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Daniel L. Smith-Christopher (ed). *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions*. Boston: Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998. Pp. 177. \$10.00 (paper).

[1] As I was reading this enlightening book, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan were squabbling militarily over Kashmir and nations identified with the Christian West were bombing Serbia, traditionally associated with Eastern Orthodoxy, to force a retreat from the largely Muslim area of Kosovo. In the Middle East, seemingly interminable conflict between Arabs and Israelis, Muslims and Jews, has become in recent years even more complicated because of increasing tensions within each camp, often along religio-ideological lines. And while Northern Ireland seems to be inching toward peace, the "troubles" will likely leave a long-lingering and widespread distrust between Protestants and Catholics.

[2] While religion may not be the spark that ignited any of these destructive fires, the presence of religious partisanship, intolerance, and fervor may certainly fan the flames. The European wars of religion of the 17th century led Enlightenment intellectuals to advocate a more humanist and cosmopolitan worldview in hopes of avoiding such faith-inspired bloodshed in the future. There can be no doubt that religion has all too frequently contributed to humanity's inhumanity and violence toward itself. That, of course, is a great irony, for as contributors Sunanda Shastri and Yajneswar Shastri put it,

Every [religious] tradition in the world talks about peace. This talk of love for peace has been going on for thousands of years but, in spite of it, human history tells us that in every tradition there have been wars. War is not advisable, but preparation for war is going on everywhere. The whole world wants peace, yet the whole world prepares for war (81).

[3] One may be forgiven a certain initial cynicism, then, when encountering a book that promises to articulate the peacemaking contributions to be made by the eight religious traditions that focus its eight chapters. But *Subverting Hatred* does not promise more than it can deliver. Its significance is wisely not premised on the notion that religion on its own can solve the perennial problem of warfare, just as one cannot blame religion on its own for

creating the problem. It is also certainly true, as the diverse authors make clear, that each of those traditions has a unique and invaluable contribution to make.

[4] Daniel Smith-Christopher, the book's editor as well as author of the chapter on Christianity, is associate professor of theological studies and director of the Peace Studies Program at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Other contributors are or have been associated with LMU also, including Christopher Key Chapple, author of the chapter on Jainism, and the Drs. Shastri, who contribute the chapter on Hinduism. Christopher Queen writes on Buddhism from Harvard University and Tam Wai Lun on Confucianism and Daoism from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The author of the insightful epilogue, Donald Swearer, is McDowell Professor of Religion at Swarthmore College. But the editor has not left the question in the hands of scholars only. The chapter on indigenous traditions is an interview with Lawrence Hart, Cheyenne Peace Chief. The chapters on Islam and Judaism complement each other nicely in that the former was written by Rabia Terri Harris, founder of the Muslim Peace Fellowship, and the latter by Jeremy Milgrom, who has directed several Jewish and interfaith peace organizations.

[5] The authors and their chapters thus offer something of a multicultural smorgasbord of scholarly insight and activist wisdom. Indeed, one question that might be raised about such a book is whether it is more than a smorgasbord. Are there recurrent patterns or unifying themes? Whatever particular aids and incentives to peace any one tradition can offer its own adherents, what if anything can religion per se offer to all humanity? What can be learned and adapted across traditions?

[6] Donald Swearer goes some distance in his epilogue toward answering that question. He reviews possible contributions to be gleaned from the eight chapters around the four themes of worldview and practice, symbols and stories, inner peace and world peace, and weakness and strength.

[7] Drawing especially from the chapter on Confucianism and Daoism and its ethnographic descriptions of the annual peacemaking practices of three rural Chinese communities, he suggests that "how we live in the world is as much or more a consequence of the communities that form our identities and our participation in communal activities, especially rituals, as it is a shared worldview" (169). In the same vein, Lawrence Hart outlines a deceptively mundane ritual practiced when the forty-four Cheyenne peace chiefs get together to further their peacemaking role within the tribe. They drink water. One of the chiefs with special authority to do so blesses an ordinary bucket of water. As the bucket is passed, each chief drinks from an accompanying dipper. The bucket and dipper make the rounds until everyone is served. As Hart explains, "this ritual, as simple as it is, tends to unite us so that we can think—ultimately with one mind, one heart" (92). Reminded of their common humanity, their common need, their common dependence and interdependence, the chiefs practice in their council the vision they are entrusted to realize within the larger tribe.

[8] One can only wonder what such practices of "mindfulness," in the language of Buddhist peace activist and author Thich Nhat Hanh, would look like and accomplish on a larger scale. Perhaps our problem is that we presently seem unable consistently to imagine our commonality across tribal, national, and religious boundaries. Rituals like passing the dipper might help.

[9] A more directly practical and profoundly more difficult intervention for peace is briefly suggested by Jeremy Milgrom. The Jewish practice of *takanat hashavim*, "the ordinance for a compassionate justice in the restoration of misappropriated property" (134), if applied to the current impasse between Israel and the Palestinians, would allow Jews to maintain their current holdings as long as equivalent holdings were offered to the heirs of the former Palestinian owners. Pope Paul VI counseled, "If you want peace, work for justice." To which Milgrom might append, "and justice requires mutual respect and compromise."

[10] A prime example of how religion has already transformed human imagination toward a greater awareness of the cause of peace comes from the origins of Buddhism. Siddhartha Gautama is said to have presented himself as a King of Truth rather than a Lord of War in direct challenge to the prevailing notions of divine authority. The shift was embodied in the transformation of the symbolism of the Wheel of Law from that of military conquest to that of nonviolence and peace. This ancient symbol was incorporated into the flag of modern independent India. It would not be surprising, however ironic, if that flag were raised high by militaristic nationalists in their defense of the recent encounter with Pakistan. But as the history of the use of the Christian Cross attests, even (or especially) the most powerful symbols are so malleable that they can represent contradictory impulses and attitudes, both crusade and self-sacrifice. Symbols nonetheless remain a potent force for peace.

[11] Stories of exemplary figures from both history and contemporary times, both celebrated and little known, enliven many of the chapters. Models of peacemaking, such as the Jain Acharya Tulsi and the Hindu convert to Buddhism B.R. Ambedkar, both contemporaries of Gandhi, can be found in every tradition. Each of the eight chapters includes plentiful suggestions for further reading about such figures as well as many other topics, including such surprising titles as *Zen at War* and *Qu'ran, Liberation, and Pluralism*.

[12] Swearer observes that "in various ways, all religious traditions link the transformation of social and political violence to the transformation of inner violence" (172). The intuition seems to be that only people at peace within themselves can bring peace into their relationships and into the larger world. And since peace with oneself would seem to depend, in large part, on peace with one's god or the cosmos, religions would seem to have a unique contribution to make in this arena. Rabia Harris therefore makes an especially provocative contribution when she asserts that *jihad* as holy war is really a caricature of what the Prophet meant to be seen as fundamental: the inner struggle with oneself. The term *islam*, which is related to *salam* (peace) and is usually defined as submission to God, might better be thought of as reconciliation with God. Islam, in turn, she contends, might better be thought of as the Way of Peace.

[13] While advising that world peace depends on something like universal personal peace may seem axiomatic, it may also represent a counsel of despair. Perhaps a more realistic assessment would be that whatever peace the world can muster probably depends on a deep and widespread *desire* for peace. Perhaps one achieves a measure of inner satisfaction by working for social uplift, and certainly all religions can encourage such ascetic activism. What has become known as "engaged Buddhism" (as represented by Thich Nhat Hanh) seems to have made this a cornerstone of its philosophy.

[14] Swearer's final theme to be identified among the eight religious traditions represented in *Subverting Hatred* is weakness and strength. The success of Gandhian renunciation of violence and affirmation of nonviolence in the campaigns for Indian independence and American civil rights points to the paradox of real strength discovered in apparent weakness. The Jains, the most thoroughgoing practitioners of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) among the major religions, have exerted an influence far beyond the power of their numbers. The same may be said for the Christian "peace churches," the Mennonites, the Brethren, and especially the Quakers.

[15] Smith-Christopher writes on Christianity out of that last mentioned anabaptist tradition. His is by far the most confessional and even polemical of the eight essays. Identifying the true practice of the "pacifist" teaching of Jesus with the pre-Constantinian church and with his own tradition, he accuses mainstream Christian advocates of the just war tradition such as Augustine and Aquinas of a "shameful display of self-interested sophistry" (145). As a matter of fact, the just war ethic is less concerned about self-defense than about the defense of innocent others against unjust aggression. It is not obvious to this writer that pacifists who have refused to defend the innocent with violence will have an easier time at the Last Judgment than soldiers who have done so conscientiously and even out of love.

[16] Indeed, of the eight major traditions as described in *Subverting Hatred*, only Jainism's renunciation of violence has been consistently absolute. I want neither to devalue the pacifist witness nor to deny that the just war ethic has frequently been corrupted by jingoism. One need not be a pacifist, however, as he assumes, to appreciate Smith-Christopher's call for a religiously inspired "political atheism," a refusal to lay down one's conscience at the feet of the Almighty State. I for one wish he had not opposed pacifism and just war so absolutely and tendentiously, but had rather explored how Christian nonviolence might rise to the challenge of the defense of the innocent and how just war can be insulated from the corruption of self-interested and shameful sophistry. The ultimate ideal, surely, is "just nonviolence," the effective defense of human rights and life without resort to lethal force.

[17] The single most insightful and provocative comment I have ever encountered on this subject, I am sorry to say, is remembered anonymously: "After Auschwitz, pacifism can never be the same. After Hiroshima, just war can never be the same."

[18] It is no denial of the value of *Subverting Hatred* that none of its eight informative chapters nor its helpful epilogue addresses this legacy and dilemma directly. (A book on that topic, with more attention to how religions can influence the politics of peace, perhaps through the power of innovative boundary-crossing rituals or other interventions, would be a most welcome sequel!) It is surely good and indispensable that "every tradition talks about peace." It has surely been a great boon to the world that every tradition has its prophets and practitioners of *ahimsa*, *shalom*, *salam*, nonviolence, peace. It is surely important and necessary to retrieve and renew these elements within our religious traditions. It is surely salutary to be reminded that the *Rgveda*, "believed to be the earliest poetic and religious document of the human race" (69), initiated this talk of peace 5,000 years ago:

Come together, talk together,
Let our minds be in harmony.
Common be our prayer,
Common be our end,

Common be our purpose,
Common be our deliberations,
Common be our desires,
United be our hearts,
United be our intentions,
Perfect be the union among us.
(X.191.2-4; quoted by Shastri and Shastri, 69)

[19] As history and the Cheyenne chiefs combine to teach us, peace is as simple and as difficult, as necessary and as sacred an act, as sharing a dipper of water. The contributors to *Subverting Hatred*, with the laudable support of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, have made a valuable effort, within the limits of the printed word, of talk about peace, to expand that circle of respect, compassion, and nonviolence, both within and among the world's religious traditions. *Thirsty?*

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