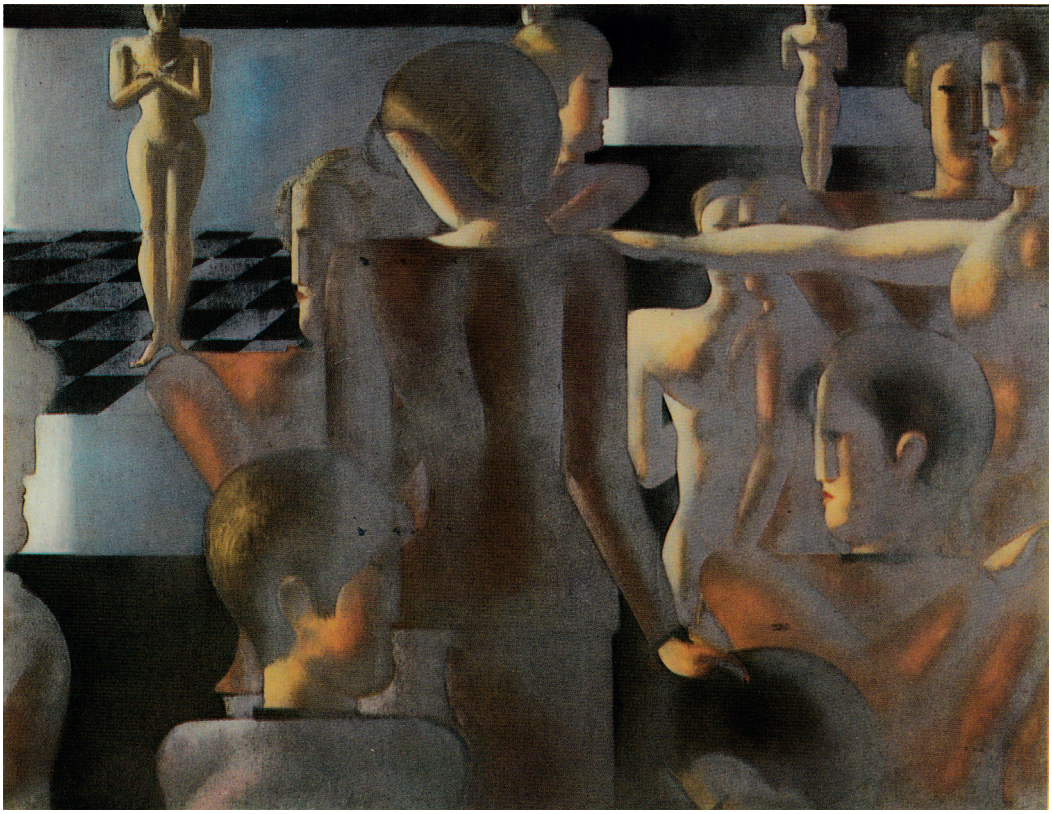
Human Diversity in Context



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Constructing the Religious 'Other'

GEREON WOLTERS

Abstract: As Aristotle already pointed out, Homo sapiens is a social animal. 'Social' means that every individual belongs to a group of people or to various such groups. Examples are families, tribes, nations. How are such groups kept together? In my essay, I will show that religion is a primary means of building up the cohesion of social groups, and a first rate component of their exclusive identity, thus involving processes of 'othering'. Constructing religious 'otherness' provides the negative complement of religious identity, and contributes greatly to its consolidation. This is mostly shown with examples from the holy texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the first section I present some general remarks on group identity. In the next three sections I offer a brief account of the creation or construction of the 'other' in the Sacred Scriptures of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I conclude by advancing some general considerations about the role of violence in constructing the religious 'other'.

Introductory Remarks

We humans are primates, at least from an evolutionary perspective[1]. With our nearest relatives, the bonobos and chimpanzees, we share more than 95% of our genome. It is, therefore, unsurprising that in anatomy, physiology and behaviour there are profound similarities to these two evolutionary cousin-genera and other primate genera. As to behaviour, for example, we share with the other primates our way of living in social groups. But there are also great differences. While non-human primate social groups reach about 800 members maximum, human social groups can be enormously larger[2]. Think, for example, of nations or religions; in 2015, there were around 2.3 billion Christians and 1.8 billion Muslims on our

[1] I would like to thank the editor, Cinzia Ferrini, for valuable suggestions. Furthermore, I would like to thank my colleague and friend Gerald J. Massey (Pittsburgh) for helping me transform serviceable German English into what he calls "real English", and for his several valuable suggestions regarding content. – In the following, I rely on van Schaik 2016, an excellent textbook that deals with both evolutionary and cultural anthropology. – I owe also much to conversations with and a talk ("Wir und die Anderen – Erwägungen zu den evolutionsbiologischen Wurzeln eines friedfertigen und friedlosen Verhaltens", May 14, 2018) by the geneticist and anthropologist Thomas Cremer (Munich).

[2] See Chapman & Teichroeb 2012.

planet[3]. Human social groups differ in more than size from other primate groups. Individual humans can simultaneously belong to multiple social systems or groups[4]. Being a member of a specific group gives an individual a sense of belonging that is constitutive of the identity of the self. Inversely, individuals with their group-based beliefs, preferences, modes of action, values, and norms determine group identity.

Constructing group identity has inevitably a negative complement: constructing the out-groups, i.e. excluding the 'others' (also called 'othering'). Excluding the 'other' or 'others' on the *group* level *in*cludes in most cases also *ex*clusion on the level of *individuals*. In the first section below, I present some general remarks on group identity. In the three sections that follow, I offer a brief account of the creation or construction of the 'other' in the Sacred Scriptures of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the last section, I advance some general considerations about the role of religion in constructing the religious 'other'. My cardinal thesis is that the creation of the religious 'other' in the three great monotheistic religions involves strong components of violence.

1. Social Groups and their Identity

Groups of social animals, and primate groups in particular, are typically built by kinship and/or such survival-related and cooperation-requiring factors as minimizing the risk of predation or enhancing the possibility of finding and defending food. *Homo sapiens*[5] is partially different, and the differences have grown considerably during the accelerated cultural evolution that began about 12,000 years ago.

This accelerated cultural evolution is associated with *Homo sapiens* slowly abandoning his existence as hunter-gatherer, becoming sedentary, and starting to produce food and to live in settlements. As a consequence of these changes, affiliation with a kinship group does not exclusively determine the social identity of human groups, particularly in the Western world. Modern western humans see themselves as simultaneous members of a variety of different groups undefined by kinship, for example, such vital groups as nations, cultures, religions, and language communities. Furthermore, there are groups constituted by a profession and/or socio-economic background. Academics like us, for example, form a global, though loose, social group. There are, in addition, life-style related social groups, groups

[3] See Hackett & McClendon 2017.

[4] See van Schaik 2016, Chap. 19.

[5] The most recent discoveries date *Homo Sapiens*'s first presence in Eurasia more than 210.000 years ago (Harvati *et al.* 2019).

based on common physical or mental conditions like handicapped or highly gifted people. Then we should not forget groups defined by sex or sexual orientation like heterosexual, gay, lesbian, transgender or whatever.

Religious or *Weltanschauungs* groups are central to the following question: What determines or creates the identity of groups? According to Tajfel, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) of intergroup relations characterizes social identity

> as that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (Tajfel 1981, 255)

In Herriot's view, people

> see themselves, at least in part, as having a social identity. I am a pious and faithful Muslim, and God has chosen me to do his will. I am a Bible-believing Baptist, and God has reserved a place in heaven for me. I am a Haredi Jew, and God honours those like me who scrupulously obey the Torah. […] Social identities direct behavior which relates to groups. […] Such behavior may include conformity with the group and cohesion within it, the stereotyping of members of other groups, favoritism towards members of one's own group; and discrimination against members of other groups. (Herriot 2007, 26f.)

Social identities thus become part of the self, but they "are not fixed and static in nature". Additionally, an important aspect is that social identities "can be used to direct behaviour". As Harriot remarks:

> A social identity will be particularly salient if the similarities within one's own category, and the differences with an out-group, are both maximized. We as group X have to be as much alike as possible, and as different as possible from 'them'. (Harriot 2007, 30, 32)

Social psychologists speak of the *prototype* that expresses the self-image of group members, and the *stereotype* that describes members of *other groups*.[6] This holds especially for religious groups, which are distinguished by providing beliefs, values, and norms that promote the self-esteem of their members and reduce uncertainty (Herriot 2007, 8).

> Self-esteem may be gained, not by enhanced status, but simply by the very fact of belonging. These people [in the group] welcome me and accept me as one of them (provided I think, feel, speak, and act as they do). Now I am one of us. (Herriot 2007, 37)[7]

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[6] Cf. e.g. Hogg 1996: 68ff.

[7] At this point arises the problem of how to live together with religious 'others', i.e. the problem of religious tolerance. I cannot deal with this extremely timely topic in this paper.

Given the central role of the concept of recognition – *Anerkennung* – in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*[8], Hegel scholars like the editor of this volume, Cinzia Ferrini, might rightly think that it was Hegel, and not Henri Tajfel, who invented SIT.

In the following, I will trace prototypes and stereotypes in the Sacred Scriptures of the three monotheistic religions. We have to be careful, though, about retrojecting our present European conception of religion as a private affair of the individual. This conception is a fruit of the Enlightenment and the process of secularization resulting from it. By contrast, as Schmitz rightly remarks:

> In the ancient world, however, religious performance was so deeply anchored in social communities (family, state, etc.) that it was impossible to see them as independent or to believe they could be taken out of this context. Every aspect of life was inextricably interwoven by religious practice. (Schmitz 2011, 162. GW trans.) [9]

In the Sacred Scriptures of Judaism and also in early Islam, social communities are defined by common religion *and* common ethnicity. The resulting collective social identity, therefore, is an amalgam of ethnicity and religion, the two being inseparable. As we shall see, Christianity differed (and still differs) in part from Judaism and early Islam in this respect.

I begin my analysis with Judaism, the oldest of the monotheistic religions, because in several respects Judaism became a model for the other two.

2. Ancient Judaism[10]

It would be a mistake to regard the Torah (the so-called five books of Moses) and other Sacred Scriptures as historical reports[11]. Most of the events they purport to talk about took place seven or eight centuries before the texts were written down in their present form. Recent scholarship – and archaeology above all – casts doubt on the historical reality of most biblical stories, e.g. the historicity of Moses as well as the Exodus story[12]. As far as details are concerned, there are

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8 Cf. Honneth 2018.

9 "In der Antike hingegen waren religiöse Vollzüge in den sozialen Gemeinschaften (Familie, Staat, etc.) so verankert, dass man sie nicht eigenständig denken oder aus diesen herauslösen konnte. Religiöse Praxis durchwirkte das Leben als Ganzes".

10 I am well aware that the label "Judaism" was coined by Christians at a rather late stage. For the conceptual history, cf. Boyarin 2018.

11 In the following, I rely on Schmitz 2011. – Note that the denomination "Old Testament" expresses the Christian view of texts of the Hebrew Bible. – It will be used, nonetheless, in what follows without Christian associations.

12 See e.g. Dever 1993, 33: "the overwhelming scholarly consensus today is that Moses is a mythical figure; that Jahwism was highly syncretistic from the very beginning; and that true monotheism

as many hypotheses about the origin of the Torah as scholars who deal with it. There is, however, virtual unanimity that the texts in their present form go back to the times of the Babylonian Exile and the subsequent Persian reign, i.e. to the period between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.

In the terminology of social identity theory, the Torah can be regarded as a collection of texts that aim primarily at creating a self-identity, i.e. a positive prototype, for the people of Israel. The Torah contains no less than 613 'commandments', i.e. prescriptions and proscriptions that the Children of Israel were obliged to follow[13]. In their *Good Book of Human Nature,* the primatologist Carel van Schaik and the historian Kai Michel offer an evolutionary-anthropology reading of the Torah that supplements the social identity approach. From their functional perspective, the 613 commandments for the Children of Israel formed a "cultural protection system" designed to ward off the wrath of YHWH (Van Schaik & Michel 2016, 246). At the same time, these commandments bound society together. Language, religion, dress, male circumcision, and burial practices, along with "distinctive culinary practices and dietary customs", are "ways in which ethnic boundaries are formed" (Van Schaik & Michel 2016, 246).

The Torah does more than contain building blocks of the *religious* identity of the Children of Israel; it is at the same time the fundament of their *political* identity. This political identity, in turn, is closely tied to the land YHWH promised them. Abraham was the first to receive this promise, which was then extended to his descendants:

> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi[a] of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites'. (*Genesis* 15, 18-21)[14]

From our point of view it is decisive that the social, political and religious identity of the ancient Hebrews were different sides of the same coin: social identity resulted from religious identity via the 'commandments' and vice versa, while religious identity via the Promised Land created national and political identity.

As to sedentariness, the conquering of the Promised Land is portrayed in the texts not simply as conquering land where other people already live. Rather, the

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developed only late in Israel's history, probably not until the Exile and Return." – For the fictional character of the Exodus, cf. Finkelstein & Silberman 2002: Chap. 2, and Assmann 2010.

[13] See Kraemer 2010. – There is a good entry ("613 commandments") in the English Wiki that even lists all the commandments (seen August 2018).

[14] Quoted from the web edition of the "International Bible Society": https://www.biblica.com/bible/?osis=niv:Genesis.15:18%E2%80%9321:18. Accessed August 2018.

texts depict the Israelites as fighting wars for land "on the command and/or with the aid of Yahweh, in pursuance of Yahweh's purpose"[15].

The Old Testament presents what was later called 'monotheism'[16]. It introduces at the same time a completely new element that Jan Assmann has identified. He calls it the "Mosaic Distinction", i.e. the distinction in religion between true and false, good and bad[17]. In this way, the Mosaic Distinction declared religious 'otherness' as wrong and morally condemnable. This attitude was unknown in so-called polytheistic contexts. There, the

> names, the shapes of the gods, and the forms of worship differed. But the functions were strikingly similar, especially in the case of cosmic deities: the sun god of one religion was readily equated to the sun god of another religion, and so forth. (Assmann 1996, 49)

It fits well with the Mosaic Distinction that in the Old Testament war is sometimes justified on the ground that the enemies of Israel were sinners and followers of false religions, i.e. religious 'others'[18]. In this context, YHWH allows and even commands genocide, rape, and slavery. Take, for example, Numbers 31, 1-18 about the revenge campaign against the Midianites:

> The Lord said to Moses, 'Before you die, make sure that the Midianites are punished for what they did to Israel.' Then Moses told the people, 'The Lord wants to punish the Midianites'. […] The Israelites fought against the Midianites, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. […] They killed all the men, […] (and) captured every woman and child […] Moses became angry with the army commanders and said, 'I can't believe you let the women live! They are the ones who followed Balaam's advice and invited our people to worship the god Baal Peor. That's why the Lord punished us by killing so many of our people. You must put to death every boy and all the women who have ever had sex. But do not kill the young women who have never had sex. You may keep them for yourselves'[19].

Violence was certainly nothing new in the history of *Homo sapiens*, and certainly not in the Middle East. What is new, however, is the fact that it is presented in

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15 Freeman 1994, 272.

16 Monotheism is, however, the result of a long development that shows that the Israelites worshiped also other gods besides YHWH. Particularly interesting is that YHWH also has a wife. In ancient Israel her name is Asherah (see Schmitz 2011, 99, 108). – Even Jewish refugees from the Babylonian conquest of Judah living at Elephantine near the Nubian border had built a temple where they worshipped Yahweh with a goddess called Anat-Yahu (Anat-Yahweh) (see Porten, 1968 and 2011). Anat-Yahu is described as the paredra (sacred consort) of YHWH (see Niehr 1996, 58).

17 Assmann 1996. For a more detailed presentation, see Assmann 2003.

18 See Freeman 1994, 272.

19 https://www.biblica.com/bible/niv/numbers/31/

this and other texts as exercised *in the name and on the command of* the supreme deity against the religious 'other'.

Violence towards the religious 'other' is directed not only against people who are *at the same time* ethnic or national 'others' like the Midianites. Apostates *within* the Hebrew nation also suffered hard times. Recall the story of the Golden Calf in *Exodus* (Chap. 32). When Moses stayed too long talking to YHWH on Sinai, the people of Israel became impatient and gave up on YHWH. On Aaron`s advice they fabricated a Golden Calf and began to worship it. In His rage, YHWH initially intended to annihilate His chosen people. Fortunately for the Israelites, Moses was able to calm YHWH who – as compensation – permitted only 3,000 Hebrew men to be slaughtered by the faithful Levites. From this and other examples of punishing and killing apostates, we can draw an important distinction within religious 'otherness': religious otherness tied to ethnic otherness versus religious otherness resulting from apostasy. The latter is not simply 'otherness' but high treason, a crime that must be severely punished. In both cases, violence is not only allowed but even commanded by YHWH. It is not without regretful sorrow that Michael Freeman says of the Old Testament, "It is this text which forms a central part of western culture" (Freeman 1994, 274).

The Old Testament is, indeed, a text full of extreme God-commanded violence against religious 'others'. These days, sheltered American students get a trigger warning when it comes to reading Homer's *Iliad* [20]. Should they not also read the Old Testament in a version expurgated *ad usum delphini* ? [21] YHWH would appear in such a bowdlerized text mainly as a God of peace, love and reconciliation who helps his people cope with the uncertainties of life.

Although this paper exclusively deals with the violent side of the three monotheistic religions, I do not doubt that they have also peaceful components. It seems, however, that ambivalence between violence and peace is a hallmark of all religions. This holds even for Buddhism, which at the surface appears as particularly irenic.[22] – In any case, keep in mind that the texts of the Old Testament are not historical reports but identity narratives. There is no evidence

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[20] See on the topic most recently Lukianoff & Haidt 2018, 6f.

[21] "ad usum delphini" (for the use of the *dauphin*, i.e. the heir to the throne) is the name of a huge (64 volumes) bowdlerized collection of classical Greek and Latin texts used for the education of *Louis de France,* the son of the French king Louis XIV. – I would not be surprised if this ironic remark became reality soon. As Gerald Massey has informed me, trigger warnings in the meantime have reached theaters, as the online edition of the New York Times reports (2018-11-18): (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/18/theater/trigger-warnings-plays-theater.html. Accessed March 2019).

[22] For a contemporary example, one might look at the support of Buddhist authorities for the fight against their religious "other", the Muslim Rohingya people in Myanmar, previously known as Burma (cf. Coclanis 2013). This fight has in the meantime resulted in extremely violent displacement of these people. – Jerryson 2013 gives a general overview about Buddhism and violence.

that the ancient Hebrews were more violent than the neighbouring peoples were. Moreover, in times to come, beginning with the 'Great Revolt' against the Romans (65-73 C.E.), which resulted among other things in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, no religious and ethnic community had to suffer more persecution from *their* religious and ethnic 'others' than the Jews.

3. Christianity

The Sacred Book of Christianity is the New Testament, even if the Old Testament is regarded as a sort of precursor and forms part of Christianity's Sacred Scriptures. Compared to the Old Testament, the New Testament is a pacifist text. Neither Jesus nor the apostles encourage or command wars or genocides. There is a simple explanation for this pacifism: Christianity quickly transcended the boundaries of a tribal religion. After a brief period of insecurity following the death of Jesus, early Christians coming from a Hellenistic background felt themselves no longer obligated to follow the rules of the Torah, circumcision included[23]. This does not mean, of course, that the separation of Judaism and Christianity occurred from one day to the next. Rather, it was a process in which Christianity developed from a Jewish sect to a religion in its own right and at the same time exerted considerable influence on Judaism[24].

In the Gospel of Mark written about 70 A.D., Jesus' missionary command is a patent indication of the separation of religion and ethnicity. This divide was to become essential for Christianity:

> And he [i.e. Jesus] said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned'. (Mark 15, 16)

Yet, as the end of the quote shows, the religious 'other' is by no means a friend. Instead of the earthly violence exercised, allowed or commanded by YHWH in the Old Testament, the punishment of the recalcitrant religious 'other' is at God's discretion and postponed to the Day of Judgment. No wonder, then, that in Christianity religion and ethnicity/nationality are separate issues, even if the Christian God remains the same for everyone. All human beings of all nations are called to become Christians. Consequently, the texts do not support Scripture-

[23] The issue was settled mostly at the so-called Apostolic Council of Jerusalem that took place sometime between 44 and 49 A.D. with St. Paul and the apostle St. James as antagonists. Jochum 2011 is a well-written and informative booklet for lay people about this council.

[24] Moore 1966 shows both directions of this process.

based conflicts over land. Moreover, to be rewarded for obeying the Lord, Christians have to await paradise and to be punished they have to await hell.

Here we encounter an important difference between ancient Judaism on the one side and Christianity and Islam on the other. The older books of the Old Testament do not mention hell. They rather talk about a realm called *sheol*, but it was merely "a place of darkness where souls abided in silence and forgetfulness […] generally reserved for wicked and impious individuals, but it was not a place of otherworldly torture" (Bruce 2018, 35)[25]. As such, hell appears in the Christian tradition and even more so in the Qur'an and in the Hadiths. Hell serves as a central instrument of making people follow the prescriptions of religion – with paradise as its complement. In Judaism, however, only in later books of the Old Testament and in the Talmud, i.e. in Hellenistic times and not least under Christian influence, the idea of punishment and reward in afterlife arises in various forms under the title of *olam ha-ba* ("the coming world"). Since in Judaism religion and ethnicity coincide (even if not the other way round), and since ethnicity is hardly changeable, it seems fair enough that originally reward and punishment for human actions does not specifically concern the religious 'other' because of being a religious 'other'[26]. The above quote from the Gospel of St. Marc, however, shows that Christianity sees things differently. Here the religious 'other' becomes a special target of divine punishment in the afterlife, exactly *because* she had insisted on remaining a religious 'other'. This approach has found with St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthago, already in the third century C.E. the classical formulation *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation). It has been repeated as a sort of Christian mantra on numerous occasions during Church history. Particularly clear is its Papal dogmatization in 1442 by the Council of Florence in the bull *Cantate Domino* of Pope Eugene IV:

> [The sacrosanct Roman Church] firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' [Matt. 25:41], unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fastings, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one,

[25] See e.g. *Genesis* 32, 35 about Jacob, who mourns his son Joseph: 'All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus, his father wept for him.' – The Greek translation of *sheol* in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (mid-third century A.D.), is *hades*.

[26] There were, however, exceptions to this rule, e.g. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (see Moore 1966, 385f.).

> whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church[27].

In the meantime this rather harsh treatment of the religious 'other' in the Catholic Church (but similarly also in other Christian denominations) has been considerably softened. One might even talk of a theological egg-dance to overcome the highly counterintuitive *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* verdict on the religious 'other' and to somehow admit into salvation all people of good will. One variant of this egg-dance is to declare the religious 'other' "Anonymous Christians". This inventive step is usually attributed to the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner[28].

Although the New Testament is a comparatively pacifist text that does not order or even allow military actions against religious 'other', Christians waged many wars and campaigns, motivated at least in part by religion, as soon as Christianity had become the state religion of the Roman Empire (380). I mention only the crusades, which certainly had a central religious objective, viz., to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslim infidels. Crusaders, however, were unable to invoke the New Testament as justification for their campaigns[29]. On the other hand, the respective popes both called to the crusades and rewarded the fighters among other benefits with a plenary indulgence[30]. Also for the religious wars

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[27] http://catholicism.org/cantate-domino.html – Latin original: "Firmiter credit, profitetur et predicat nullos extra ecclesiam catholicam existentes, non solum paganos, sed nec iudeos aut hereticos atque scismaticos eterne vite fieri posse participes, sed in ignem eternum ituros, qui paratus est dyabolo et angelis eius (Mt 25, 41), nisi ante finem vite eidem fuerint aggregati, tantum que valere ecclesiastici corporis unitatem, ut solis in ea manentibus ad salutem ecclesiastica sacramenta proficiant et ieiunia, elemosine ac cetera pietatis officia et exercitia militie christiane premia eterna parturiant, neminem que quantascunque elemosinas fecerit, et si pro Christi nomine sanguinem effuderit, posse salvari, nisi in catholice ecclesie gremio et unitate permanserit". (https://w2.vatican.va/content/eugenius-iv/la/documents/bulla-cantate-domino-4-febr-1442.html. Both sites accessed March 2019).

[28] As to the widespread attribution of the expression to Rahner, see the dissenting vote of Bullivant 2010.

[29] This shows, for example, the famous speech launching the crusades at the Council of Clermont in 1095, where Pope Urban II invoked the Gospel three times. He could not find, however, an invitation to violence. The references are as follows: 1. "The Lord says in the Gospel: 'He that laveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me", "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life"; 2. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them"; 3. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Munro (Ed.) 1901, 5-8).

[30] Cf. Zinser 2015, 86ff. – William Robertson enumerates the extensive privileges and immunities granted to the persons who assumed the cross: 1. They were exempted from prosecutions on account of debt during the time of their holy service; 2. They were exempted from paying interest for the money borrowed for the equipment 3. They were exempted from the payment of taxes 4. They might alienate their lands without the consent of their superior lord; 5. Their persons and effects were taken under the protection of St. Peter and the anathemas of the church were denounced against

of the seventeenth century, particularly for the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) which destroyed enormous regions in Europe, one could not invoke the New Testament. Furthermore, Western colonialism had an important religious component: it offered institutional settings that supported the missionizing of the religious 'other' in remote regions of the world. And let us not forget the Christian pogroms against the Jewish religious "other" that began in the eleventh century and have continued over the centuries.

At the same time, Christianity did not leave the punishment of the *internal* 'other', the apostates ("heretics") to the afterlife, as suggested in the New Testament. Quite to the contrary, heretics had to suffer sometimes extreme mundane violence. This began with the Edict of Thessalonica (380) that declared Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. The so-called Albigensian Crusade in Southern France against the Cathars in the early thirteenth century is an instructive example. In various European countries there began in those times what was later (1542) concentrated in Rome as the "Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition" (*Sacra Congregatio Romanae et universalis Inquisitionis*), which formally existed until 1965 (2nd Vatican Council)[31]. From the perspective of the construction of the religious 'other', the Inquisition was a remarkable innovation. It organized the *institutionalized persecution* of the religious 'other', both on the individual and on the group level.

4. Islam

The prophet Mohammad (ca. 570– 632) founded Islam in what is now Saudi Arabia. Islam's Sacred Books are the Qur'an and the Hadiths. While the Hadiths purport to report words and deeds of the prophet and his companions, devout Muslims regard the Qur'an as the immediate, unaltered, and final revelation of God, literally transmitting what Allah had revealed to the prophet in Arabic. Unlike the Old or New Testament, the Qur'an is not an historical or biographical narrative. It contains 114 Chapters (Suras) that consist of verses. The Suras are not arranged thematically or in chronological order but according to length, beginning with the longest (most verses) and ending with the shortest. There is

all who should molest them, or carry on any quarrel or hostility against them, during their absence, on account of the holy war; 6. They enjoyed all the privileges of ecclesiastics, and were not bound to plead in any civil court, but were declared subject to the spiritual jurisdiction alone 7. They obtained a plenary remission of all their sins, and the gates of heaven were set open to them, without requiring any other proof of their penitence, but their engaging in this expedition (Robertson 1840: "Proofs and Illustrations", Note XIII Sect. I, 23).

31 The German Wikipedia has a remarkably informative entry: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inquisition

a long tradition in mainstream Islam about how to interpret the Qur'an[32]. Topics are context, elimination of inconsistencies, problems of the Arabic language and translations. What is missing, though, is an historico-critical approach of the sort we find in mainstream Christianity and liberal Judaism. Those very few Muslim scholars that in the West ("Euro-Islam") follow such an enlightened approach to their Holy Text usually receive death threats and have to live under police protection – at least in Germany[33].

One of the central characteristics of Islam is the unity of religion and politics:

> The Quran tells us that God is concerned with every aspect of humanity's life on Earth. What we do here determines our ultimate fate. This makes Islam a very social religion; it does not draw a distinction we often draw between religious and secular affairs. Every aspect of life is considered religious, and religion is politics. In his lifetime Muhammad was both a messenger of the One God and the ruler of a state. (Polk 2018, 13f.)

Despite its universal aspirations, Islam in its origins was a strictly tribal religion. Accordingly, the Persian tribes that in the seventh and eighth centuries were conquered and converted to Islam were soon assigned to one of the Arab tribes[34].

Like the Old Testament, the text of the Qur'an is ambivalent; it preaches both peace and violence. While Christian missionary activities in the first centuries of Christianity were non-violent right from the beginning, the expansion of Islam was achieved for centuries by the sword. The religious 'other' was for the early Muslim tribes at the same time a tribal and political 'other'. The Qur'an is full of verses that command the killing of "infidels"[35]. Particularly notorious is Sura 9, which is regarded the latest Sura of the Qur'an. It deals almost exclusively with how to treat infidels and all those that Muhammad did not regard trustworthy. The so-called sword verse (v. 15) is often cited in this context:

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[32] Goldziher 1920 still seems to be the most comprehensive presentation. – The Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) was one of the founders of modern Islamic Studies.

[33] One of various examples is Seyran Ates, who founded together with others in 2017 in Berlin the "Ibn-Rushd-Goethe Mosque", where men and women, Shiites, Sunnites and Alevites may pray together. She received more than 100 death threats. In addition, the Turkish president Erdogan asked the German government to close this mosque: https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article166155366/100-Morddrohungen-gegen-liberale-Moschee-Gruenderin.htm. Accessed March 2019. – Other people under police protection in Germany are the critic of Islam Hamed Abdel-Samad, and the professors for Islamic theology Mouhamad Khorchide (Münster) and Abdel-Hakim Ourghi. (Freiburg): https://www.zeit.de/2017/40/islamkritik-reformen-liberal-bedrohung. Accessed March 2019.

[34] Gronke 2003, 15: "During the first century of Islam – under the rule of the first four caliphs until the end of the Umayyad dynasty (660-749) – […] Muslims of non-Arabic descent – which meant almost all newly converted – had to join an Arab tribe or a prominent Arab as "clients" (Arabic *mawâlî*). They did not own all rights of Arab Muslims and lived on a lower social level, even if they were well off and educated".

[35] Khoury 2003 gives an excellent compilation.

> And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful[36].

Qur'an interpretation has been very busy to "mitigate" this (and other verses) by contextualising them (defense against aggressors, punishment for traitors and so on)[37]. Among the conquered religious 'others', Muslims from the beginning distinguished between pagans (*Kafirs*, Infidels) and People of the Book (*dhimmis*). The people of the Book were Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians[38]. As we have already seen in the sword verse:

> for pagans that came under Islamic supremacy there was only the alternative conversion to Islam or death. Jews and Christians [and also Zoroastrians] had the possibility to secure the protection of the state by paying the so-called head tax (Arabic *jizya*). In return, the State guaranteed their life, property and the right to practice their own religion. At the same time they imposed a series of restrictions and prohibitions that should symbolize the submission and humiliation with respect to the Muslims[39].

Another important feature of constructing the religious other in the Qur'an is the claim that infidels are "unclean":

> O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Haram [the Holy Mosque in Mecca, G.W.] after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise (Sura 9, 28).

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[36] Quotes from the Qur'an are from the online Arabic-English edition at: https://quran.com. Accessed March 2019.

[37] There are informative Wiki entries in German (Schwertvers) and English (sword verse). A sober analysis is given by Abdel-Samad 2016, Chap. 6.

[38] For present day Muslim fundamentalists, all who do not share their convictions (Muslims included) are "infidels".

[39] Gronke 2003, 13f.: "Gab es für Heiden, die unter islamische Oberhohheit kamen, nur die Alternative Übertritt zum Islam oder Tod, hatten Juden und Christen noch die Möglichkeit, sich dem Schutz des Staates zu unterstellen und die sogenannte Kopfsteuer (arabisch *dschizya*) zu entrichten. Im Gegenzug garantierte ihnen der Staat ihr Leben, ihr Eigentum und ihr Recht auf Ausübung der eigenen Religion, erlegte ihnen allerdings auch eine Reihe von Einschränkungen und Verboten auf, die die Unterwerfung und Erniedrigung der nicht-muslimischen Minderheiten gegenüber den Muslimen symbolisieren sollten". – The jizya worked also as a sort of business model in early Islam. Polk 2018, 35 even claims in this context: that "historically, Islam has been the most tolerant of the three religions". This view might be strongly contested given the situation in most Muslim countries.

This delusional purity serves as building block of their own prototype and is an important means of isolating true Muslim believers from their religious others[40]. Under Islamic rule, *apostates* have a very hard time. Since there is no separation of politics and religion in mainstream Islam, apostasy is at the same time high treason and has to be punished accordingly. The Qur'an does not explicitly require the death penalty; instead, it consigns the punishment for apostasy to hell, e.g. in Sura 2.217:

> And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever – for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally[41].

Some Hadiths, however, have the prophet saying that apostates should be killed. This is also the opinion of most Islamic law schools. As of 2016, apostasy is punishable in more than 20 Islamic states (in 13 of them by death)[42]. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that standard Islam also regards a person that commits "blasphemy" or "insult of the prophet" as *kufr* (miscredent). You might recall that in 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini in a fatwa sentenced Salman Rushdie to death and offered a hefty bounty to those who would kill Rushdie. It has risen in the meantime to 4 million dollars[43]. Also think, for example, of the journalists of *Charlie Hebdo*, who were killed in Paris in 2015.

In the West, many people regard Islam as a coherent or unified religious group. This is not the case. The religious 'other' is often a different Muslim group. Compelling evidence of this is the fact that the victims of Islamic religious terrorism are for the most part themselves Muslims. They have the unfortunate fate to belong to the wrong variety of Islam and, therefore, are particularly hateful religious 'others'. Look also to the wars that shatter the Islamic world.

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40 Mohamed Atta, the "suspected ringleader" of the 9/11 terrorists insensitively cared before the attack about his cleanness. This is shown by a four-page document written in Arabic that was found in his baggage. English translation at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/30/terrorism.september113. Accessed March 2019.

41 https://quran.com/2/217. Accessed September 2019.

42 Cf. Wikipedia "Apostasy in Islam" (accessed October 2018); furthermore https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-13-countries-where-being-an-atheist-is-punishable-by-death-a6960561.html (accessed September 2018). – According to Pew Research Center Study between 2008 and 2012 in several countries like Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Malaysia also large majorities of the population support death for apostasy: http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-beliefs-about-sharia/. Accessed September 2018.

43 https://www.nzz.ch/international/vier-millionen-fuer-einen-killer-1.18700188. Accessed September 2018.

For example, in Yemen and partly also in Syria, the leading nations of Shiism and Sunnism – Iran and Saudi Arabia – conduct among other things proxy wars against the respective religious 'other'.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the new idea of Man in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment marks a decisive turning point in the process of constructing the religious 'other'. The central innovation of the Enlightenment is the separation of religion and politics. According to a recent study, this development was made possible by a major psychological variation in populations that are Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD)[44]. The authors claim a correlation and partial causal connection of this psychological variation to what they call the Roman Church's Marriage and Family Program (MFP). Between ca. 500 to 1500 CE, the ecclesiastical prohibition of cousin marriages fostered "social norms that favoured *extensive* (my emphasis) kin ties", while cultural evolution in the process of sedentariness, of which the Old Testament is an important document, had supported *intensive* kin ties by favouring forms of cousin marriage. Kin-based institutions, as we know them from the Old Testament (and from Islam):

> reward greater conformity, obedience, holistic/relational awareness and in-group loyalty but discourage individualism, independence and analytical thinking. [...] Kin-based institutions should also inhibit motivations toward prosociality, including trust, cooperation and fairness, towards strangers or impersonal organizations[45].

Whatever the fate of this remarkable study will be[46], in Europe Humanism and Enlightenment weakened, at least in principle, the religious prototype and the violence-related construction of the religious 'other' strongly tied to it. Social identity in Europe is less and less defined by religion. This is different, unfortunately, from mainstream Islam which by and large has been unaffected by the ideas of the Enlightenment. Quite to the contrary, in the Islamic world an alarming rise of religious fundamentalism has occurred during the past 50 years.

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[44] A group of researchers led by the Harvard anthropologist Joseph Henrich conducted the study. A preliminary version is Schulz *et al*. 2018. See also *infra* Stovell's contribution to this volume, Chap. 8.

[45] Schulz *et al*. 2018, 2, 4 (GW pagination).

[46] In my view, West European Jews to whom the Marriage and Family Program (MFP) did not apply, after their so-called emancipation, became most quickly in a couple generations exemplary WEIRDs. The emancipation began with the American Bill of Rights (1789/91) and as a result of the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (1789) during the French revolution.

Above all among Sunnis violence against the religious 'other' is growing, be the 'other', 'the West' or different Muslim denominations. Interestingly,

> religion is not a primary motivation for joining violent extremists like ISIS. In fact, research in the characteristics of violent extremists suggests that many are religious novices or converts. [...] Religion is sometimes used to legitimate personal and collective frustration and justify violent ideologies[47].

In Israel, sociologists have diagnosed a new wave of "religionization" (*ha-data*) of the society during the past two decades[48]. The "Nation-State Law" that was passed in July 2018 by the Knesset is an expression of institutionally constructing ethnic and religious "otherness" by promoting the corresponding Jewish self-identity[49]. With increasing frequency, the occupation of the West Bank by Israeli settlers is justified as the mere taking back what YHWH had promised to His people.

Let me conclude with a less than optimistic outlook. In the West, the Enlightenment has almost completely ended violent constructions of the *religious* 'other'. Unfortunately, this does not mean that the violent tendencies of human nature have been eradicated from the Western world. Rather, the stereotype of religious 'otherness' has been displaced by other, equally unenlightened stereotypes, above all ethnic and racial 'otherness'. The potential for violence and horror associated with these forms of 'otherness' are at least on a par with religious 'otherness', as the world witnessed in colonialism[50], the Stalinist Gulag, and the Shoah, and is witnessing in our days in terrorist attacks by so-called White Supremacists, sometimes globally connected by the 'social' media[51].

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47 See S. Lyons-Padilla *et al*. 2005, 2.

48 Cf. Peri Ed. 2012 and Peled & Peled 2018. Peled & Peled 2018, 225 ('Appendix') report an order of the day (9 July 2014) by the commander of the Givati Brigade, Colonel Ofer Vinter, during Israel's military operation in Gaza: There one can read among other things: "History has chosen us to be at the spearhead of combat against the 'Gazan' terrorist enemy which defames, defiles and insults the God of Israel".

49 https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-pasccessed ses-controversial-nation-state-bill-1.6291048. Accessed March 2019.

50 The horror of colonialism does not seem to occupy much space in the collective memory of leading colonial countries (as Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, or Italy). For example, the colonization of the Congo by Belgium and its king between 1880 and World War I cost the lives of between five and eight million Congolese people (cf. Hochschild 1998).

51 Recent examples are the "Charleston Church Massacre" in 2015, in which a white American killed nine African American churchgoers: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston_church_shooting) – the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting in 2018, where eleven people were killed: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittsburgh_synagogue_shooting) and the Christchurch Mosque Shooting in 2019, where 50 people were killed: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christchurch_mosque_shootings). All sites accessed March 2019.

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