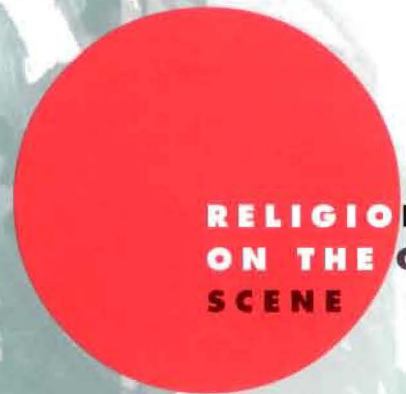


THE KILLER THAT HEALS, THE HEALER THAT KILLS



**RELIGION
ON THE GLOBAL
SCENE**

Martin E. Marty

Eleventh Annual
Mortenson Distinguished
Lecture

September 20, 2001



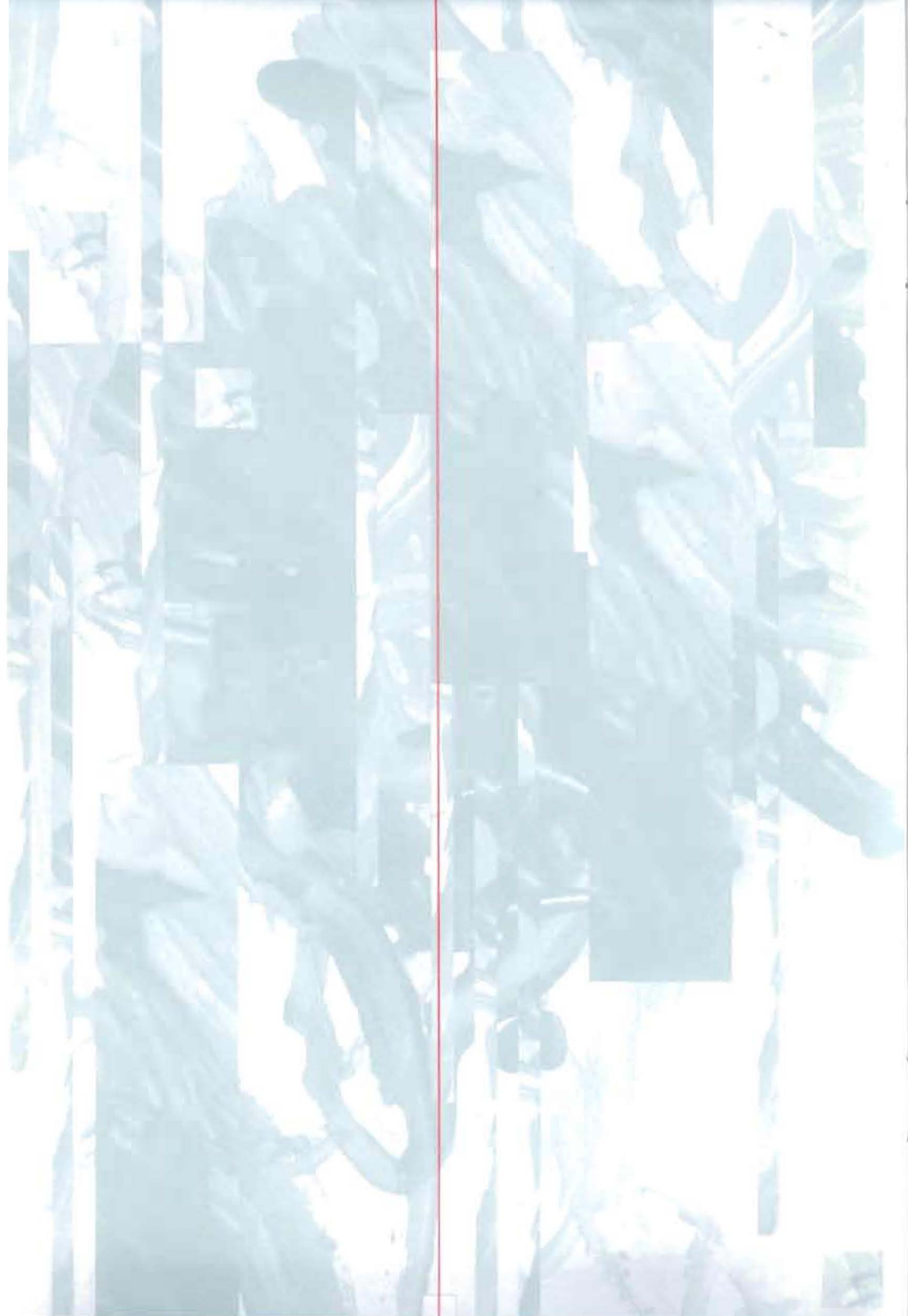
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Martin E. Marty is one of America's foremost theologians and religious historians. He spent his career at the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus.

He is a fellow of the oldest scholarly societies in this country, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and the recipient of many medals, including the National Humanities Medal and the National Book Award. He has received 67 honorary doctorates.

He is the author of more than 50 books, among them *Modern American Religion* and *The One and the Many: America's Search for the Common Good*, and editor of the newsletter *Context* and contributing editor of *The Christian Century*.

He directed the recently completed five-year Fundamentalism Project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which studied comparative fundamentalist religious movements around the world. This lecture derives from that project.

Professor Marty has given his lecture a paradoxical title: "Religion on the Global Scene: The Killer that Heals." In light of the events of September 11, the topic takes on new significance. I am delighted that we can mark the tenth anniversary of the Mortenson Center with this lecture by Martin Marty.

Marianna Tax Choldin
Director, Mortenson Center for
International Library Programs and
Mortenson Distinguished Professor

**RELIGION
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**THE KILLER THAT HEALS
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Martin E. Marty

Gauche though it may appear to be, let me frame this year's lecture against the background of three paragraphs from two reports that came from my own hand. If I fail to provide such a context it may seem to anyone who might some day come across the published version of this lecture, dated as it is nine days after the terror of September 11, that I gerrymandered a topic to fit the occasion, to be relevant to it. Rather, this subject has long been on my mind, and the new world we entered this September serves to sharpen the subject.

Before the framing, here is the nail on which we will hang it: I have long been pondering the question: "What is it about religion (or faith, or spirituality) that empowers or motivates people in its name to kill and/or to heal?" Half of my intellectual energies since 1987 have gone into researching the "killing" side, through international studies of conflict along religious lines. The other half is devoted to the study of religion's role in healing and bringing peace and reconciliation. Do not look soon for the book I have thrice begun on this complex topic. The passing seasons provide too many data on both sides for one to gain perspective.

Now for the framing:

On May 10, 1995 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, I reported on the most extensive and expensive research and publication project in the two-centuries long history of that Academy. I reminded the audience, though it had to be aware of all this, that its leaders had chartered a six-year study of modern religious fundamentalisms, especially those of militant sorts. They named me director and I was joined by R. Scott Appleby, with whom I edited five large volumes from "The Fundamentalism Project" at the University of Chicago Press.

Haste to get to today's topic disciplines me not even to begin to wander down the paths that project took us; the volumes are readily available, and say more than most might want to know, as they have made their mark around the world, in the spheres of mass communicators, educators, politicians, clerics, and military people. During the six years of its life, Dr. Appleby and I, fearing that the topic assigned us by those who chose us might be eclipsed by other world events and trends, kept yellow-highlighting news stories about fundamentalist movements and events around the world in the daily papers.

What if, I asked, the Academy in 1987 had asked us to address urgent topics that bade well to be semi-permanent. For example, "U.S.-Soviet Relations in the 21st Century." Or: "The Threat of Apartheid's Export from South Africa." Or: "The Impending Spread of Liberation Theologies and Other Ideologies of the Left." Finally: "Prosecuting the Cold War in Its Second Fifty Years." Those topics now belong to history, and recede from the front of our papers.

and of our minds. But modern religious fundamentalisms are at the center of the most traumatic news stories after September 11.

Now I quote:

"Every day there are reasons to react to headlines involving fundamentalisms, both internationally and domestically—yet opinion polls show that the US public's awareness of systematic threats or promises from fundamentalisms remains relatively low." John E. Rielly [ed: yes, spelled thus] in a book prompted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in 1995 reported that only "a third of the public and slightly more of the leaders (39 percent) believe that the possible expansion of Islamic fundamentalism could represent a critical threat."

"Should the Fundamentalism Project have rung figurative alarm bells with one hand and tried to calm those who stereotype and exaggerate fundamentalist threats with the other?"

That was six and a third years ago. I would answer the question, "Yes."

One year later I was asked to address "The Future of World Fundamentalisms" at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. The talk opened with reference to the writings of one of the 200 scholars who participated in the project, the late British social philosopher Ernest Gellner. In 1992 he foresaw three ideal type contenders for dominance in the new century:

1. Religious fundamentalism
2. Relativism, exemplified for instance by the recent fashion of 'postmodetnism.'
3. Enlightenment rationalism, or rationalist fundamentalism."

These were extreme forms of what hundreds of millions of that to which citizens around the world were gravitating. Gellner was puzzled that the first of these had outlasted Soviet Communism; that the second was characterizing both high and broad cultures in nations like the United States; and that not more would engage in the critical appropriation of Enlightenment thought and achievement that Gellner himself favored. What about the first of these three, and its future.

Second quotation:

"As for futures: combine these fundamentalism with religious ethnonationalisms and one finds some of the most perplexing, confusing, puzzling, and bemusing forces. They are had to anticipate, locate, or define.

'They do not fit the conventions of diplomacy, since such movements 'take no prisoners,' make no compromises, *and may resort to forms of terrorism that transcend boundaries or subvert conventions of warfare.*' [Italics here, not in the original publication in 1998].

Wearied by work in the years in which these forces became too familiar to us, I wanted to say good-bye.

At the end, quotation number three:

Fundamentalists have demonstrated the power of conviction in the world of 'postmodern' relativism,' and have held up the mirror to complacent heirs of the Enlightenment. They often do moderate or compromise, and are less likely to do so if stigmatized, or all lumped together in simply negative terms. Still, my wave of good-bye, inspired by good will and measured gratitude to people who provided such a valid and interesting subject of study, can be discerned to be made, at least in the present instance, by someone who will stay alert, and who keeps the fingers of that waving hand crossed."

That same fingers-crossed hand next pointed me to other places where religion could kill, or heal. Three years with the Salzburg American Studies Seminar on the religious dimensions of ethnonationalism, by no means all of which came close to our definitions of fundamentalism. Plus two years with Emory University (plus the Carter Center) and a brief sting at the University of Cape Town pursuing the religious dimensions of human rights. A year of research and conferencing on intense religious commitments on both sides of the Cairo Conference (1995) on Population, Development and Migration. Most recently, for and with leaders at the Rockefeller Foundation on the religious aspects of "Globalization Ethics."

And, through it all, on the healing side specifically and almost obsessively, years of research and writing on the international, inter-religious, intercultural, and interdisciplinary approach for the Park Ridge Center on "Health, Faith, and Ethics."

So much for framing. It is time to look at the current picture.

Resuming old habits from the Fundamentalism Project years, I resolved to do highlighting of headlines from the day after Labor Day, my return from summer preoccupations, until September 20, the Mortenson Lecture date. There is no way to make the findings vivid except to highlight those highlights, though we have time only to sample the abundant examples that are visible to all who read the papers. From September 4 to September 11, 2001, I will reproduce 36 of the many possibilities dealing with religion as killer

and healer. Those readers who find this reckoning to represent overkill are free to sample and move on, but I believe this jumble of randomly-sequenced items help make a "medium is the message" point: there is a lot of volatile and controversial religious activity going on "out there:"

Torture Charge Pits Professor Vs. Professor "Many students and professors were killed, . . . Catholic University [in Santiago] in particular became the president's [Augusto Pinochet's] brain pool . . ."

Is No Adoption Really Better Than a Gay Adoption? "The author, a fundamentalist Christian . . . was deeply concerned . . ."

Beliefs: In the venture into stem cell research, just where are the ethical limits?

Only Game in Town: Lincoln Awaits the Irish. A Cornhusker, I could not resist the reference to the "holy wars" when Notre Dame came to Nebraska in the early 1920s. "Among the reasons for the long estrangement: religion, ethnicity and the Ku Klux Klan . . . A local newspaper began its report this way: "Cornhusker outbattled Catholic yesterday afternoon."

Afghan Judge Denounce Aid Workers Now on Trial, about eight foreign aid workers accused of spreading Christianity. [Many stories on that unfolding set of events.]

A Cycle of Hatred Is Visited on a New Generation in Northern Ireland, where most paragraphs spoke of Catholics and Protestant Christians in conflict.

Global Anti-Semitism Is Alive and Well.

Nigeria: Christians, Muslims Wage Deadly Fights

Nigeria: Religious Violence Explodes

Israeli Arab's Suicide Bomb Points to Enemy Within, "in a mixed population of Muslims, Christians and Druse . . ."

Central Synagogue Reopens Three Years After Fire

Faith-Based Banking Gets Boost from U. S. Agency

Belfast Protestants Say They Must Protect Homes

Christians Embrace Old Dating Ritual with a New and Conservative Twist

Doomed to Irrelevance: "The tragic problems of ethnic, religious and gender intolerance have stained very region of the globe," [hard for UN to address].

Reforming Success: "For the Bush people, context is nothing. Their theological beliefs are everything and what they believe must be good everywhere all the time."

F.B.I. Searches Internet Concern in Inquiry into Mideast Terrorism. "The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development . . . [and] anti-Muslim bias."

Cult Statue Destroyed in France, "The Mandarim sect's leader, the Cosmoplanetary Messiah was facing criminal charges when he died in 1998."

Bush Picks Envoy to Seek Peace in Sudan "a political and religious conflict that has killed two million people in 18 years . . . Muslim government . . . Christian rebel group . . ."

Shah's Tent City, Fit for Kings, May Lodge Tourists . . . "Islam came in order to destroy these palaces of tyranny." Ayatollah Khomeini had said.

Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion.

The Origins of Zionism . . . "to escape further racist and religious persecution"

France: Clergymen Sentenced in Sex Cases

Fox' Wife Plays by Own Rules as 1st Lady, "Mexico's powerful Roman Catholic Church has criticized the marriage because both [Martha Sahagun de Fox] and Fox were divorced. A leading cardinal even called the union a 'situation of sin' . . ."

Night of the Living Sandinistas, where Daniel Ortega "says his main inspiration nowadays [not so much Marx but Jesus,"

Man in Orthodox Jew's Garb Sets Off Blast in Jerusalem

Pressing the Case for Naming a Foe of Abortion to the Supreme Court "Some 23 groups, including the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission . . . the Center for Reclaiming America, which is affiliated with Coral Ridge Ministries . . ."

Inspired by Jesus, Sandinista Tries for a Comeback

In Coffin-Making, an Abbey Finds Fiscal Rebirth

Ann Landers: Trying to Reason with Religious Fanatic Is Useless

Israeli Party is Bickering, it is "somewhat unusual, though far from unheard of, for an Orthodox Jew who wears a knitted skull-cap" to be in the "peace camp."

Arabs Expect No Wider War, But Fear U. S. Coaltions: "if Mr. Arafat stood up [against] more extreme groups like Hamas or Islamic Holy War . . ."

Sex Abuse Lawsuit is Settled by Mormons for \$3 Million

Sharon's Policies Gain Support "on the edge of the religious Mea Shearim neighborhood Orthodox Jews were starting their workday after morning prayers . . ."

Afghans Present Aid Team's Sins, Complete with Theology Lesson

A Rabbi Uses 'Holy Partying' to Turn a Solemn Event into a Festival . . . Cruise Has Time to Repent

So it went in two papers on September 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Then came events of September 11 and stories in the press and on radio and TV that had to deal obsessively with the killing aspects of a manifestly religiously-inspired set of terrorist acts, and chose to deal consistently with the healing aspects of people of faith, of many faiths, alongside a minority who were unmotivated by religious faith, but linked hands in the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon devastations.

"Too bad we're still relevant."

Now to the present point, our approach to religion as "the killer that heals, the healer that kills".

First, we readily recognized that people do both in the name of faith, religion, theology, and belief. Often, admittedly, religion is epiphenomenal, attached to and living off another phenomenon. That one may be thirst for territory, but is rarely the case. It may be everyday anger, hate, envy, and desire for revenge. People are mad at each other, and "God" legitimate their barbarous acts. People would heal, and "God" reinforces the works of medicines in respect to physical health and diplomats in the sphere of reconciliation.

What is plaguing is that some people do *both* killing and healing in religion's name. The killers and the healers do not always belong to opposed or at least differentiated camps. Loving and caring and tender mothers send their sons into crusades and jihads and holy wars, and mourn their loss intensely, but do not see the impulse to wage war a contradiction to their readiness to tend the sick.

If religion can be an epiphenomenal element, it can also be the phenomenon, the main inspirer or motivator or impeller. They kill the "other," the Satan, the infidel, the outsider, because God tells them to. They might not, otherwise. That outsider profanes their world or the world, and must be done away with. God tells them to heal the "other," the family member or neighbor and also the stranger and the enemy. They set out to do so. They might not, otherwise. The priest must minister in the plague. The fire department chaplain must bring solace until the beam collapses on him and the fire reaches him.

Again, some people do both in its name. And, again, what is it about religion that makes it so useful for contradictory actions? Before we address that di-

rectly, we have to issue a caveat or, better, suggest a sign of our awareness. I don't want to sound like National Rifle Association people, but I do echo their slogan: Religion does not kill people. People who are religious kill people in the name of religion. Religion does not heal people. "God" and medicine may heal them, but people who are religious heal people in the name of religion. Religion is seen as an agent or the agent that causes persons to kill or heal.

Now to define "kill." It can mean actual killing, as in holy wars or religiously motivated terrorist activity. We can document millions of people who died as a result of such wars and activities in the most recent half-century alone, long after religious passions were supposed to be strong enough to motivate much of anything. "Kill" can also mean something metaphoric or analogous to physical killing. By extension, in the Christian gospels, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount announces that whoever hates the other is killing the other. On quieter planes, in colloquial terms, looks can kill, words can kill, apartments in the City of the Anonymous can kill. Chants from the bleachers calls on teams at church-related colleges, often called "Saints" or "Crusaders," to "kill" the other. People who are victims of abuse legitimated by criminal religious teachers may not be killed in the literal sense, but many aspects of their full adult potential can be harmed by the legacy of abuse. Religions can "kill" by oppression, suppression, repression. We will keep all of these in mind.

If religion kills, it also heals. For definitions of healing and health let me borrow from world and church. The World Health Organization's definition of health: "A state of complete [!] physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" which permits people "to work productively, and to participate actively in the life of the community in which they live." To that let me add a definition by a commision of an antecedent church body to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to which I belong. [You will find similar definitions in any number of religious communities.]

There health is "the total well-being of persons . . . the integration of each person's spiritual, psychological, and physical dimensions . . . the harmonious interrelationship of environmental, nutritional, social, cultural, and all other aspects of life."

These and other like definitions include the term "physical," which in the minds of many means "actual" healing. The intention to do such healing is not novel or marginal. It is part of the scriptural genetic program of the great religions, which began, historically-minded anthropologists might say, as healing cults (or cultuses). In Hebrew and Greek scriptures the root words for healing and saving are related. Religious communities have invented and

sustained hospitals, the professions of religious sisters who were chartered to care, nurses, deaconesses. They have sent missionary physicians to dangerous places, have chartered programs to produce clean water, promote preventive care, provide the company of chaplains and other clerics and patient lay people who tend the sick through the long nights, the long years. Look at the weekly bulletins of synagogue and church, study the activity charts, and you will see much accent on prayer and care for the ill, and urgings to participate in health-providing activities. Some religious groups even believe in “faith-healing,” and most profess that faith has something to do with healing and coping with suffering. Some epidemiologists are studying connections between beliefs and belief-inspired behaviors and healing.

Similarly, healing can be used metaphorically and analogously, as when its meanings are extended into the body politic or local and international situations of conflict. Then it gets translated to words such as *shalom* or reconciliation or concord. When the President of the United States lines up with imams, rabbis, priests, pastors, and evangelists in Washington National Cathedral; when congregations collect themselves or link for interfaith services; when Jewish and Catholic families—like our neighbors across the street—stage impromptu candle-lit vigils of prayer, they are engaged in promoting the healing a.k.a. “understanding” and “reconciling.”

Contrast the two: media have an easier time with killing. Conflict makes news. Murderous activities draw cameras, as night-long vigils with the ill do not. Were we to be able to probe into the center where people counter their addictions, sit with others who are trying to, engage in counseling of and providing refuge for the abused and victimized, or help people aspire to maturity and some sort of balance, all in the name of God or sacred impulses, the balance sheet would look very different. It is harder to report on the healing that goes on in America’s 450,000 [or so?] congregations than it is on one terrorist act of vandalization of a synagogue or mosque.

Mindful as I am of the university library and university context in which I speak and write, let me remind all that the volume of books addressed to the role of religion in these and other activities is enormous. In the (by contrast to the University of Illinois’) petite libraries at The University of Chicago and neighboring theological schools, they estimate that well over one million and, if the definition is broad and the indexing search engine focused, up to three million books deal with religion, religious philosophy, theology, religious history, religious ethics, pastoral care, and the like. For universities to overlook or neglect or even push to the side such topics in curriculum is to miss the potency of the ever-growing, ever more intense, ever more potentially (and

actually, we say after September 11th!) lethal and often healing role of this engrossing subject. End of commercial for religious studies, university-level theology, campus ministries, and the like.

Reviewing all these usages of religion we return to the reminder that religion does not ‘do’ anything, religious people do. And not many religious people characterize themselves as such. Religion is a second-order term, applied by us historians, social scientists, demographers and suppliers of the Yellow Pages, who have to categorize. The term “religion” hardly appears in English versions of the Bible and are very rare in hymnody or the languages of prayer. Interview those who have “got religion,” [H. L. Mencken notes that that phrase is an Americanism] and they will instead say that they are, for example, “Born again,” or “saved” or “enlightened” or “members of a people.”

Today words like “faith-based” and “spiritual” serve as parallels, and for some, quieting substitutes when the word “religion” (as in “organized religion”) offends. Let it be noted, however, that everything that goes under the term “faith-based” or “spiritual” ends up in dictionaries and encyclopedias of religion. One friend says that “spirituality” is “religion, but with the things a person doesn’t like taken out of it.” Yet it is religion. When asked to define religion I, when impatient and in a hurry to get to the meat of a subject, like to say: we eight editors of the 16-volume, multi-million worded book called *Encyclopedia of Religion* could answer: “Religion is the stuff you write about in a book with that title.”

To understand why “religion kills” or “religion heals,” however, we can advance by taking apart some elements. I do not honestly have a prior definition of religion into whose straitjacket things must be fit. Instead, like many historians, I note what people call religion and analyze its components. If I list my own chosen six findings, it is obvious that all can easily go into “killing” and “healing.”

Thus, first, *ultimate concern*. Suicide bombers in the name of God are ready ultimately to give all, just as secular revolutionaries and religious-or-not patriots who “more than selves their country loved, and mercy more than life.” Ultimate concern, which by itself is not necessarily to be equated with religion—call it a necessary but not sufficient factor—is that by which one lives, for which one might die, by which one measures what is really important and on which one draws for profound values, impulses to sacrifice for others, and have in mind in the passage to eternity. Of course, something so strong impels people to kill when they would kill and heal when they would heal.

We look for ultimate concern to be nurtured on *myth and symbol*. People don't die so readily because their world is defined in simply pragmatic speech and abstract formulas. They reach for the mythic, are fed by rhetoric of the sacred. Not "87 years ago" but "fourscore and seven years ago . . ." "The astronauts looking down on the luminous blue globe called earth on Christmas Eve did not bore earthlings by reading the dials in their spacecraft. They inspired most by reading from Genesis, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth . . ." They also infuriated some, which is something the reading of dials would not have done but, because the myths and symbols are so profound, they also offend, they scandalize. Religions do that. Crosses and crescents, words like "crusade" and "jihad" and "Holy Land" rouse people to kill and heal more readily than do analyses of strategic charts or hospital bureaucratic organizational charts.

As with myth and symbols, so with *rite and ceremony*. In Israel, as people entered military service they were taken to Masada and told the stories of the Jews who resisted, even to death, even by suicide. Memorial Day, Veterans Day, rites at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier fill civil religious roles, just as *hajj* or Bar Mitzvah or confirmation do. People kill in the name of ceremonies dedicated to Allah, Yahweh, the Father of Jesus Christ, Wotan, and Warrior Gods. They heal in the name of the Good Samaritan or with the symbol of the Caduceus or healing rabbis who taught the disciplines of ritual bathing and enacted circumcision. All religions use rite and ceremony to mark the stages of life, the seasons of the year, the events in the life of the gods. Flag-salutes, Islamic prayer, Buddhist contemplation, Baptist immersion are or can all be profound experiences that impel killers and healers.

Fourth, religion ordinarily implies what I call *metaphysical sanctions*, the understanding that behind our quotidian dramas there is a cosmic backdrop, that behind the natural there is some sort of supernatural or suprahuman set of meanings or agencies. They may come from revelation in ecstasy and sacred books or they may be the result of philosophical speculation. But the individual in culture ordinarily cannot sustain a merely and purely random and chaotic understanding of the surrounding universe. The "cosmic backdrop," vivid or implied, helps endow their joys and sorrows, their successes and failures, their health and their suffering, their acts of killing, with meaning.

So there are what I call *behavioral correlates*, expectations that go with the above four. If you believe this, or that, you will fast or eat or not eat, drink or not drink that. You will bring up your children this way or that. You will or will not wear a turban or a knife, a cross or a Star of David. You will "be good" or "be" this or that way, as prescribed or enjoined. That behavior may mean

that you must kill or banish or impede the hideous and profaning "other," or must seek to heal in the physical, spiritual, and other senses.

Finally, though this fades in today's individualized spirituality, the religious impulse is toward community, communal experience. The community may have close and tight boundaries, as in "sect" or "cult" or "intentional community." It may be open and loose, as in "interfaith relations" or a "pluralist society" informed by civil and public religious meanings and rituals. Religion is born of awe, as in the word to Moses from the burning bush that was not consumed, and the voice of the "I am . . ." and it moves quickly to a mission to and through "my people," and the formation of a covenant. That covenant or mission may be to destroy all that threatens or offends or mystifies. It may be to heal the sick and reconcile warring parties, to seek *shalom* not as absence of war but as presence of fulfillment.

So what is it about religion that it can do both? In this (relatively) happy (quite) pluralist society religion is often, thanks to acts of etiquette and deference or apathy and mistrust, relegated to realms where blithe indifference prevails. "Go the church of your choice." Such lightness of religious being, offensive to prophets and reformers, has its positive side: ordinarily it helps minimize the chance of making war or terrorizing in its name. Its downside is that such religion is more remote for those who would stock the repository of options for healing. I for one do not envy societies where religious passions are so strong that the potential for killing remains strong, and would rather seek ways in which the healing side can come in a culture where the "other" is not to be killed or shunned, but to be appreciated, affirmed, and learned from, even when she or he or it is to go unfollowed.

Religion is an element in the impulse to kill and to heal because those who are part of it experience a transcending of ordinary experience or believe the stories of fellow-believers who witness to such experiencing. Religion often feeds the motive for killing and healing because so often its revelations, its scriptures, its sages, offer special insight and knowledge. Religions are scripted, prescribed, inscripted, and thus those who are part of them feel that in following the script they are fulfilling what God or the gods would have them do. They "know" the outcome of history, and are willing agents. They hear commands that empower them.

What to do about this double-sided phenomenon?

"Wish this away" say some. Let it disappear and all will be well, or at least better. Such reasoning is futile; it will not go away in foreseeable futures. The world that held the allegiance to Islam of every seventh person now sees

every fifth human in the Muslim community. Christianity may be thin in Western Europe and the British Isles, thinning in Canada and the northern United States. But the American South, the Caribbean, Central and South America, where the “Baptistification,” “Catholicization,” and “Evangelicalization” of the world continues; where acculturated Catholicism that had been the instrument of corrupt establishments comes alive and finds company and rivals among evangelical and mainline Protestants, quickened alike, is a different picture. So, in spades, is the story of sub-Saharan Africa, in lands of poverty and aids and conflict and misery, where we are told 16,000 new Christians are added by birth and conversion every twenty-four hours.

If it won't go away, it is still fair to ask: since it may kill as readily as it may heal, should we not do what we can to thwart its adherents, hem in its collectivities, and promote dispassion? The record of a religion-less world, which means a world in which Enlightenment heirs in their relative benignity and anti-religious totalitarians in their malignity, is not all that cheering. Usually para-religious, new-religious, pseudo-religious forms develop where the old were expunged. Look for the six elements of religion that I noted above and you will find them manifest in gross ways in Fascism, Nazism, Communism, Maoism, Japanese Imperialism, and the like.

So, strategy two: if you can't do away with religion and cannot foresee a utopian alternative if it is countered and hemmed in or neutralized, why not just pick the good one? Plenty of representatives of the world religions and their sub-groups (Christianity includes over 25,000 different denominations worldwide, and Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, up close, offer much variety) are ready to claim that all will be “healing” if they are allowed to prevail. Some will even say that they must kill in order to bring in the reconciling, healing realm.

A problem with that is that no religion's record is clean in respect to killing and none are fulfilled if they are left alone to do all the healing. The Qur'an has “killing” texts which al-Qaeda and similar terrorists groups invoke. It also has “healing” texts of great beauty and generosity. The terrorists, we might say, “hijacked” Islam; they are on its trajectory, they read its instruments, and then they jettison many healing aspects and steer their version into paths of destruction, sometimes destruction that demands the sacrifice of their own life.

So is Judaism pure? Like Islam, it has texts that have given impulse to the turning of swords into plowshares, realizing measures of shalom, and healing the sick, or at least tending to them in their suffering. At its best, Judaism

sees itself as “a light to the nations,” a people chosen not to be a superior race but a people with a mission; not a people that believes the world will be saved if all turn Jewish but one that believes the world will not be saved if Jews are not faithful to the covenant. But the obverse of that healing side is evident in the primal texts, such as the books of Joshua and Judges. In them the conquering armies of Israel and thus of the Lord are on occasion told to kill all, not just soldiers but also women and children and animals. All of them.

So Christian are home free? The New Testament includes disturbing texts about how Jesus came not to bring peace but the sword. Invoked by champions of “family values,” its pages include demands to hate father or son, to set mother-in-law against daughter-in-law. There have been crusades and inquisitions and Protestant radicalisms that took life or drew the killing fury of established fellow-believers. Yet believers are Christian in overwhelming numbers because their faith promises eternal life and peace, speaks of the breaking of human barriers, offers commands to reconcile, and from Sermon Number One by Rabbi Jesus in the Synagogue, to heal the sick.

Romantics who are opposed to the sorry record of the three “Peoples of the Book,” the Abrahamic and Jerusalemite faith-communities, often urge that only healing, not killing, would prevail if we would learn from the Native American peoples, who lived so well with nature and tribe and community. Or with Buddhists and Hindus, with their many texts that counsel peace-making. Yet the record reveals no utopia ruled by believers or by unbelievers. In the years just before Columbus, archaeologists and other scholars say that in one particular ritual in the land of the Aztecs and the Mayans, over 80,000 human sacrifices occurred. Hindus in the name of their gods fight and are fought by Muslims nearby. Buddhists and Shinto-celebrators in Japan made war and invoked the gods of Japan past and present. And they also, all, healed on other occasions.

Aware of the double-sidedness of all profound myths and symbols, I have often thought of Abraham Lincoln's analysis of the human and, specifically, the American condition, where those sadly called to arms should bind up the nation's wounds. He would speak of how the “better angels of our nature” might be evident, might prevail.

To close, while I am an historian, reporter, analyst, chronicler, and musier, not called to preach a sermon or offer therapy, in these urgent times all of us are called to venture a bit into responses to the question, “Given this situation and analysis, what are some of the things we might do?” How bring out “the better angels of our nature” and address “the other?”

Suggestions:

First, there is need for honesty. This means self-examination and realism about one's own beliefs. It was a healing moment when the best-known Christian preacher of the century past, evangelist Billy Graham, not every Christian's or not every one else's favorite theologian, was honest enough to be humble about knowing what Lincoln called the "mysterious" ways of the Almighty. Graham: "I don't know."

With such confession, which need not be paralyzing but should inspire follow-up work, comes the counsel to begin at home. This is not the year to see only "our" faults, as some in the prophetic and sometimes the masochistic minority would urge. But a perspective, including a humble "godly" perspective on the ways we kill or neglect to heal, is itself healing. It need not be in the form of hyperbolic accusations, self-hating words, or over-compensatory themes in the face of jingoist and idolaters of our nation. But it would impel an examination of where we fail in foreign policy, and where we are intolerant at home. When a mosque near where I live was besieged by intolerant, flag-waving crazies, a rabbi a few suburbs away announced: if they come again, the members of his temple would form a human link around the mosque. Gestures like that do more than competition among word-smiths as to who can confess our faults more profoundly. Especially when these faults, chosen by left and right factions, turn out to be accusations of their right and left counterparts.

Universities like this one and libraries like the one that sponsors this lecture, by accenting international, inter-religious, and interpersonal experiences do well by sticking to their charter: to educate. Education comes not just from faculty or books but by lived experience. Not all that each of us will see and experience will be inspiring and ennobling. But it will help overcome ignorances and thus contribute to healing. For one example: education can help non-Muslims sort out Islam in its various schools from the hi-jackers of Islam who draw on some of its killing themes and obscure all the rest. And, vice versa, so with learning of other faiths. One cannot say of these huge communities, "to know us is to love us." Many members of these communities "know" their communities and do not "love" all of each, or all factions in each. But they can come to knowledge and understanding that hitherto has eluded them.

Add to this: religious people can appeal to the better angels of their nature and heal, and let that healing show. "Organized religion" may be a whipping-boy to the individualist "spirituality" devotees. But spirituality does not provide chaplains for hospices, did not build hospitals, does not tell the stories that impel groups to go about healing.

Watch your language! Can be a fifth counsel. Lumping all the others into a hated "Other," thus seeing all schools of Islam summed up in the activity of Muslim fundamentalists; seeing all Christians as crusaders against the Muslim infidel, into our own time; giving voice to anti-Semitism, pushing people into imposed conformity where they differentiate themselves from others—as does the Muslim down the block distinguish herself from the perverted Islam of al-Qaeda—are self-defeating, dehumanizing strategies.


Emphatically, it is a time to respect not only other religions but the non-religious. Some of the flag-wavers after September 11 saw the terrorists as instruments of a just God who was whomping the domestic enemies of those who did the speaking. Still others wanted to mobilize "Christian" or sometimes "Judeo-Christian" majorities into homogeneous monopolies—against the infidel. Keeping American pluralism, including the humanist non-religious parties and persons, richly mixed is likely to help them and the religious respond to the call to heal and reconcile, while keeping the resolve to destroy the terrorist destroyers.

Separating "patriotism" from "nationalism," if we understand those terms in particular ways, can be salutary. Nationalism, when accompanied by themes of ultimate concern, myth and symbol, rite and ceremony, metaphysical sanction and behavioral consequences, and the attempt to form a single religious-national community is offensive to most of the celebrators of theologies and prophecy. Patriotism and love of country are not incompatible with most of them most of the time, and, in many theologies, can be seen as providing an arena in which God can work, or in which the transcendent can break in toward positive ends.

Binding up wounds, for example of the bereaved, those rendered jobless, the neighbor who is different, is part of the strategy that would minimize evil and see "the better angels of our nature."

Love your enemies. That is hard and demand a special definition of loving. It cannot mean letting the terrorist free to terrorize and destroy. But not all named as enemies truly are, and the religions by and large teach care for the souls of those clustered as enemy.

Firmness of purpose. Now I am beginning to sound like a general or a sermonizer. But that firmness can charter all that follows. Contributing to the survival of a civilization, a society, a nation, its components, will not always strike those religious who see sacrifice as the ultimate and as a practical demand. But, as a friend says, "if we don't survive, we don't do anything else, either." And remaining firm in the purpose to make use of post-survival life



toward benign and benevolent ends is not just a charge by the sermonizer but an anticipation of what is needed in such a time.

War, if you must, or engage in conflict, or find whatever terms, say the voice of many faiths, but do it in a special way. In the Christian tradition, a theologian in his prime at the beginning of the Cold War, Reinhold Niebuhr liked to quote Psalm 2:4. There, when the “princes of the world” conspired and warred and pursued their own purposes, God who “sitteth in the heavens” shall laugh and hold them in derision. For Niebuhr and the Psalmist that did not mean that therefore nothing good should be attempted. No, the God who laughs when people lose perspective, also holds them responsible to pursue justice. And does not dishonor the aspirations of those who would pursue human good.

When citizens “fight” if they must with the perspective of those who know how God or the gods laugh at their pretensions, but still act responsibly and aspire to heal, we shall have seen at least glimpses and evidences, against all odds, of “the better angels of our nature.” Those related to religion, the killer that heals and the healer that kills, will find that healing can prevail.