipulation or subjugation. The interpretation cannot be identified with divine guidance. It is simply a human attempt to understand it, an effort that can be improved and modified. Identifying one's interpretation with God's guidance is the first step towards fundamentalism and religious authoritarianism.

3.2. The Text's Nature and Function

Ambiguities that have deviated from the text's spiritual function as a nourisher of religious experience are often linked to definitions of the text and the ideas conceived of its aim. The Qurʾān is not a book of legislation or history, or philosophy, even if it does contain historical, legislative, and philosophical elements, amongst others. It is fundamentally a book of guidance, according to how the Qurʾān describes itself:

This is the Book in which there is no doubt, a guide for the righteous. (Q 2, 2)

Guidance is at once its identity and function. It plays a directing and educational role in clarifying the path to God; however, this light does not replace the path of the believer. It cannot in any way replace the believer's spiritual experience and ethical consciousness in his or her individual way of being and living in the presence of God.

Khaled Abou El Fadl problematizes the question in ethical terms:

If by the standards of age and place, or the standards of human moral development, traditions lead to *wakhz al-ḍamīr* (the unsettling or disturbing of the conscience), the least a Muslim can do is to pause to reflect about the place and implications of these traditions. If we assume that the human *fiṭrah* (intuition) is socially and historically limited, it will necessarily be changing and evolving. Consequently, what will disturb the conscience in one context will not necessarily do the same in another. Nevertheless, if a Muslim's conscience is disturbed, the least that would be theologically expected from thinking beings who carry the burden of free will, accountability and God's trust is to take a reflective pause [. . .] The duties of honesty, self-restraint, diligence, comprehensiveness, and reasonableness demand that a Muslim make a serious inquiry into the origin, structure, and symbolism of the authorial enterprise that produced the tradition before simply waiving it away and proceeding on his merry way. (Abou El Fadl 2003, p. 213).[2]

Abou El Fadl's reflection concerning the Sunna is extendible to the Qurʾān itself, as the historical and ethical challenges are the same. He is aware of conservative Muslims' objections that see a sign of the anarchic and antireligious in this critical attitude. "This is not an invitation to the exercise of whimsy and feel-good determinations" (Abou El Fadl 2003, p. 213), he said. The core of the question is the understanding of religious obedience, as mentioned by this verse:

When God and His Messenger have decided on a matter that concerns them, it is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter: whoever disobeys God and His Messenger is far astray. (Q 33, 36)

The question is not obeying God and His messenger, a shared fundamental doctrine, but rather understanding the divine Will and interpreting the revelation. A mechanical and literalist understanding can be a betrayal of this sublime Will, and above all, God's Will cannot be reduced to practical and juridical commands. It is more than orthopraxis; it is a question of inner transformation that makes the believer have no other will than that of God. Guidance cannot be reduced to "what to do". Instead, it is primarily "how to be", an existential conversion and the purification and change of the heart. Apparent deeds and actions are only the external expression of the inner state. Historically, Islamic law, *fiqh*, holds a dominant position in Islamic knowledge, which is still present and influential in Islamic institutions and religious public opinion today. The situation has become more complex with the interference of political and ideological factors, which see in the Qurʾān a political program or the "constitution" of a desired or effective "Islamic" state.

In the Qurʾānic text, which is composed of 6235 verses, there are no more than 500 juridical verses, and the most accurate number is around 350 (Kamali 2008, p. 19). The boundaries between the moral and juridical are not always clear. The principal aspect of the Qurʾān, the stories of the Prophets, represents instead almost a quarter of the Qurʾān, 1453 verses (Gilliot 2003). Their function is often seen as consolidating the Prophet, educating children, or an abrogated history of pre-Islamic generations. The reconsideration of the Qurʾānic narratives enhances the awareness of the unity of the text and its function. Narration is an essential tool in transforming minds and souls from inside through creative imagination.

Sufism had the privilege of reconsidering the stories of the Prophets, noting that they contained a rich symbolic discourse, a mystical theology, rather than simply being decorative annexes. The juridical approach, in its extreme form, transforms life into a series of commands that cover life in all its aspects and details, from birth to death. Without a holistic meaning or a spiritual experience, the juridical hegemony constitutes a risk for a healthy religious life, precisely due to its lack of freedom and imagination.

3.3. The Centrality of the Religious Experience

Another religious principle guides one's interpretation: the religious experience, the intimate relationship between the believer and God. The spiritual experience nourishes the reading of the text, which reciprocally raises the spiritual experience. The text should nourish and orient the religious experience, but it cannot take its place, as is affirmed in these verses:

> This is truly a noble Qurʾān, in a protected Record that only the purified can touch. (Q 56, 77–79)

The expression "only the purified can touch" is often written or stamped on the Qurʾān's cover. It has been interpreted in liturgical terms to mean that the believer cannot touch the book of the Qurʾān without performing the ritual purification, *wuḍūʾ*. Paradoxically, when the verse was revealed, the Qurʾān did not exist physically as a book. Therefore, it is impossible for the first meaning to be a condition of physical purification. The verse aims at another form of purification, in the figurative sense, that of the heart, purification from prejudices, vain thoughts, and personal or group motivations. It is an invitation to enter the text through the door of religious experience, not through political use or a justification of power. Cognitive humility means listening and understanding without prejudices, projections, or projects. One cannot listen to the Word of God disseminated throughout the text without emptying one's soul, leaving room for its reception, otherwise, we repeat ourselves, finding only the reflection of our sick souls and what we seek to obtain. In this case, reading is only an opportunistic selection and an alteration of the meaning.

However, the purity of the heart when facing the text remains relative. It is more a matter of a movement in progress than a final state obtained once and for all; it is a state of faith, and faith increases and decreases. Purity of the heart does not mean a loss of memory or approaching the text as a blank page. We carry all the questions of our time, its needs, and challenges. We have our worries, expectations, hopes, and frustrations. Our humanity has its brightness and misery, ups and downs, intelligence and stupidity. We cannot strip ourselves of our human condition. We need, instead, to be aware of these predispositions and how they influence us. These conditions are not necessarily harmful; they are sometimes essential for a renewed reading. Asking new questions affords new interpretations about which our predecessors had not thought, for the simple reason that they did not have the same provocations. The answers are new because the questions themselves were unknown before. In this way, the text remains alive and can surprise us, just as living beings surprise one another with what they do not expect: "The Lord said, Call me, and I will answer you" (Q 40, 60).

3.4. The Text Exceeds Itself

The text is not a goal in itself, it has a divine origin, but it is not God. It guides human beings in their journey to God, indicating the way and opening their eyes to the divine signs:

> On Earth, there are signs for those with sure faith and in yourselves too, do you not see? (Q 51, 20–21)

The word "signs", *āyāt* (sing. *āya*), is applied to the Qurʾānic verses, just as it is to the cosmic signs "on Earth", and to the psychological and human signs "in yourselves". It is a call to meditate on the exterior signs surrounding us, and the interior signs in the depths of our hearts, within and among us. The human being is an admirable sign. The role of the Scriptural signs is to open our eyes to see all the signs around us and engage in a dialogue with them, discovering their sense and message. The Qurʾān helps to see God with the eye of the heart everywhere and in everything.

The concept of "sign" is linked to that of revelation, *waḥy*, which initially means a hidden communication and which leads to the meaning without ever exhausting it or putting it in a conceptual box. It is a movement towards an ever-renewed meaning. The believer is not a literalist scribe or bibliophile but a cosmic reader and a meditator in his/her soul. In this way, Qurʾānic reading takes place in a vast spectrum of human knowledge, encompassing all creatures and cultures, engaging in dialogue with all, nourishing from each. Qurʾānic hermeneutics is a part of cosmic and existential hermeneutics. The complementarity and unity of the divine signs are well expressed in the prayer of the universal human being, *al-insān al-kāmil*, symbolically represented by David, called in verse (Q 38, 26) the representative of God, *ḫalīfat Allāh*:

> We graced David with Our favour. We said: "You mountains, echo God's praises together with him, and you birds, too". We softened iron for him. (Q 34, 10)

The universal human being prays with the mountains and the birds, making the iron malleable without harming creation. It is the best illustration of the believer's presence in the universe. The Qurʾān is part of the infinite Words of God, and all creatures are God's Words:

> Say, If the ocean were ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would run out, before the Words of my Lord run out, even if We were to bring the like of it in addition to it. (Q 18, 109)

> If all the trees on earth were pens, filled by the ocean, with seven more oceans besides, the Words of God would not run out. God is Majestic and Wise. (Q 31, 27)

The Words of God cannot be locked away in a golden box or the pages of a book. They are overflowing with life, a life without limits that cannot be contained. Among the Words of God are the Qurʾānic words. They are not dead letters; they are a permanent breath of life renewed in the souls of the believers and the movement of history.

3.5. History as Revelation

The historical signs are among the divine signs spread throughout creation. The Qurʾān, on several occasions, calls to meditate and interpret them. The expression "Travel the Earth and observe" is repeated 13 times: (Q 3, 137), (6, 11), (12, 109), (16, 36), (22, 46), (27, 69), (29, 20), (30, 9, 42), (35, 44), (40, 21, 82), (47, 10). The term *sunan* (sing. *sunna*) is used to describe the movement of history (Q 3, 137), which is not chaotic or casual. *Sunan*, can be understood as norms and stable ways of doing or being, usually related to God's way of creating (Abdel Haleem and Badawi 2008, p. 460).

3.5.1. The Gandhian Moment

The contemporary Syrian theologian Jawdat Saʿīd (d. 2022) considers history a criterion of truth, citing the following verse:

> In this way does God set forth the parable of truth and falsehood: the scum disappears; but what is of benefit to man abides on Earth. In this way does God set forth the parables. (Q 13, 17)

Saʿīd defines this verse as "the law of abrogation", *qānūn al-nasḫ*, and "the law of history", shifting the concept of abrogation from the Qurʾānic signs to the historical ones:

> This is the law of history. The goal that history has never ceased pursuing: what is of benefit to the humans, and not only to some of them, must remain on earth. This law is the decisive and categorical authority with no mercy towards what does not progress: it will abolish it and turn it into useless garbage, whether technology or mental representations. What benefits humans abrogates the least useful. It is a law that the Qurʾān reiterates when it states: "As soon as we abrogate a sign or make it oblivious, we replace it with a better or similar one" (Q 2, 106) (Saʿīd 1998, p. 70).[3]

> Today, after so much history, the signs of God in the world and souls are beginning to show that the position of the son of Adam is correct, even if it would lead to death . . . [Abel, the son of Adam, is saying] "If you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise mine to kill you" [Q 5, 28]. Indeed, the force of arms has reached such a level that, by using them, neither of the opposing parties would be saved" (Saʿīd 1997b, p. 184).[4]

> History is oriented towards [the method of the son of Adam]; the whole creation will get there! (Saʿīd 1997a, p. 290)

This modern awareness of the absurdity and cruelty of war is not possible without the "Gandhian moment" in the twentieth century. Previously, humanity had known nonviolent precursors, exemplified by the behavior of individuals and groups who favored nonviolence as a way of life; however, modernity has given the issue a systematic and political character. The "peaceful resistance", *satyagraha*, of Mahatma Gandhi (d. 1948), was rooted in ancient beliefs, such as the principle of *ahimsa* in Hinduism and Jainism. Nevertheless, the new dimension that this idea took on in the twentieth century would not have been possible without a series of circumstances that enriched human awareness with a radical and inclusive nonviolent vision.

The meaning of war today is different, despite the use of the same word. Modern technology has made war more destructive than any previous war. The emergence of weapons of mass destruction, and even conventional weapons, have become so deadly that so-called "collateral damage" cannot be avoided. Large numbers of victims are often unarmed civilians. The ferocious and criminal aspect of war is more evident than ever, and for the first time in history it is actually possible to destroy our planet.

One cannot but note that the semantic shift caused by the movement of history is a well-known phenomenon that can cause significant damage on the theological and practical levels. I mentioned earlier the term "war," but one can also add the word "state". The modern state is very different from the institution that bore the same name in the past. They are incomparable at the level of structure and the control of society. This observation is also valid at the Qurʾānic semantic level. A term like *islām* has an inclusive sense in the Qurʾān as a religious attitude of submission to the divine Will, which is the message of all the Prophets, but even at the cosmic level, all creatures submit themselves to God. This term later, especially with the emergence of Islamic theology, *Kalām*, assumed the meaning of an identity designating the community of Muḥammad, considered distinct and superior. Modern Muslim theologians of religious pluralism, aware of this semantic shift, seek to return to the original Qurʾānic meaning in order to overcome theological exclusivism.[5] The

history factor is crucial in theological criticism and reform, without reducing theology to history.

3.5.2. De-Dogmatizing History

Considering history as a source of religious knowledge does not transform it into a myth or a hagiography. The theological reading of history is different from the "secular" one. The religious view is oriented towards the future, learning from history the "lesson" whereon a reform project may be built or from which some ethical, even doctrinal, conclusions and revisions can be drawn.

The founding moment in Islamic historical narratives is the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, *Sīra*, and his Tradition, *Sunna*, as found in classical sources. They are an essential reference in order to understand Islam as a religion and to verify the application of Qurʾānic principles and values based on historical reality, or what is thought to be real. History includes what factually happened in the past and what we think happened, as a collective historical *imaginaire*. In this context, it is necessary to equip oneself with a critical vision to identify the narratives that contradict and betray the Qurʾānic principles and values. The Qurʾān represents the supreme reference on the theological level.

Partly, but significantly, the history of Islam is forged and modelled by empires, conquests, and expansions. Classical theology and Islamic knowledge still bear traces of past imperialism, even after the last empire's fall. The Islamic theology of nonviolence, just like theologies of women and pluralism, are an opportunity to purify theology from ideologies and justifications of power.

Criticizing the past is not complete without criticizing the present. The critique of modernity and its ideologies prevents reform from being a mere adaptation of, or even worse, surrendering to the dictates of globalization. An old dogmatism cannot be replaced by a new one, even if it is masked by a secular appearance. This critical character of the new theologies makes them a prophetic voice in a time of crisis.

3.6. Thinking Inter-Disciplinarily and Inter-Religiously

We previously discussed the importance of Qurʾānic narration as an essential part of discourse and not as a purely decorative addition. Reconsidering this aspect implies reconsidering the biblical heritage, overcoming the gap between the legacies of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, created by the theory of *taḥrīf*, falsification, and elaborated in the context of religious polemics.[6] The result is a feeling of superiority towards the sacred texts that preceded the Qurʾān. There is also an equivalent feeling of superiority on the other side concerning Islam and its Scripture. This reciprocal exclusivism must cease in order to find a means of dialogue and collaboration. The Qurʾān describes the Torah and the Gospel as "a guide and a light" (Q 5, 44, 46), (Q 6, 91), terms applied to the Qurʾān itself (Q 42, 52). The Qurʾān invites Jews and Christians to embrace the values existing in their own Scriptures (Q 5, 45, 47). It is a rare invitation in the history of religions, as each religion usually invites for itself while excluding others. The Qurʾān came "to confirm the Book that was there before it and to prevail over it" (Q 5, 48). To prevail, to be *muhaymin*, means here to be the exegetical authority; the previous Books must be read in the light of the Qurʾān as far as Muslims are concerned. The confirmation refutes the accusation of falsification and a loss of authenticity circulating in polemical writings. It is worth mentioning that the early commentaries, such as the Tafsīr of Ibn Ǧarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), attributed an important place to the so-called *isrāʾīliyyāt*, information from the biblical, Talmudic, or Midrashic heritage. This heritage was gradually marginalized in Islamic thought (cf. Saleh 2008, 2016).

Thinking on a truly global level, so that Islam is not just a local belief claiming universality, requires an openness to human heritage. It is a matter of restoring biblical heritage to its place and activating its role in a new style, in a profound dialogue with the human, historical and linguistic sciences and methods applied to biblical studies.[7] It is crucial to focus on the unity and complementarity of human knowledge, based on the concept of a "heritage of humanity", considering knowledge to be a "common good".

This interdisciplinary and interfaith approach permits one to see Islam's position in the historical landscape of world religions and to develop a more inclusive theology of religions. René Girard's mimetic theory, for example, assists the discussion of the relationship between religion and violence and the role of faith in pacifying human beings or increasing violence. In point of fact, Girard focused on Greek mythology and the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Later, the mimetic theory became the center of a more extensive interreligious debate. Various researchers applied the theory to Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religious traditions (cf. Palaver and Schenk 2017; Collins 2014; Goodhart 2014). It is now time to see the complex relationship between Islam and memetic theory as part of a new Islamic theology of nonviolence. This theory offers new tools for analysis that allow Islamic theology to understand itself better and participate in global discussions.[8]

4. Tracing a New Methodology

4.1. Facing the Difficult Texts

After this general survey, let us address the complicated knots of interpretation, revisiting and criticizing the different methodologies in classical and modern thought.

The classical abrogation theory (cf. Burton 1990) cannot solve what seem to be contradictory texts. Instead, it is part of the problem, which is the fragmented reading of the Qur'ān. Abrogation, a classical tool used to solve contradictory juridical and practical verses, cannot be a theological method. God's promises cannot be abrogated. Sunni theology strongly condemned the so-called *badāʾ*, changing the divine mind, seen as an anthropomorphist deviation.[9] Another problem is that abrogation is based on an uncertain chronological order of the Qur'ānic verses.

The theory of the higher finalities of Islamic law, *Maqāṣid al-Šarīʿa*,[10] is to a certain extent helpful but not sufficient to solve the problem. It is a *Šarīʿa*-oriented theory and does not deal with the more inclusive Qur'ānic finalities.[11] Indeed, violence and exclusivism have juridical aspects; however, theology seeks to understand the philosophical and hermeneutical roots behind the concrete manifestations. To note here that the five general finalities, *al-kuliyyāt al-ḥams*, are aimed to protect: religion, life, reason, family and property. The Tunisian Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀšūr (d. 1973) added a sixth finality: protecting freedom (Ibn Ashur 2006, pp. 154–64). These categories of protection present a basic form of nonviolence compared to the biblical Decalogue; however, the protection itself may either assume violent forms or tolerate some. The finalities are often correlated to the traditional view of *Šarīʿa*, which accepts the defensive war, and sometimes justifies the preventive one. Nevertheless, as seen previously, some Muslim reformists use the finalities theory to overcome some traditional issues such as slavery and corporal punishment (Duderija 2014).

Another modern attempt to resolve the historical–hermeneutical challenge is the theory of the Sudanese Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭaha (d. 1985)[12] concerning the Meccan and Medinan Qur'ān. The Meccan verses represent, in his view, the universal message, and the Medinan ones represent a historical and contingent application of the Meccan principles (Taha 1987). This theory does not seem helpful because principles and historical applications are present in both periods. Life is not divided into two chapters: first ideal and then practice. In the Medinan Qur'ān, we find fundamental principles of religious pluralism and freedom, such as the well-known verse: "There is no compulsion in religion". (Q 2, 256)

4.2. Recognizing the Text's Limits

There is no radical nonviolent model in the Qurʾān, at least no explicit one. The Gandhian model was unthinkable in the Qurʾānic context; radical nonviolent interpretation comes from a modern necessity in a dialogue with the text's potentials. The historical moment opens new horizons of understanding and makes the unthinkable thinkable. New questions and challenges require new answers. As mentioned above, the "Gandhian moment" is a new cross-religious awareness of the immensely devastating character of modern war. The Qurʾān seems to accept the defensive war:

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not commit aggression; God does not love the aggressors. (Q 2, 190)

Fight them until there is no oppression, and worship becomes devoted to God alone. But if they cease, then let there be no hostility except against the oppressors. The sacred month for the sacred month; and sacrilege calls for retaliation. Whoever commits aggression against you, retaliate against him in the same measure as he has committed against you. And be conscious of God and know that God is with the righteous. (Q 2, 193–194)

If they incline towards peace, then incline towards it, and put your trust in God. He is the Hearer, the Knower. If they intend to deceive you, God is sufficient for you. It is He who supported you with His aid, and with the believers. (Q 8, 61–62)

Based on the above mentioned verses, in the case of an aggression or attack on the community, reacting to violence with violence is permitted under certain ethical conditions:

1. To be a legitimate defense.
2. To be proportionate and not exaggerated.
3. To stop at the first sign of peace.
4. Patience and non-immediate reaction are recommended.

What makes the interpretative endeavor more complicated is the existence of some verses that encourage the believers to fight:

O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. (Q 8, 65)

Fighting is ordained for you, even though you dislike it. (Q 2, 216)

When you meet the disbelievers in battle, strike them in the neck, and once they are defeated, bind any captives firmly. Later you can release them by grace or by ransom until the toils of war have ended. (Q 47, 4)

The historical background to these verses is a painful transition from a tribal system based on blood alliances, in which man defends his tribe regardless of any consideration, to a system based on a solidarity within a faith. Under the attack of Qurayš, the Prophet's tribe, and its allies, the new community of Medina was obliged to fight as an act of survival, which meant fighting against their families and tribes, a taboo in Arab society at that time. This contextualization is necessary in order to avoid the transformation of these verses into an appeal for perpetual war, also considering the ethical conditions mentioned above. This social transformation is summarized by a Ḥadīṯ narrated by Anas b. Malik:

God's Messenger said, "Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed". A man said, "O God's Messenger! I will help him if he is oppressed, but if he is an oppressor, how shall I help him?" The Prophet said, "By preventing him from oppressing [others], for that is how to help him". (Buḫārī 1980, K. al-ikrāh, ḥ. 6952, vol. 4, p. 287)

The genius of the Prophet is to transform a pre-Islamic proverb that summarizes the "group feeling", *al-ʿaṣabiyya*,[13] changing its meaning radically and endowing it with a moral purpose.

However, recognizing the defensive war in the Qurʾānic text does not necessarily mean its insuperability or dogmatization. Contextualizing these kinds of verses makes it possible to distinguish between principles and historical forms, between theory and historical examples.[14]

A similar problem is faced in feminist hermeneutics in this emblematic verse concerning domestic violence:

> Men are *qawwāmūn* on women, as God has given some of them an advantage over others, and because they spend out of their wealth. The good women are obedient, guarding what God would have them guard. As for those from whom you fear disloyalty, admonish them, and abandon them in their beds, then strike them. But if they obey you, seek no way against them. God is Sublime, Great. (Q 4, 34)

There are extensive modern debates about the meaning of the adjective *qawwāmūn* (sing. *qawwām*)[15] and the noun *qiwāma*, which indicate man as the head and the person responsible for the family. The most sensitive and arguable question in the verse is the permission to beat wives. The primary strategy used by feminist interpretations is to criticize the patriarchal interpretations of the Qurʾān, showing other possible ways of understanding it. The entrance of women into the realm of interpretation can change the situation in a field historically dominated by men; however, changing perspective is necessary but not sufficient to solve the problem. The question concerns not only the dominant patriarchal character of Tafsīr literature, but the Qurʾānic text itself that contains patriarchal elements.[16] The Qurʾān was not only revealed in the Arabic language but also in the Arabic culture of the seventh century, marked and formed by the patriarchal society. It is not a defect but a part of divine communication. God reveals Himself in history and culture, and revelation is not a *sopra*-cultural or an a-historical phenomenon. The Word of God is an active agent running through history that transforms history, people, and cultures. It is necessary to go beyond the patriarchal commentaries and to recognize the text's historicity and patriarchal language and models. The text is not modern, and it cannot be; only our reading is modern.

4.3. Textual Hierarchy

The Qurʾān asserts that its verses are not equal and recognizes an internal textual hierarchy, which is an essential hermeneutical key. Other traditions do the same, considering a part of their Scripture to be the primary reference for interpretation, just like the Johannine and Pauline part of the New Testament for some Christian theologies. In the Qurʾān, the main referential or the theoretical part is not a chapter or a group of chapters or sūras. It is dispersed throughout the entire text, complicating the hermeneutical task. Let us analyze the key verse concerning this question:

> It is He who revealed to you the Book. Some of its verses are *muḥkam*; they are *umm al-kitāb* (the mother/foundation of the Book), and others are *mutašābih*. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow the *mutašābih*, seeking descent, and seeking to derive an interpretation. But none knows its interpretation except God *and* those firmly rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it; all is from our Lord". But none recollects except those with understanding. (Q 3, 7)

The traditional explanation, which is still more widespread, is that the *muḥkam* verses are clear and explicit with just one meaning. The *mutašābih* verses, instead, are the ambiguous ones that afford different interpretations. This definition is problematic and needs to be revisited. The verse mentioned, (Q 3, 7), seems to be *mutašābih*, applying the standards of ambiguity/clarity. Historically, there is no consensus on what is clear or ambiguous, more or less essential, or even on the meaning of the two terms.[17] The main objections to the traditional definition are the following:

This definition transforms many practical and juridical verses from concrete and historical cases and examples into definitive and "eternal" meanings and instructions that cannot be changed. Because of their practical nature, these verses are clear and explicit, which does not make them doctrinal and ethical principles. At the same time, this definition marginalizes the theological verses; their general character could be considered "ambiguous". This approach is one of the causes of the priority of law over theology, reversing the pyramid, and it might be appropriate when relatively slow change occurs within the same paradigm or system. Nowadays, this conservatism leads to subtle or manifest violence, the violence of old models and patterns in a changing world and totally different contexts. The examples of corporal punishment and the death penalty are eloquent. They became part of the so-called *al-maʿlūm min al-dīn bi al-ḍarūra*, "what is recognized necessarily as part of religion".[18] The same approach is expressed in the juridical rule: *lā iğtihād maʿa al-naṣṣ*, which means: "there is no *iğtihād*, interpretation, with an explicit text".[19]

The dogmatization of law, attributing a theological status to certain historical practices, may cause a hermeneutical chaos. The so-called "sword verse", *āyat al-sayf*,[20] is a significant example. Some traditional views declare that this verse abrogates all verses concerning mercy and peace. This abusive use of abrogation theory is none other than an expression of a fragmental reading of the Qurʾān, the bitter fruit of the absence of an inclusive theory that defines the hierarchical values in the text. This arbitrary approach is the sole Qurʾānic justification of the expansionist and imperialistic war.

A more reasonable definition is possible, avoiding risks and inconveniences:

> The *muḥkam* verses are the hermeneutical principles, definitions, and criteria. In other terms, the Qurʾānic theory, *umm al-kitāb*, the mother/foundation of the Book, as (Q 3, 7) called them.

The *mutašābih* verses are the contingent and historical applications of the values and principles. These verses are *mutašābih* because they may create confusion when exchanged with the principles. Indeed, absolutizing this category leads to *fitna*, conflict, and violence and prevents radical *iğtihād*.

In this manner, the doctrinal verses of peace and nonviolence are *muḥkam*, interpretive and theological criteria, and the verses concerning defensive warfare are *mutašābih*, i.e., contingent and historical applications of the ethical and doctrinal principles, as will be explained further below.

The use of the Sunna as the primary reference for interpreting the Qurʾān is a widespread methodology in Tafsīr literature, particularly among traditionalist and Salafi circles.[21] The Sunna is indeed predominant in modelling the Islamic mind. It offers more details and challenging texts, sometimes contradicting the Qurʾān itself. This excessive use risks over-turning the hierarchical textual order, especially in the absence of a Qurʾānic theory and criteria. The correct methodology is to read the Sunna in light of the Qurʾān; then to read both of them in light of clear Qurʾānic principles and values (cf. Ghazali 2009).

4.4. Hierarchy of Values

In this approach, the *muḥkam* is mainly theological bearing ethical doctrines and hermeneutical keys. In this category, the main questions are: Who is God? Who is the human being? What is religion? What are its mission and function? What are the core ethical values of the Qurʾān? These concepts of reference have a tangible impact on life and history; however, this concreteness should be continually contextualized and updated.

The theory that permits an interpretation of the Qurʾān according to fundamental values is not possible without knowing the scale and the hierarchy of these values within the text. The values have a pyramidal structure with priorities and requirements, constituting somehow the "personality" of the text. This holistic and structural vision of the text guarantees avoiding a fragmented reading. The chaos of values is no less dangerous than the lack of distinction among values and their historical forms of application.

However, in searching for this hierarchy, the reader should have the courage and the humility to recognize that his or her priorities are not necessarily identical to the divine intent. It is only a human attempt to understand the text in a systematic way, which can be improved or modified. In other terms, the divine intent is *relatively* manifested in our sincere and limited attempts to understand it in space and time.

Let us consider two examples of the fundamental hermeneutical and ethical principles:

4.4.1. Mercy-Centered Theology

Al-Raḥmān, which means fullness of Mercy and Love, is the only divine Name to have the same value as the proper Name *Allāh*, God, which indicates the divine Mystery:

> Say, call Him God, or call Him the Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*). Whichever name you use, to Him belong the Best Names". (Q 17, 110)

Al-Raḥmān coincides with another Name with the same root, *al-Raḥīm*, the Clement, the Merciful. Both derive from *r.ḥ.m*, from which also derives *raḥim*, maternal womb. The *basmala*, or the Qurʾānic formula *b-ism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, often translated as in the Name of God the Clement and the Merciful, is repeated 114 times in the Qurʾān.[22] *Raḥma* is divine Love concretely expressed and realized and fulfilled in creation.[23] Mercy is not only the Truth of the divine Being but also His absolute commitment, as this verse indicates:

> He has inscribed for Himself Mercy. (Q 6, 12)

It is the only time we find this expression in the Qurʾān as the only divine commitment. That means that the truth and the end of every creation is Mercy. Mercy is unquestionably at the heart of divine ethics, the criterion for understanding the divine Will in all its forms and manifestations. Consequently, the unique *raison d'être* of Muḥammad's mission is to convey divine Mercy everywhere:

> [O Muḥammad] We did not send you except as Mercy towards all the worlds. (Q 21, 107)

The meaning and purpose of Muḥammad's mission is Mercy. It is the central value around which the other values are ordered. Under these conditions, one cannot espouse extremist attitudes that adopt the theory of the "sword verse", *āyat al-sayf*, mentioned above.

4.4.2. No Compulsion in Religion

We do not find the word "non-violence" in the Qurʾān. Instead, we see the expression "no compulsion":

> There is no compulsion in religion. *Rušd* (good sense, good judgment, correctness, rectitude, wisdom, maturity) stands out clearly from *ġayy* (misguidedness, delusion, error). Whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things. (Q 2, 256)

Non-compulsion is more radical than non-violence. It rejects even psychological violence, a hidden one that does not shed blood or leave bruises. Yet it still leads to physical violence by preparing the conditions for it. The verse "No Compulsion in Religion" is not only a fundamental moral principle but is also a definition of religion. Religion cannot be combined with coercion, which ranges from violence by hand and weapons to violence by words and gestures, extending to silence and neglect. Non-compulsion is a categorical rejection of all forms of violence, purification of religion from all impurities that would question or diminish human free choice. Embracing or leaving a religion,[24] practicing or abandoning it, are all possible options for a person as long as he or she is free and responsible. Anyone who thinks that an external authority (a state or law) can make a good believer is wrong. Coercion only creates hypocrites or those fearfully oppressed. Coercion

is a psychological terror that enslaves and does not liberate, is anti-religious and contrary to the essence of belief.

The same verse states the reasons for non-compulsion: "*rušd* (truth, rectitude, wisdom) stands out clearly from *ġayy* (error, ignorance)". This clear distinction can be understood on two levels: the verse affirms the dynamism and autonomy of truth on the intellectual level. Its beauty and authority are enough to move and persuade. It does not need violence, even when it is subtle and hidden. The truth shines like a light in the dark. It does not require a protector or guardian. It runs through peoples and cultures, strong in itself and not because of others, dispensing goodness, beauty and freedom. It uses people, and people do not use it. As far as the practical level is concerned, coercion is oppression and injustice, which are incompatible with reason and wisdom. Non-compulsive religion is nonviolence par excellence.

4.5. Narrative Theology

The Qurʾānic narratives are essential for the theology of nonviolence. The story of the creation of the human being, as in (Q 2, 30–33), the rebellion of Satan, (Q 38, 71–78), and many others, are rich in elements of spiritual anthropology and theology. These stories confirm and develop the nonviolent principles of divine and human mercy and non-compulsion; however, the most nonviolent passage in the Qurʾān is the one that describes the first crime on Earth, the prototype of bloody violence. The protagonists remain anonymous, called "Adam's two sons". We are all the children of Adam, *banū Ādam*:

> [Prophet], tell them the truth about the story of Adam's two sons: each of them offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one and not the other. One said, "I will kill you", but the other said, "God only accepts the sacrifice of those who are mindful of Him. If you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise mine to kill you. I fear God, the Lord of all worlds, and I would rather you were burdened with my sins as well as yours and became an inhabitant of the Fire, such is the evildoers' reward". But his soul prompted him to kill his brother: he killed him and became one of the losers. God sent a raven to scratch up the ground and show him how to cover his brother's corpse and he said, "Woe is me! Could I not have been like this raven and covered up my brother's body?" He became remorseful. On account of [his deed], We decreed to the Children of Israel that if anyone kills a person– unless in retribution for murder or for spreading corruption in the land– it is as if he kills all mankind, while if any saves a life it is as if he saves the lives of all mankind. (Q 5, 27–32)

The human desires and contradictions are manifest in this scene. Yet, strangely enough, Satan is absent. *Al-qurbān*, the sacrifice, comes from the verb *qarraba* that means to come closer. Therefore, *qurbān*, which implies an act of coming closer to God, has become the symbol of discord, sin and distance from God. It has become the reason for jealousy, violence and homicide. It is a metaphor for religion, which is supposed to lead to God, but instead, in former as well as in contemporary times, it is often used to justify war and religious jealousy.

The key phrase: "If you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise mine to kill you", missing in the Bible, means the rejection and condemnation of violence. This sentence could serve as the theological basis for an Islamic theology of nonviolence.[25] Nonviolence does not mean assuming a lax attitude or a weak acceptance of destiny and violence. On the contrary, it is a courageous choice, which bears its fruits in the repentance of the aggressor. The story of the repentant man begins with man's return to the tenderness of nature, when he notices the raven. Man's violence is an imbalance in cosmic harmony, and repentance returns to the initial state of peace and harmony. Violence is blind, but repentance and the return towards God result in a new cosmic awareness. When man reopens his eyes to discover the signs of God, they will indicate the way to peace.

In this story, there are two essential elements: the refusal of the victim to imitate the aggressor, then the imitation of the killer of the innocent victim, who transforms the aggressor. The cure for violence, in this vision, is to cut the chain of reactions of mimetic violence, in Girardian terms, by creating an alternative mimetic model of peace.

The sacrifice of Abraham, (Q 37, 102–113), another important story as far as nonviolence is concerned, can be considered a hermeneutical key: the divine command appears to be one of violence, but the true divine intention is life and peace. To reach this deep understanding, we must sacrifice our egos. The first understanding of Abraham was *iblitāʾ*, a trial. It is a trial and test to think that God can ask for such an extreme violence as killing our children. The culture of that time accepted it as a "possible" sacrifice. The decisive step that needs to be taken is the awareness of God's peaceful plan. There are not two divine contradictory and separate orders: kill–do not kill. They are, instead, just one order of peace and mercy that only the pure heart can grasp by overcoming appearance. This purification and liberation are realized by eliminating attachment and dispersive desires, an act of *tawḥīd* that unifies human desires in the divine desire. The ego constitutes a veil when reading the Word of God, being the source of violence and disorder.

At the methodological level, the Mystical reading of the Qurʾānic narratives *interiorizes* the meaning, searching for the inner significance concerning our lives. The stories are not seen as *historical* events of the past; they speak instead to us today thanks to their existential and anthropological symbolism.

5. Conclusions

This research does not respond to the modern challenges with a "yes" or "no", in the juridical logic of *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām*, permissible or forbidden. Instead, it fits into a different kind of reasoning: the human conscience makes decisions in difficult and complex situations after long deliberation. The text nourishes the ethical conscience but does not replace it. The believing conscience starts from the text to listen to history and respond to the needs of the time. The hermeneutics of the text is not separate from the interpretation of the signs of the times. Islamic nonviolence theology is a reading oriented towards the higher finalities of the Qurʾān. It touches the heart of religious reform, which can only be interreligious and interdisciplinary.

Inclusive and universal peace, the project of radical nonviolence, is found in many religions as a messianic dream, postponed until the end of history and then to Paradise. It is often seen as a meta-historical and eschatological hope. Today, the prevailing opinion is the theory of a just or defensive war, which many religions consider a challenge to be overcome. We sometimes also see a regression back to a preventive and offensive warfare theory. The theory of permanent warfare is not yet dead, and it is found in the form of great or lesser powers that do not even recognize the minimum moral conditions of war. The debate is still open, but the awareness of nonviolence as a fundamental solution to the tragedies of conflict, killings and displacements has begun to crystallize and present itself as an alternative and a new horizon. Can humanity overcome war and violence in the same way as it has overcome slavery? We need to redefine religion and engage in radical reform or a nonviolent spiritual revolution in order to concretize this hope. At the same time, we need to rethink modernity and the economic and political systems that produce violence. Violence and nonviolence today are questions of life and death concerning the survival of humanity and the planet. This urgency forces us to face our historical and collective responsibility: it is not a dream but a roadmap that we should construct together since there are no separate destinies or ways to salvation.

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Notes

1. "The lasting good things," in the title, is a Qurʾānic expression (Q 18, 46), (Q 19, 76). The Qurʾānic quotations are a mixture of different translations, mainly (Abdel Haleem 2004) and (Itani 2012), with some modifications. The letter Q indicates the Qurʾān; the first number indicates the sūra number; the second one shows the verse number (Ḥafṣ numeration).

2. Abou El Fadl's position is shared by other contemporary theologians, such as Amina Wadud, Farid Esack, Aysha A. Hidayatullah, and Hakan Turan. It is what Johanna Pink calls "post-modern interpretation of the Qurʾān". (Pink 2019, pp. 265–81).

3. I am grateful to Paola Pizzi for indicating the quotations, on Saʿīd's thought (cf. Lohlker 2022).

4. See below for a more detailed analysis of the Qurʾānic story of Adam's two sons (Q 5, 27–32).

5. For the semantic shift of the term *islām* (cf. Donner 2012; Hermansen 2016).

6. For the concept of Scriptural falsification (cf. Adang 1996).

7. Recently some important studies have appeared attempting to conjugate human sciences with biblical and Qurʾānic studies, for example: (Neuwirth et al. 2009; Reynolds 2007, 2010; Cuypers 2007).

8. For more details (cf. Kirwan and Achtar 2019). See also my forthcoming book (Mokrani 2022).

9. *Badāʾ* is one of the Twelver Shia doctrines, seen as a sign of divine Freedom. God is free to intervene deliberately in history and life, directing the events towards an end different from what was predestined by Himself; however, the concept is commonly rejected by Sunni theology (cf. Saeedimehr 2018).

10. About the higher finalities of *Šarīʿa* (cf. Nassery et al. 2018; Raysuni 2005).

11. Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour well formulated the idea in his book's title: *From the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law to the Higher Objectives of Islamic Theology: Towards a Theory of Maqāṣid al-ʿAqīda* (Abdelnour 2022).

12. See about him (Thomas 2010).

13. Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 808/1406), in his theory concerning "group feeling", ʿaṣabiyya, as a main historical engine, considered that the tribal solidarity returned immediately after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad to be the dominant political and social rule. In this way, he understood the failure of the revolt of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī (cf. Ibn Khaldūn 1967, vol. I, pp. 443–46).

14. On the origin and development of the concept of *ǧihād* (cf. Afsaruddin 2013), (Goudie 2019).

15. The word *qawwāmūn* is translated in different manners: the protectors and maintainers of women, the managers of women, the protectors and maintainers of women, in charge of women. For the debate about (Q 4, 34), see (Bauer 2017, pp. 211–15), (Ibrahim 2020).

16. Aysha A. Hidayatullah, in her criticism of feminist hermeneutical methodologies, reaches the core of this problem: the presence of patriarchal elements in the Qurʾānic text and not only in the commentaries (Hidayatullah 2014, pp. 172–73), (Pink 2019, pp. 265–69, 290–93).

17. For the different definitions of *muḥkam* and *mutašābih* (Suyūṭī 2018, pp. 715–18).

18. Challenging corporal punishment, in some contexts is difficult, even theoretically; because it refers to explicit verses, although such punishment is no longer applied in many majoritarian Muslim states. Tariq Ramadan's "call for a moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning, and the death penalty" in 2005 sparked a strong protest in the Islamic world, particularly in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to the point of condemning him for apostasy and denying what is necessarily known in religion (Ramadan 2005).

19. This rule is well rooted in the history of Islamic juridical thought, see for instance, the Mutazilite jurist and theologian Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1085), (Baṣrī 1982, vol. II, 1403, p. 396).

20. There is no consensus among supporters of this opinion on the verse number from sūra 9, *al-Tawba*, because there are at least four eventual verses: 5, 29, 36 or 41. See (Abdel Haleem 2017).

21. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) played a major role in theorizing this methodology in his short treatise: *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* (Ibn Taymiyya 1980; Saleh 2013).

22. The *Basmala* is mentioned at the beginning of every sūra, except sūra 9 (*al-Tawba*); however, it is mentioned twice in sūra 27 (*al-Naml*), in the beginning, then in verse 30.

23. Ibn ʿArabī developed philosophically and ontologically the relationship between Mercy and creation (Izutsu 1983, pp. 116–40).

24. For an accurate discussion of the question of apostasy in Islam (cf. Alalwani 2011).

25. Jawdat Saʿīd was one of the first Muslim contemporary theologians to develop the theology of nonviolence based on the story of Adam's two sons (Saʿīd 1966).

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