

Chp 4 Breaking the Spiral of Violence (was Jesus' death the final sacrifice or the end of sacrificing... that is, not a sacrifice.)

“When the Powers That Be catch the merest whiff of God’s new order, they automatically mobilize all their might to crush it.” p82

“What killed Jesus was not irreligion, but religion itself; not lawlessness, but precisely the Law; not anarchy, but the upholders of order. ... because he was not only innocent, but the very embodiment of true religion, true law, and true order, this victim exposed their sacrificial violence for what it was: not the defense of society, but an attack against God.” p83

Hebrew Bible “a long and laborious exodus out of the world of violence” plagued with reversals p84

“In Israel, for the first time in human history, God begins to be seen as identified with the *victims* of violence.” “The violence of Scripture, so embarrassing to us today, became the means by which sacred violence was revealed for what it is: a lie perpetrated against victims in the name of God. God was working through violence to expose violence for what it is and to reveal the divine nature as nonviolent.” p85

- Wink offers this without references. The violence of the Hebrew Bible stands out for me. Can you think of examples of the rejection of violence?

“...in the New Testament ... the scapegoat mechanism is fully exposed and revoked” p86

(*putting the community's sins into the scapegoat which is sacrificed to cleanse and preserve the community*)

- Is this correct? Scapegoating is an understanding that violence and sin can be rectified with violence.

“[The early church] confused God’s intention to reveal the scapegoating mechanism for what it was with the notion that God intended Jesus’ death.” Mistakenly saying “...Jesus was sent by God to be the last scapegoat ... to reconcile us...” p87

“The earliest Epistles and all the Gospels had attested that Jesus was executed by the Powers.” But the Domination System defends itself and in the Epistle to the Hebrews “...Christian theology argued that God is the one who provided Jesus as a Lamb sacrificed in our stead; that *God* is the angry and aggrieved party who must be placated by blood sacrifice; that God is, finally, both sacrificer and sacrificed.” “But what is wrong with this God, whose legal ledgers can be balanced only by means of the death of an innocent victim? Jesus simply declared people forgiven, confident that he spoke the mind of God. Why then is a sacrificial victim necessary to make forgiveness possible?” p87

Paul has difficulty understanding that “Christ is the *end* of sacrificing” instead of “the *final* sacrifice whose death is an atonement to God.” “...Christianity has suffered from this confusion ever since.”

“The nonviolent God of Jesus becomes a God of unequaled violence.” p88

- I was very impressed by this discussion. What do you think? Is it wrong? Is it simplistic?

P89 “...the false God changes suffering into violence, the true God changes violence into suffering.” p89

- This seems like an important idea, but I don't understand it. Can you help me?

“In its early centuries the church lived in conflict with the Roman Empire, and used the imagery of conflict to explain the saving power of the cross. ... Two irreconcilable systems strove for the allegiance of humanity. The ‘Christus Victor’...theory of atonement proclaimed release of the captives to those who had formerly been deluded and enslaved by the Domination System. With the conversion of the emperor Constantine, however, the Roman Empire took over from the church the role of God’s providential agent in the world. Once Christianity became the religion of the empire, ...its success was linked to the success of the empire and preservation of the empire became the decisive criterion for ethical behavior. The Christus Victor theology fell out of favor ... because it was subversive to the church’s role as a state religion. The church no longer saw the demonic as lodged in the empire, but in the empire’s enemies. ... The idea that the work of Christ involves the radical critique of society was largely abandoned.” p89

*From Wikipedia:*

*Christus Victor theory of atonement: liberation of humanity from bondage of sin, death, and the devil*

*Ransom theory of atonement: Christ as ransom payment to evil, the Devil*

*Satisfaction theory of atonement: Christ is punished instead of (as a substitute on behalf of) humanity, thus satisfying the demands of justice so that God can justly forgive.*

- What are the two irreconcilable systems spoken of in the second sentence?  
What are your understandings of atonement?  
If Christianity had not become the state religion of the Roman Empire, what would the church look like today?
  
- Wink says the church has mistakenly accommodated itself to power politics,  
to violence as a solution,  
to scapegoating instead of forgiveness and  
to the reign of God as not a part of this life but of a far away time. (p90-91)  
This is not a quote, it’s Harold trying to understand. Have I correctly understood Wink?  
What do you think of this?

“The Domination System grows out of the fundamental belief that violence must be used to overcome violence.” (p91) “Jesus absorbed all the violence directed at him by the authorities and the Powers but still loved them. If humanity killed the one who fully embodied God’s intention for our lives, and God still loves us, then there is no need to try to earn God’s love.” p92

## DYING TO THE POWERS

“One does not become free from the Powers by defeating them in a frontal attack. Rather, one dies to their control: ‘Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it’ (Luke 17:33). Here also the cross is the model: we are liberated, not by striking back at what enslaves us – for even striking back reveals that we are still controlled by violence – but by a willingness to die rather than submit to its command.” p93

Eph 2: 1-2

“We are dead insofar as we have been socialized into patterns of injustice. We died... as expectations foreign to our essence were force upon us. We died as we began to become complicit in our own alienation and that of others. We died as we grew to love our bondage, to rationalize, justify, and even champion it. We died as we set ourselves in the place of God and tried to control our lives. And by a kind of heavenly homeopathy, we must swallow what killed us in order to come to life.” p94

I read “swallow what killed us” as absorbing the violence with our bodies... nonviolent resistance, which will be the next chapter.

“...children must be socialized. Rules, customs, habits must all be learned...[but learned] under the supervision of the Domination System. So, along with good and necessary learnings, children are also taught racial prejudice, jingoistic pride, insatiable consumerism, and hatred of others not like themselves. ... we must begin to become ourselves... we who are dead must die to our learned preferences for domination.” p94

Do you find this statement shocking? Can you think of instances of all these learnings in your own life?

p94 - 97 The need to die to our ego (which is all tangled up with the Domination System), to die to all that seems to define us. The ego cannot be the agent that conquers the ego. The ego must “[die] to its illusion that it is the center of the psyche and the world.” (p 96) “The ego ... tears up the false deed by which it had claimed possession of the house, and acknowledges that the whole property belongs to God. And lo! God allows the ego to go on living there.” p97

“When Jesus said, ‘Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it’ (Luke 17:33), he drew a line in the sand and asked if we would step across – step out of one entire world, where violence is always the ultimate solution, into another world, where the spiral of violence is finally broken by those willing to absorb its impact in their own flesh. ... nonviolence ...” p97

My translation of Luke said “save his own life” instead of “make their life secure.” Do both translations carry the meaning of a violent looking after what is mine?

Next week: Jesus’ third way of nonviolent resistance