

**Sacrifice, Religion and Nation:
Essentials for Peace-building in the Age of Terror¹**

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Abstract:

“Sacrifice” is one of the keywords that require serious consideration when discussing specific aspects of war and peace, because the concept of sacrifice has often been used to raise nationalism and justify war. The act of dying for some noble cause is sometimes regarded as justifiable. In fact, people who died for their country during war were praised for their noble sacrifices. Similarly, people who die for God are praised as martyrs. The logic in praising death for some noble mission is embraced by both nations and religions, and this commonality has often led to the combination of nationalism and religion. In other words, religions can serve to complement the logic of sacrifice required by a nation. To address such a logic of sacrifice, pacifism should be more substantial than mere idealism. In this paper, I will discuss the relationship among nations, religions and war, centering on the keyword of “sacrifice.” I will also examine idolatry as a logic used to justify sacrifice, and offer perspectives we should adopt to achieve peace.

Keywords:

peace, violence, sacrifice, nation, idolatry

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)

1. Introduction: Reflection on the 70 Years following the End of World War II

1-1. Germany and Japan in Prewar Days

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, issues relating to the war have been the focus of many TV programs and various discussions in Japan in 2015. However, we cannot fully explore the meaning of the war that Japan fought simply by reflecting on these 70 years. As the period of war is closely associated with the history of the modernization of Japan, we must take into consideration the process of development of Japan as a modern nation that started with the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

I would like to say a few words about the relationship between Japan and Germany. While Japan was allied with Germany during World War II, Germany had had a huge influence on Japan even before the war. Simply put, Germany was one of the exemplary models for Japan to follow in its modernization process. The Meiji government placed the highest priority on modernizing the nation to catch up with the Western great powers and dispatched missions to the U.S. and Europe. Japanese intellectuals who were sent to Prussia (present-day Germany) took note of the fact that Kaiser Wilhelm had the support of the Lutheran Church and both were closely associated with each other. They decided that this relationship in Germany between politics and religion could be usefully applied to the Japanese political system that centered on the Emperor. In this way, not only the German Constitution provided a model for the Constitution of the Empire of Japan before the war, but also the German political theology had a significant influence on the relationship between politics and religion in Japan. Needless to say, the religion that played a central role in Japan was not Christianity, but Shinto (State Shinto), which connected the Emperor and the Japanese people as an ethical code of the nation.

This reveals one of the important points that must be taken into consideration when discussing the issue of peace. In both Germany and Japan, nationalism was linked to religion, which consequently led to the involvement of the religious community in the war. In both countries, there were people who were opposed to their country going to war, but they were in the minority and many of them were suppressed. These historic events teach us that to attain peace, we should not allow religion to be used as a tool of

narrow-minded nationalism.

1-2. Japan in Postwar Days: The Constitution of Japan and Article 9

After World War II, Japan enacted a new constitution with an article stipulating that “Japanese people forever renounce war ... and land, sea, and air forces ... will never be maintained.” The spirit of the Preamble and Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan has been the keystone of postwar pacifism of Japan. In 2015, however, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party reinterpreted Article 9 and submitted national security-related bills to give more power to the Self-Defense Forces, triggering huge protest movements in various parts of Japan. Though these bills were eventually passed into law, the protest movements against the government made a meaningful contribution by stimulating heated discussions among Japanese people and helping to renew our awareness of the significance of Article 9 and the no-war pledge.

While the provision of Article 9 renouncing war itself might concern Japanese people only, the ideal of pacifism enshrined in this article is relevant to other countries, too. We should develop an understanding of the origins of the pacifist thought embodied in Article 9 in the wider context of human history, so that we can see that pacifism is not a domestic issue of Japan, but is a universal issue affecting all humanity.

Though Christianity has had only a small influence on Japan, the pacifist thought upheld by Article 9 has something in common with Christian pacifism. It should also be noted that pacifism has stemmed from versatile ideological sources, although it has never been a mainstream thought in human history. For example, the Indian tradition of ahimsa, or nonviolence towards all living things, was inherited by Buddhism and prevailed throughout East Asia. In the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi put the idea of ahimsa into practice in leading the nonviolent resistance movement. Early Christians struggled to practice nonviolence in a manner faithful to the teachings of Jesus and persevered through the hardships of persecution. After Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the pacifist thought was removed from the main thrust of the doctrine. However, this thought was consistently maintained by minority sects of Christianity until the 20th century when Martin Luther King, Jr. led the civil rights movement, upholding the principle of nonviolence. Also, the works of Leo Tolstoy and other pacifist novelists, as well as the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (especially his *Perpetual Peace*), gave Japanese intellectuals in the modern age the opportunity to think about pacifism. With an understanding of the pacifism embodied in Article 9 in the light of these historical backgrounds, we can clearly see that pacifism does not reflect the Japanese historical

context alone, but is a universal issue affecting all humanity.

1-3. Just War Theory: The Justification of War as a Necessary Evil

However, the validity of pacifism has been questioned by many, both in Japan and abroad. Especially in international politics, pacifism is regarded simply as an idealistic thought and is rarely even discussed. An overwhelming majority of countries around the world keep military forces in the belief that military power enables them to defend their people and deter possible attacks by enemies. Seen from this standpoint, we could say that not all wars are wrong and that some wars are necessary to establish peace. This is called the “just war theory,” which is supported by most countries. Even the United Nations embraces this idea, and has occasionally resolved to resort to military intervention when a humanitarian crisis is occurring.

In the United States, the A-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been seen as exemplary cases of the just war theory: the A-bombings were considered necessary to bring peace and thus justifiable. In recent years, there is growing criticism among American people that the A-bombings were inhumane, but a majority of them still believe that the bombings were justified.

The just war theory is taken for granted not only in the United States but also the rest of the world, where pacifists who are basically opposed to the use of any kind of armed force remain a tiny minority. This also applies to the world of Christianity. While Jesus was a pacifist who was expressly opposed to violence, many of today’s Christians are not pacifists: they support the just war theory and accept war and the use of armed force as necessary. If we simply insist on the importance of pacifism without recognizing this reality, our voice will certainly not be heard by international society. Thus, at least the Japanese should establish an ideological and political base that enables us to logically convince international society of the importance of pacifism.

1-4. Overcoming the Paradox of Sacrifice

“Sacrifice” is one of the keywords that require serious consideration when discussing specific aspects of war and peace, because the concept of sacrifice has often been used to raise nationalism and justify war. The act of dying for some noble cause is sometimes regarded as justifiable. In fact, people who died for their country during war were praised for their noble sacrifices. Similarly, people who die for God are praised as martyrs. The logic in praising death for some noble mission is embraced by both nations and religions, and this commonality has often led to the combination of nationalism and

religion. In other words, religions can serve to complement the logic of sacrifice required by a nation.

The most serious problem pertaining to the logic of sacrifice is that loyalty to someone can cause others to sacrifice themselves, or, in other words, that being responsible to someone (our nation) can in turn mean not being responsible to others (people of other nations). The “paradox of sacrifice” in which absolute self-sacrifice for a country requires the sacrifice of people of other countries becomes most apparent during wartime.

It is wrong to think that this problem was settled in 1945, because the same logic has been repeatedly adopted by religious extremists, such as Islamic State. Absolute loyalty to God and one’s mission as well as the spirit of self-sacrifice has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent people. In 1995 in Japan, members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult released sarin gas in subway trains in Tokyo, killing and injuring many people. What motivated them to do so was their loyalty to the guru and belief in self-sacrifice. In order to bring peace to the world, we must recognize the danger of the logic of self-sacrifice that claims the lives of others, and put an end to the “paradox of sacrifice.”

Pacifism should be more substantial than mere idealism. Pacifists must calmly analyze the logic behind a great many sacrifices during wartime and start to take action based on the lessons learned from history, including offering apologies and reconciliation. In this paper, I will discuss the relationship among nations, religions and war, centering on the keyword of “sacrifice.” I will also examine idolatry as a logic used to justify sacrifice, and offer perspectives we should adopt to achieve peace.

2. Logic of Sacrifice

2-1. Logic of Self-sacrifice: Nationalism and Religion

I mentioned earlier that nationalism and religion are easily combined with each other. So first, I would like to take a look, from the viewpoint of Mark Juergensmeyer, at secular nationalism and religious nationalism, which came to be often used for organizing the relationships between nationalism and religion in the contemporary context.

Focusing on “ideologies of order,” Juergensmeyer says that both religion and secular nationalism serve to maintain or strengthen orders in society and consequently, they may be put in a competing relationship. He also explains, as follows, that there is a

significant similarity between the seemingly conflicting two.

(Secular nationalism and religion) serve the ethical function of providing an overarching framework of moral order, a framework that commands ultimate loyalty from those who subscribe to it. . . . nowhere is this common form of loyalty more evident than in ability of nationalism and religion, alone among all forms of allegiance, to give moral sanction to martyrdom and violence (Juergensmeyer 1994: 15).

Figuring out the mechanism to enhance group affiliation up to “martyrdom and violence” and searching for ways to prevent it, must be a more significant challenge than just trumpeting war against terrorism. His approach is to look for clues in the proximity and tensions between secular and religious nationalism. Juergensmeyer acknowledges that the concept of nationalism is a Western structure and questions whether secular nationalism could accommodate religious nationalism. His case studies on various countries in the Middle East and South Asia and former communist countries show that secular nationalism did not necessarily work out well.

In the West, modern states were formed based on the separation of church and state. Likewise, in non-Western countries, it was considered possible to realize a modern and tolerant society by dividing social life into public and private spheres, and placing religious activities into the private sphere. Actually, just such a policy was implemented under the colonial administration by Western powers. That is also the reason why religious nationalism took place in the early 20th century, often as a movement against Western modernism. In some Islamic countries such as Turkey, secularism was considered essential for modernization. While some countries virtually aimed for the separation of religion and politics, there appeared also religious nationalism, such as those found in a number of Islamic movements, which strictly separated modernization from secularization and aimed for the formation of modern states within the Islamic ideal and law.

Here, it should be noted that the terms “secular” and “religious” should not be interpreted as a confrontational dichotomy. In fact, Juergensmeyer’s understanding has a dichotomic tendency, but it unintentionally reflects the Western tradition, which separates the public and private spheres. I would like to emphasize that it is preferable not to interpret religious nationalism as measures against modernization and secularization and that it is necessary to accept religious nationalism as a product of the

modern age in search for a new ideology of order. This approach enables us to keep a distance from the temptation to easily regard religious nationalism as a deviance from modernity.

In reality, the modern age is characterized by the rise of passionate nationalism that can be even described as religious. In modern Japan, religious nationalism served as a driving force to mobilize Japanese people to action. From the viewpoint of modern nationalism, regardless of whether religious or secular, sacrificing oneself for the nation was seen as a natural thing to do. As such, modern nationalism brought about the two world wars in the past. If we are to prevent such tragedy from happening again, we should think about the meaning of sacrifice for humanity, or the logic in compelling or justifying sacrifice.

2-2. Considering Sacrifice in the Context of Human History

Though Christians do not have the custom of sacrificing animals as offerings to God, the redemptive meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus is closely associated with the concept of sacrifice that has been known since ancient times. In the early days of human history, ritual, especially the practice of offering animal sacrifices, was religion itself. Everywhere in the world, men could not contact the transcendental being or access the transcendental world without some medium. For example, due to the critical importance of rain for any agricultural community, rain-making rituals played a crucial role, in which various animals were sacrificed as offerings to the divinity.

The Bible, especially the Book of Leviticus, contains many accounts of “burnt offering.” The most famous of these is surely the story of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.

Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

The Hebrew word for “burnt sacrifice” is “olah,” which is translated as “holocaust” in Greek, as is well known. I’m sure I don’t need to describe here how this famous story ends. This story poses a very difficult question as to the absolute loyalty to God and sacrifice, which has been discussed throughout the history of Judaism and Christianity,

and has also been addressed by many philosophers.

In some sense, modern thought in postwar days began with criticism of the system of sacrifice, as demonstrated by the thinkers such as René Girard, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault. Through the two World Wars, modern nations caused an unprecedented number of victims, and it has been asked what caused such disastrous consequences. Simply put, the answer to this question is that modern nations upgraded the system of religious sacrifice (victimization) to a more elaborate one, instead of overcoming or eliminating it. In other words, the issue of sacrifice we are discussing here is not an ancient issue relevant only to the time of Abraham, but is a contemporary issue of the 21st century, passed down to us from the 20th century.

Before discussing this issue in detail, let me check the broad meaning of sacrifice in the context of human history by referring to *Sacrifice and the Body* written by John Dunnill. According to him, the following factors are commonly identified in various types of sacrifices.

1. Action. A sacrifice is a thing done, and therefore necessarily external and material.
2. Ritual. The action is ritualized, that is, it requires some index of difference, either in the materials used, or the personnel, or the mode of sacrificing, or in the understanding of what occurs. Abnormal things are done, or normal things done differently.
3. Transcendence. A sacrifice is a ritual action mediating relations with a power of another order, in some sense 'divine' or 'sacred.'
4. Exchange. In sacrifice something is handed over to the god, with some sense of something else received: some physical, social or spiritual benefit or 'blessing'; or the offering is made in response to a prior divine gift received.
5. Transformation. Both as action and as exchange, a successful sacrifice is understood to involve a change (whether in the god, or the material or the sacrificer) through access to transcendent power.
6. Solidarity. The actions and materials used are always closely related to the life circumstances (the habitat, economy, social structures and concerns) of the sacrificers, which by being brought into relation with the divinity unite the god also to their life.
7. Cosmology. While individual sacrifices may be routine or trivial, the system or set of practices (insofar as they can be perceived as a whole) may be understood to represent the totality of life (biological, social, existential) for the sacrificing group. (Dunnill 2013: 177)

Of course, the influence of each of these factors varies depending on region and culture, but we can say that the seven factors cover the main characteristics of sacrifice in general. Among them, I would like to focus on the 4th factor, “Exchange,” as the logic of exchange has often been used to justify sacrifice for the sake of religion or nation.

2-3. Sacrifice and Christianity

Christianity started as a non-sacrificing religion, which was quite extraordinary in those days. Because the Roman Empire recognized the ritual of offering sacrifice as a religion itself, early Christianity was seen as a superstition, rather than a religion. Two factors contributed to Christianity starting as a non-sacrificing religion. One was the influence of Judaism in those days and the other was the redemptive understanding of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Alongside the older sacrificial system based in the Temple in Jerusalem, at least from the time of the Babylonian Exile (sixth century BCE) there developed a weekly or daily practice of verbal praise and law-obedience in the synagogue. These two co-existed in harmony for several centuries, but after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, Judaism survived as a religion of the Law and the Book. This happened at the very time that the Christian church was separating itself from Israel and defining itself over against Israel as a rival, non-sacrificing, religion (Dunnill 2013: 105).

In addition to this historical reason, there is another reason, a theological one, that explains why Christianity started as a non-sacrificing religion. This is the redemptive interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus, which holds that as Jesus sacrificed himself for the redemption of mankind, it is no longer necessary for us to offer sacrifice.

It should be noted that while this understanding of the crucifixion became a central doctrine of Christianity, part of it served to lead Christians to martyrdom. Christian literature of martyrdom contributed to the conception of the idea that Christians should prove their faith by dying for God, just as Jesus did on the cross. The idea praises martyrdom as an exemplary act, holding that dying for a noble cause is a respectable thing to do, and has led an increasing number of Christians to be martyred for their faith. In Japan, for example, intense persecution against Christians began in the 17th century, and many Japanese Christians chose to die for their faith. As a result, only a few Christians remained in Japan, who secretly maintained their faith as “hidden Christians.” Reportedly, Christian literature of martyrdom brought by Catholic priests from Europe to Japan helped to spread the idea of martyrdom as an admirable act among Japanese Christians.

With an understanding of this historical background, let me summarize the relationship between sacrifice and Christianity. Historically, Christianity started as a non-sacrificing religious community. It is true that Christianity rejected the ritual of sacrificing animals, but it also positively accepted the practice of Christians sacrificing themselves for their faith. Against the backdrop of the rise of nationalism from the 19th century to the 20th century, the idea of self-sacrifice for a noble cause was further developed by modern nations and incorporated into their national systems. In those days, fighting and dying for one's own country was generally considered to be perfectly compatible with the Christian faith, because offering one's life for a noble cause was acclaimed as an exemplary practice of self-sacrifice, and dying for one's country became almost synonymous with dying for one's faith. This is what I call the logic of exchange in sacrifice. One of the modern examples of the embodiment of the logic of exchange in Japan is Yasukuni Shrine, where people who fought and died for Japan are enshrined as noble spirits in reward for sacrificing their lives.

Indeed, the concept of sacrifice is important in Christianity. However, is the logic of sacrifice that can easily slide into the logic of exchange compatible with the teachings of Jesus? Would Jesus wish for Christians to die a noble death, urged by church or nation? To answer these questions, let me next discuss the characteristics of the ethics of Jesus.

3. Ethics of Jesus

As Jesus often used parables in his teachings, we cannot derive any rational logic from them. Yet, Jesus' parables have a power that is destructive to the existing social order, which we can call the "ethics of Jesus" in a broad sense. Here, I will focus on the following three characteristics of the ethics of Jesus in light of sacrifice.

3-1. Denial of the Logic of Exchange

Jesus denied the simple dualism between good and evil and the principle of rewarding good and punishing evil, and instead indicated an ethical horizon extending beyond them. Obviously, the principle of rewarding good and punishing evil is based on the logic of exchange, and Jesus was explicitly opposed to this logic as shown by his words:

You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute

you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-45)

The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-6) also indicates the love of God that surpasses the logic of exchange that is familiar to us. According to the logic of exchange, it is natural that those who have worked all day long grumble about being paid the same as those who have worked only one hour. However, this parable teaches us the generosity of God, and the radical love of God that defies the logic of exchange. In other words, the ethics of Jesus serve as a power to free us from the logic of exchange.

3-2. Absolutely Individual-centered Ethics

The logic of sacrifice often requires individuals to sacrifice themselves for the whole. Individuals offering their lives for the nation were praised for dying a noble death, and this logic drove people to war. Jesus was opposed to individuals sacrificing themselves for a group and steadfastly insisted on the value of each individual, which is especially evident in the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). In our daily life, we think and act in a utilitarian manner, so we will keep the ninety-nine sheep rather than go searching for the missing one. However, Jesus asks us to consider the “lost one” and in this sense, his ethics are absolutely individual-centered and simply incompatible with collective ethics that justify the sacrifice of individuals for a group.

3-3. Internalization of Sacrifice

The teachings of Jesus are characterized by the deep internalization of the formal aspect of law. In terms of sacrifice, this characteristic is clearly seen in his words: “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.” (Matthew 12:7) When some trouble arises, we are inclined to seek a target or scapegoat to blame. On the contrary, the ethics of Jesus turn our mind to “mercy,” not sacrifice.

So far, I have outlined the ethics of Jesus in terms of sacrifice and argued that the act of an individual to sacrifice his/her life for a nation or community is never justified in the ethics of Jesus. The ethics of Jesus go beyond the logic of sacrifice, and indicate a world where no one dies for a community or nation. If we accept the crucifixion of Jesus as the last sacrifice for the sake of humanity, then I believe that continuing to offer human sacrifice should be prohibited.² This interpretation helps us gain an insight that

the idea of absolute nonviolence and pacifism not only manifests itself in the words of Jesus, but it paradoxically culminates in the crucifixion of Jesus, which is the ultimate form of violence.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the naïve spirit of self-sacrifice was skillfully exploited by nations. To draw attention to this historical fact, I will discuss the relationship between modern nation and violence from the viewpoint of patriotism.

3-4. Ethical Paradox in Patriotism

For this purpose, let me quote a rather long text from the work of an American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 1932.

There is an ethical paradox in patriotism which defies every but the most astute and sophisticated analysis. This paradox is that patriotism transmutes individual unselfishness into national egoism. Loyalty to the nation is a high form of altruism when compared with lesser loyalties and more parochial interests. It therefore becomes the vehicle of all the altruistic impulses and expresses itself, on occasion, with such fervor that the critical attitude of the individual toward the nation and its enterprises is almost completely destroyed. The unqualified character of this devotion is the very basis of the nation's power and of the freedom to use the power without moral restraint. Thus the unselfishness of individuals makes for the selfishness of nations. (Niebuhr 1960: 91)

Of course, the historical context on which Niebuhr bases his discussion is different from that of modern Japan, but the ethical paradox in patriotism discussed in this text was also seen in Japan in the modern age, and other nations also shared a similar structure to a considerable extent. Then what insight should we have if we are to prevent the unselfishness of individuals or the spirit of self-sacrifice from being taken into narrow patriotism and exploited as a tool of the nation or war? Modern nations have to continue to create some “idol” as a means to promote patriotism and unify people. The concept of noble sacrifice is one of such idols. To explore this issue in depth, I will discuss idolatry in the following section.

4. Invisible Idolatry

4-1. Idolatry in the Bible

Idolatry has been the subject of harsh criticism in monotheistic religions that believe in an absolute God. The prohibition of idolatry is not only a tradition common to the three major monotheistic religions; one could even say that the identity of these monotheistic religions is dependent on the denial of idolatry. In this sense, we could say that the true opposition to monotheism is neither polytheism nor atheism but idolatry. In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the prohibition of idolatry is associated with the second commandment as expressed in Exodus, Chapter 20, while in Judaism, the prohibited worship of other gods is called *Avodah Zarah* and is not limited simply to visible idols (*pesel* in Hebrew). In order to examine the problems of the modern world, we must understand “idolatry” not only as serving visible idols but also in the broader sense of “invisible idolatry” (Kohara 2006: 10). The following comments on this point by the theologian Paul Tillich are helpful:

Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy. Something essentially conditioned is taken as unconditional, something essentially partial is boosted into universality, and something essentially finite is given infinite significance (the best example is the contemporary idolatry of religious nationalism). (Tillich 1951: 13)

Tillich wrote *Systematic Theology* in 1951, but the importance of understanding religious nationalism as idolatry has increased dramatically since the terrorist attacks of September 11. As Tillich’s words imply, all people and all religions can be exposed to the danger of idolatry.

Isn’t it, however, too easy to say that something finite should not be given infinite significance? If idolatry could be avoided with such simple formulations, idolatry would not be a serious problem to begin with. Tillich recognizes the danger of making the nation into an “absolute” in the fervor of religious nationalism. But while God’s sovereignty can coexist with the nation-state in the West, the idea of the nation-state itself is occasionally considered dubious in the Islamic world. Tillich never witnessed in his lifetime the extremely purified prohibition of idolatry that has become popular among certain Islamists who are hostile to Western society and its values. In this sense, we cannot be content with Tillich’s formulations.

4-2. Invisible Idolatry and Structural Violence

If materialism, represented by capitalism, and imperialism, especially in the form of military intervention by the U.S., extend themselves through the power of proliferation and impact the entire world (these are typical images of the “West” in Occidentalism), then it should come as no surprise that the persons who are oppressed by materialism and imperialism would see that power as a kind of idolatry. Put another way, “invisible idolatry” can become the breeding ground for structural violence, and at times people resort to direct, physical violence in order to stand up against such structural violence.

While “structural violence” is a well-known term especially in peace studies, let me introduce the meaning of this term, defined by Johan Galtung. Galtung believed that peace could not be achieved simply by getting rid of personal and direct violence, and he expanded the notion of violence. According to Galtung, violence exists if people are influenced in such a way that their immediate somatic and intellectual self-realization does not fully meet their potential self-realization (Galtung 1991: 5). This is what he terms “structural violence.” In the context discussed earlier, if Muslims are deprived of inherent human dignity or allowed less freedom as a result of Western materialism or imperialism, then structural violence exists. In this sense, “invisible idolatry” can generate structural violence, and those who have become aware of such structural violence might exercise “direct violence” to destroy idols.

This formula took its most extreme form in the terrorist attacks of September 11. In the eyes of the terrorists, the World Trade Center may have appeared as an “idol” that embodied the riches and violence of capitalism. The Pentagon may have appeared as an “idol” embodying military force. This is why, despite the loss of many precious lives, the attacks were greeted among some Muslims with jubilation aroused by the desire to see the destruction of those idols. What can we do to prevent the repetition of an iconoclasm that combines both despair and jubilation? To find an answer to this question, I will rather discuss the worst scenario that can result from the structural violence; a possible future situation that we can predict based on the lessons learned from the past.

4-3. Consequences of the Structural Violence and Challenges Imposed on Us

Ironically, people become able to remove heterogeneous others without a feeling of hate against them when the invisible idolatry and structural violence prevail in society. In other words, the “culture of hate” created by these powers enables people to remove specific groups, to whom they are indifferent, from society. In fact, many of the mass

murder incidents that have occurred in modern times result from systematic violence triggered by indifference, rather than by accumulation of hate.

A typical example is an anti-Jewish pogrom (the Holocaust). On November 9, 1938, Jewish-owned stores and synagogues were attacked and destroyed by German people driven by a hatred for Jews. This incident was called the Kristallnächte (Crystal Night). This was a day of extensive looting and mass murder, about which Zygmunt Bauman, a sociologist who studied the Holocaust, writes as follows: “One could neither conceive of, nor make, mass murder on the Holocaust scale of no matter how many Kristallnächte.” (Bauman 1989: 89) His point is that this was not an incident of mass violence stemming from a hatred, but that ethical indifference prevailing in society drove people to annihilate heterogeneous others without feeling hatred for them.

Organized violence triggered by indifference was unknown before modern times, and we may say that this is the ultimate form of the culture of hate. This form of violence did not end with the Holocaust, and is still prevailing around the world. We should learn the danger of indifference from the lessons of history and the realities currently going on in the world, and make constant efforts to explore a new manner of discourse to prevent people from feeling indifference. Certainly, there is truth in the message “All religions seek peace” but I fear that the sheer monotony of the message can drive people to indifference. If the message of peace is trapped in a dichotomy that makes a sharp distinction between allies and foes, then, ironically, the message can serve to supplement the culture of hate. Making unceasing efforts for self-criticism and self-transformation is the only way to overcome the culture of hate that can artfully lure us into a trap.

The culture of hate does not originate in religious differences. The fact is that the culture of hate creates boundaries of religious differences or cultural differences, justifies hate, and eventually drives people to expel heterogeneous others from their boundaries, even without feeling hatred for them. In this light, repeating the message “All religions seek peace” can be understood to be an embodiment of the positive naivety of truth on the one hand, while doing so entails the danger of reinforcing the boundaries created by the culture of hate despite the original intention on the other. To avoid such a danger, we should engage in not only interreligious dialogue, but also dialogue with secular society and develop a technique to have meaningful discourse on human identities.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, I will briefly summarize the discussion and highlight the matters we

should keep in mind to achieve peace.

First, we should develop a critical view on the logic of sacrifice. While ritual involving sacrifice began early in human history, it has been upgraded to a more elaborate form by modern nations and incorporated into national systems. We should be fully aware that the logic in praising death for some noble mission is commonly seen among nations and religions, and this commonality has often led to the combination between them. This means we should have the ability to think beyond the simple religious/secular dichotomy.

Second, we can base our criticism of the logic of sacrifice that justifies violence and war on the ethics of Jesus. If we do nothing but simply observe the ever-changing international situation, we can be easily imbued with nationalistic fervor when a national crisis arises. In our effort to achieve peace, therefore, we should take a firm stand that will not be affected by the changes of the times. The teachings of Jesus have continued to pose radical questions to us as the basis of pacifism.

Third, we cannot solve problems simply by trying to root out evil by means of exercising military power (direct violence), as typically shown by war against terrorism. Instead, we should recognize and alleviate structural violence that can provide a breeding ground for “invisible idolatry” and iconoclasm against it, thereby spreading the basis of peace.

Fourth, we should not offer our bodies as a sacrifice to any being other than God, and the sacrifice must be a living one, not a dead one, as described in the passage, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1). We should never be easily seduced by the idea of “noble death.”

Fifth, followers of Jesus should emphasize the universal “love your neighbor” principle across national borders and serve as mediators to reconcile peoples to achieve peace, especially in East Asia where nationalism is rapidly rising. By doing so, we can be “a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” and at the same time, present an antithesis to the logic of sacrifice (logic of exchange) that is used to justify human death.

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Notes

- ¹ This paper is based on the keynote speech at the 2015 International Colloquium on War and Peace: Religious Perspectives, Alliance Bible Seminary, Hong Kong, Oct. 31, 2015, but modified.
- ² Heim (2006), who reinterprets the meaning of the cross in comparison with other sacrifices, supports this idea.