RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

Core, misapplications and (mis)understandings

- "Religion is a bad thing that necessarily fosters violent actions"

- "It is grave mistake to condemn any religion because of its misapplications by misguided adhetents"

- "It is important to separate religious traditions/religions from eachother: different teachings at the core" (cf. Jesus – Muhammed)
  - Joh. 8 vs. Bukhari, Vol. 4 Book 61, No. 3635)

- "It is impossible to separate religious violence from secular violence"

- Cf. Fundamental assuptions of Man and the World we live in (Anthropology and Cosmology) (Phil./Truth-Ethics/Good-Aestetics/Beautiful)
WAR AND PEACE
SOME ARGUMENTS ALONG WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

- Pacifism

- War is a necessary evil under certain circumstances (cf. the strive for positive peace = not simply the absence of war or conflict)
  - *Jus ad bellum* (The right to go to war: Just War Theory)
  - *Jus in bello* (Right conduct within the war)
  - *Jus post bello* (Justice after the war)
Integration theories

- The right to defend yourself by using violence (police, military forces) ...in order to achieve (positive) peace

- The right to defend yourself only by non-violent means...in order to achieve (positive) peace

- No active resistance at all
  
  = a strong doctrinal imperative within Christianity against violence, particularly Jesus’ teachings, cf. The Sermon on the Mount (nonviolence and love of enemies)
To be there, when evil happens...
Ljungsbro Nov 2013
More thought on the issue

- Polarization theories
  - The right to use violence in order to achieve positive peace, justice, etc. (cf. Marxist influenced Liberation theology)
  - The right to only use non-violent means in order to achieve (positive) peace, justice, etc. (cf. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement)
TERRORISM

LATIN TERRERE = TO CAUSE TO TREMBLE
HAMAS
SEPTEMBER 11
”We warn America! We warn Europa!”

Gaza after the death of Usama bin Laden
The bombing of Bali nightclubs
...killed 202 people in 2002

The al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah group was behind the double-bomb attack...

...Muslim militant Umar Patek
What is the meaning of j-h-d/jihad?
• (striving or effort)

- Cf. The ”Mecca” period (moral striving) and the ”Medina” period (also a military meaning) in the Qur’an

- Islamic law: Four types of lawful use of war/four types of enemies (infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits). Only in the first two types = jihad
  - Offensive: volunteers, professionals
  - Defensive: everybody (cf. Usama bin Laden, war declaration against the U.S.)
- **Nerve gas in Tokyo subways**
  
  (by members of Aum Shinrikyo on March 20, 1995, leader: Chizuo Matsumoto, known as Shoko Asahara)

- **Sikh bombings in India**

- **Buddhists violence against the Muslim minority in Burma**
LARS VILKS
Northern Ireland
"...terrorism in the name of religion and ethnicity...

...religious violence "has reappeared on a massive scale..."

"One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom-fighter" (or martyr!)

"If the world is perceived as peaceful, violent acts appear as terroris. If the world is thought to be at war, violent acts may be regarded as legitimate".
"At least in some cases, religion does make a difference" (transcendent moralism, justified acts)

Religious nationalism = religious and political ideologies are intertwined

"...religion becomes fused with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change"

The goal: to understand why acts of violence and terror are often associated with religious causes?

Why can anyone believe that God could sanction terrorism?
COMMENTS: "THE WESTERN PERCEPTION"

- "Religion" vs. Religions = separate!!!

- The Western dichotomy: "religion" vs. "secular" (cf. Cavanaugh (and Panikkar))

- The role of Media!!!
  - The example if Ireland (Political, military, social and economic historical realities; the Northern Ireland solution; Irish/nationalists vs. British/unionists)
REASONING

- What causes what?
- Correlation – causation?
- What arguments are used for what purposes

- Religion
- Politics
- Political history
- Economy
- Economic history
- Culture
- History
- Social history
- Military history
- Power structures
- Demographic realities
Some more commentators

- Samuel Huntington (changes on the world scene)
- Raimundo Panikkar (the Western dichotomy)
- William Cavanaugh (The Myth of Religious Violence/”Religious” vs. ”secular”)

Samuel Huntington in *Foreign Affairs, 1993*

“The Clash of Civilizations”

(...the term used in 1926 by Basil Mathews in *Young Islam on Trek: A Study of Clash Civilizations*; and by Bernhard Lewis in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Sept Issue) 1990).

- **Before 1500AD**: The civilizations were separated geographically...The spread of ideas and technology took centuries.

- **1500AD-1900**: The domination of Western cultures took form due to ocean navigation: domination of ideas, values, and religion.

- **Early to Mid-1900s**: A move from the unidirectional influence of the West on the rest. Instead, multidirectional interactions are seen. Western civilizations still influencing the rest, but the rest, smaller and less powerful civilizations are also influencing the West.

- **The Post Cold-War Era**: The era of ideology/The era of the division between the First, Second and Third World is over and exchanged with an era of the clash of civilizations.
**PHASES**
*(article)*

- Peace of Westphalia (1648) – End of World War I
  = conflicts between ”princes”/nations

- Then, conflicts of ideologies
  = communism/fascism vs. liberal democracy)

- From the end of the Cold War
  - = clashes of civilizations
HUNTINGTON

- The age of ideology has ended (Post Cold-War)
- New patterns of conflict
- The primary axis of conflict in the future will be along cultural (and religious) lines: “The most important distinctions among peoples are [no longer] ideological, political or economic. They are cultural.”
- The importance of religion, the societal factor that has filled the vacuum created by the loss of political ideology (...the unsecularization of the world)
- The highest rank of cultural identity = Civilizations
THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS
HUNTINGTON’S CATEGORIZATION OF CIVILIZATIONS

① Sinic (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean)

② Japanese (distinctly different from the rest of Africa)

③ Hindu (the core Indian civilization)

④ Islamic (Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, etc. (Subgroups: Arab, Turkic, Persian, Malay, etc.)

⑤ Orthodox (centered in Russia)

⑥ Western (Centered in Europe and North America; incl. Australia)

⑦ Latin America (Central and South America)

⑧ Sub-Saharan Africa (increasingly development of a sense of an African identity)
• So called “torn countries” with large groups of people identifying with separate civilizations...
  ......as Turkey, India (Hindu and Muslim), Nigeria and Kenya (between Islam and Sub-Saharan Africa)

• Russia/Orthodox, Japan/Japanese and India/Hindu = “swing civilizations”

   For example: Orthodox clash with Muslim ethnic groups in former Soviet, but Russia is able to cooperate with Muslim countries in order to avoid conflicts with Muslims in Southern Russia.
Why Clashes?

• The cultures are deeply ingrained, a result of centuries, vast differences too fundamental to disappear in a short perspective

• The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife... rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy

• Interactions across the world intensify civilization consciousness and the awareness of differences

• Social change, economic modernization, etc., separated people from longstanding local identities. Religion fills this gap, provides a basis for identity and commitment, which transcends national boundaries... and unites civilizations (...the unsecularization of the world)
• A return to the roots phenomenon among non-Western civilizations. They want to shape the world in non-Western ways ↔ Western power/influence

• Successful economic regionalism will reinforce civilization-consciousness
“Bloody Borders”

The conflicts as particularly prevalent between Muslims and non-Muslims; “Bloody borders” between Islamic and non-Islamic civilizations

- Islamic resurgence
- Demographic explosion in Islam
- “Western universalism” = all civilizations should adopt Western values = infuriate Islamic fundamentalists
  - the Soviet-Afghan War
  - the First Gulf War
INTERCIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICTS
ALONG TWO LINES

- **Fault Line Conflicts**
  On local levels. Occur **between** adjacent states belonging to different civilizations or **within** states with a population belonging to different civilizations

- **Core State Conflicts**
  On the global level. Between **major** states of different civilizations
  (Can be a result of fault line conflicts).
PRESENT DAY EXAMPLES

- **Egypt**: gunmen open fire at Coptic Christian wedding in Cairo. Four people, including an eight-year-old girl, killed... (The Guardian, Oct 21, 2013)

- Christians were also the target of Islamic fanatics in the attack on a shopping center in Nairobi, **Kenya** this week that killed more than 70 people. The Associated Press reported that the Somali Islamic militant group al-Shabab “confirmed witness accounts that gunmen separated Muslims from other people and let the Muslims go free.” The captives were asked questions about Islam. If they couldn’t answer, they were shot. (World News, Sep 27, 2013)
Iran: Christian “whipped with extreme violence” as lashing sentences carried out.

Four members of the Church of Iran denomination sentenced to 80 lashes for taking wine during a communion service were lashed yesterday. (Oct 30, 2013)
**Between civilizations**

- **Stockholm, Sweden**: suicide bomber Taimur Abdulwahab al-Abdaly (Dec 2010)
The importance of developing a "more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests."
CRITICISMS OF HUNTINGTON’S THESIS

- Over generalizations (vague, anecdotic style)
- Disregard of local conflicts, non-civilization conflicts were more common than civilization conflicts
- Civilizations are split within themselves. Huntington categorization too monolithic.
  (f. ex. China ↔ Vietnam; the Islamic world: Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Turks, Pakistan, and Indonesians)
- Enlargement of EU (Western+ Eastern)
- Clash of interest (political/economic)
- Privileges the West, de-humanizes the Muslims/non-Western cultures
Politics: the sum total of principles, symbols, means, and actions whereby Man endeavors to attain common good for the polis (human order)

Religion: the sum total of principles, symbols, means, and actions whereby Man expects to reach the summum bonom of life (ultimate order)
"All burning religious issues are at the same time political" = a nondualist relation

"Politics and religion are two interdependent dimensions of the human being"

"I fear that the two words, when understood in dialectical opposition, have lost their meaning"

"The distinction natural-supernatural, temporal-eternal, secular-sacred, human-Christian, individual-personal must be reconsidered in depth and, in any case, cannot be turned into ultimate ontological divisions"

"It is when both come together that they gain the power to affect human lives, and accordingly, it is when the two are mixed together that they can become explosive and dangerous"
There is no authentic religion without a political dimension, and no true politics without a religious dimension.

There is no true religion without an incarnation in politics, nor is there true politics without its assumptions by the religious.

= a constitutive interdependence, two elements of the one and same reality
The myth "is the idea that religion is a transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from "secular" features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly inclination to promote violence."
Cavanaugh Challenges ”Conventional Wisdom”

- Ideologies and institutions labeled ”secular ” can be just as violent as those labeled ”religious.”
  - Challenges the incoherent argument that there is something called religion which is necessarily more inclined to violence than are ideologies and institutions that are identified as secular.

  = ideologies and institutions that are identified as secular can be just as absolutist, divisive, and irrational as those labeled religious.

- ”Religious” violence cannot be separated from ”secular” violence. A separation is incoherent since it is impossible to separate religious from economic, political and social motives.
THE WESTERN RELIGIOUS VS. SECULAR IDEA

• The religion-and-violence arguments serve a particular need... The arguments belong to a broader Enlightenment narrative that has invented a dichotomy between the religious (=seen as irrational, dangerous) and secular (=seen as rational)

  = ”one-dimentional narrative”

• = the very separation between religion from politics is a modern Western invention, unknown f. ex. in the East

• The construction of ”religious” vs.”secular” marginalizes ”religion” and ”religious groups”

  = the Other, prone to fanaticism, to violence, irrationality: the enemy
CAVANAUGH IS SHOWING...

- ...the structure of the myth (...providing a genealogy of the myth)
- ...for what purposes the myth is used
- ...what counts as religious or secular violence depends on who has the control of the definitions
- ...that the religious-secular division is highly contestable, misleading, and mystifying
- ... that a distinct violent-prone religious element does not stand up to scrutiny
The so-called "wars of religion" in Europe were not wars over dogmatic differences.

- The religious violence myth is historically misleading and inaccurate.
- Cf. The Thirty-Years-War: Catholic France+Lutheran Sweden and Catholic Habsburg vs. Catholic Bourbons.

The concept of "religion" is used and defined by secularists prone to attack everything "religious".

- Cf. Stalin "religious"
- M.L. King Jr "not religious"

The "secular" violence is seen as righteous/legitimate when launched on "religious" enemies/non-Westerns Others.

- A blind eye to secular violence.
Some questions

- Can religious arguments for violence be separated from political, economic, social, cultural arguments?

- Differences between religions? (cf. Islam-Christianity/Muhammed-Jesus)
REASONING

- What causes what?
- Correlation – causation?
- What arguments are used for what purposes

- Religion
- Politics
- Political history
- Economy
- Economic history
- Culture
- History
- Social history
- Military history
- Power structures
- Demographic realities