

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY

The Role of Christianity in Current American Wars  
**Master's Thesis**

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Olomouc 2013

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci  
Filozofická fakulta  
Akademický rok: 2012/2013

Studijní program: Filologie  
Forma: Prezenční  
Obor/komb.: Anglická filologie (ANGFN)

**Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta**

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**TÉMA ČESKY:**

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**NÁZEV ANGLICKY:**

The role of Christianity in current American wars

**VEDOUcí PRÁCE:**

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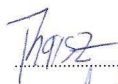
**ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:**

Definovat do jaké míry funguje v USA předpokládaná rozluka státu a církve a dodržování náboženských svobod.  
Analyzovat, zda a jak se prvky křesťanství objevují v plánování a realizaci vojenských akcí USA.  
Diskutovat jejich původ a dopad na vývoj zahraniční politiky v ideologickém kontextu.

**SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:**

Allitt, Patrick. Religion in America since 1945: a history. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.  
Borhaug, Kelly. U.S. war-culture, sacrifice, and salvation. Oakville, Conn.: Equinox Pub., 2011.  
Durward, Rosemary, and Lee Marsden. Religion, conflict, and military intervention. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009.  
Shaw, Jonathan Eberhardt. The role of religion in national security policy since September 11, 2001. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011.

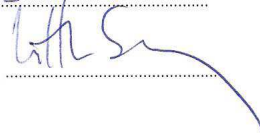
Podpis studenta:



Datum:

30.11.2012

Podpis vedoucího práce:



Datum:

30.11.2012

## Prohlášení

Místopřísežně prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma: „The Role of Christianity in Current American Wars“ vypracoval samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího diplomové práce a uvedl jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 19. 4. 2013

Podpis 

# **Acknowledgments**

Above all, I would like to thank Matthew Sweney, PhD., supervisor of my thesis, for providing me with encouragement, good advice and patience. I would also like to thank Professor Kelly Denton-Borhaug of Moravian College for an eye-opening experience which I received attending her religion classes at Moravian.

# Content

Introduction .....	6
1. The Christian Nation .....	7
1.1. Religion of the Founding Fathers .....	7
1.2. In God We Trust .....	12
1.3. The Case of the National Day of Prayer .....	15
1.4. The Bible vs. the US Constitution .....	22
1.5. The Shift .....	28
2. War Culture and Sacrifices .....	30
2.1. The Just War Theory .....	30
2.2. Meeting War Culture .....	36
2.3. Christian sacrifice and War Culture .....	41
2.4. Guns and Bibles .....	46
2.5. The results of proselytizing .....	52
3. The Global Impact.....	55
3.1. American Foreign Policy and the Biblical Worldview .....	55
3.2. Islamophobia after the Boston Marathon Bombing.....	60
3.3. Just Peacemaking .....	62
Conclusion .....	65
Bibliography .....	70
Annotation .....	80

# Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the role of Christianity in current American war conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It questions the ties between Christian notions of salvation and sacrifice, and political, cultural and military sacrificial frameworks to demonstrate how sacrificial rhetoric energizes American war culture both home and abroad in the post 9/11 period. The study is divided into three parts - in its first chapter it examines the historic evidence to decide whether or not the United States was founded as a Christian nation. Studying the primary documents of American history, it aims to outline how the separation of church and state works in the United States. This remains a very divisive topic that fuels many public disputes due to many misconceptions about primary documents (such as Constitution) and the largely ignorant electorate. In the second part, the concepts of “war-culture” and “just war” are introduced and applied to the current situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. American Christianity seemingly enables the existence and continuance of war culture, and electrifies the rhetoric of “necessary sacrifice”. In this chapter, reports have been gathered to demonstrate how deeply this sacrificial framework penetrates the military code and institutions. The goal is to determine whether behavior of soldiers and their officers amidst atrocities of warfare could have been institutionally motivated by Christian doctrines of sacrifice and salvation. And in the last chapter, the possible outcome of such indoctrination is discussed in a broader ideological context, attempting to answer questions such as - Is the war in Iraq and Afghanistan a just war in terms of Christian ethics? Does it exemplify an old conflict between the Christendom and the Muslim world? Is it a religious war? How should the US allies reply to such a conflict? And how did American Foreign Policy changed after 9/11?

# 1. The Christian Nation

## 1.1. Religion of the Founding Fathers

The idea that the United States is a 'Christian nation' has been central to American identity. In today's America, religion often imbues politics and only a few matters can ignite more controversy than the country's Christian roots. It is widely believed that the religion of the American Founding Fathers was Christianity and as a result of this assumption, the political culture has been overflowing with Christian symbolism. Most US presidents, for instance, Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, have sworn their oaths of office on the Bible, while G. W. Bush's inauguration was officially dedicated to Jesus Christ, invoking "the Father, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit" in a prayer delivered by Rev. Franklin Graham: *Now, O Lord, we dedicate this presidential inaugural ceremony to You. May this be the beginning of a new dawn for America as we humble ourselves before You and acknowledge You alone as our Lord, our Savior and our Redeemer. We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*<sup>1</sup>

Including the two prayers at this year's Barack Obama's inaugural, twelve prayers were delivered at inaugurations since 1989. All of them were delivered by Protestants and through careful construction spoke for "all" Americans. Furthermore, a vice presidential candidate of 2008, Sarah Palin, asserted that America is a Christian nation and it would be "mind-boggling" to suggest otherwise.<sup>2</sup> To an ordinary citizen of the United States it then may appear that America really is a country founded on Christian faith. Such establishment would be, however, in conflict with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, created by Founding Fathers, that says *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of*

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<sup>1</sup>"Franklin Graham's Inauguration Prayer," Beliefnet.com, accessed February 20, 2013, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2002/08/Franklin-Grahams-Inauguration-Prayer.aspx>

<sup>2</sup>"Sarah Palin's 'Christian Nation' Remarks Spark Debate," ABCNews, accessed February 20, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/sarah-palin-sparks-church-state-separation-debate/story?id=10419289>

*the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*"<sup>3</sup>

Unlike Pilgrim Fathers or the first settlers in America, who had organized church-state relations around the idea of religious uniformity, the Founding Fathers were well-aware of the problems it had brought. Whether Anglicans or Puritans, the settlers of a given colony shared one faith and believed that their formulation of Protestantism was the correct one.<sup>4</sup> That meant that everyone in such colony was compelled to support their church. One of the most infamous cases of such church oppression took place in 1692 in a Puritan town called Salem, in the former Massachusetts Bay Colony, where more liberal individuals were rampantly accused of witchcraft and consequently hanged. This was probably one of the factors that made the Founding Fathers rethink the concept of religious rights when drafting the Constitution, as they made religious freedom the cornerstone of faith in the new republic, refusing to establish any single religion as its official church.<sup>5</sup>

Even though they admired the moral teachings of Christianity and Jesus Christ, they acknowledged the existence of pluralistic society in the United States and rather persuaded a free religious marketplace where individuals would practice their own religion and no one would be considered a dissenter.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the religious liberty, not religious regulation, was thought to be the more effective bond in a pluralistic society. The Founding Fathers actually guaranteed the right for the non-religious to hold a public office in the Article 6 of the US Constitution: "*...no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.*"<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect that affected their decision-making was that the Founders were not united in their religious views. Some of them (such as Patrick Henry, Roger Sherman, John Hancock, and John Witherspoon) were Christians as we know them today - that is to say, believing in the core (biblical) principles of Christianity, such as Divinity of Christ, Virgin birth, Resurrection, and Original Sin, while others were either

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Constitution, amend. I.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 205.

<sup>5</sup> Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, 206.

<sup>6</sup> Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, 206.

<sup>7</sup> US Constitution, article VI



deists (George Washington, James Madison) or Unitarians (Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin) influenced by the Enlightenment movement. Being a deist or a Unitarian meant rejecting the miracles and other supernatural parts of Christianity that appeared illogical while keeping the belief in a more or less active God, or rather “Divine Providence” (the word God does not appear anywhere in the Constitution; nor does Jesus Christ). Then, as now, politicians approached the religious themes carefully and by appealing to “our Lord”<sup>8</sup> they did not necessarily mean Jehovah.

The most active Deist among the Founders was Thomas Jefferson, who was deeply suspicious of organized religion, persistently challenging the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. In fact, the myth of Biblical inerrancy was so disturbing to him that he decided to debunk it by publishing his own version of Bible in 1804. Using a razor, he re-arranged and expurgated the New Testament to leave out all references to the supernatural, such as Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the complexities of the crucifixion of Christ. Jefferson's work was literally a cut and paste job. He would only leave the matters that were, as he later claimed “as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.”<sup>9</sup> Ultimately he managed to reduce the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to just 46 pages that he cut out of two Bibles.<sup>10</sup> If Jefferson were to live today, such action would probably cause a public outrage among the right-minded public. The presidential campaign of 1800 was actually similarly marked by a Federalist attack on Jefferson's alleged atheism and caused his further alienation from the clergy. The book itself was published after Jefferson's death as “The Jefferson Bible,” though Jefferson originally entitled it “The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth”.

Historian Gregg Frazier goes even further to illustrate that “the political theology of the American Founding era was neither Christianity nor deism. The prevailing political theology of the time was theistic rationalism.”<sup>11</sup> According to Frazier, the Founders took elements of Christianity and elements of natural religion and mixed it with rationalism to keep only what they thought was reasonable and

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<sup>8</sup> See US Constitution, Article VII

<sup>9</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 372.

<sup>10</sup> Willard Sterne Randall, *Thomas Jefferson: A Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 555.

<sup>11</sup> Gregg L. Frazier, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 2.

rational, rejecting the rest. This hybrid, unlike the Deistic idea of God, developed a benevolent god who answered prayers to impart justice.<sup>12</sup>

That being said, America was not founded as a Christian nation simply because the new republic was not supposed to be theocratic or homogenous in terms of religion. There are at least two very significant documents validating this point – the first one is the letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists that contains the famous phrase “a wall of separation between church and state”.<sup>13</sup> In the letter Jefferson wrote “*I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church & State*” (even in this letter Jefferson avoided the usage of the name God or Christ, using “the common father and creator of man” instead).<sup>14</sup> The metaphor of the wall of separation has been cited repeatedly by the U.S. Supreme Court, even though this constitutional principle has not always been interpreted as absolute.

The second document addressing the separation of church and state is the Treaty of Tripoli. It was one of the many US treaties with the Muslim Barbary nations to ensure protection of American commercial ships in the Mediterranean, in which each country recognized the religion of the other to prevent further escalation of a religious war between Christian nations and Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Article XI of the Treaty of Tripoli, ratified by the US senate in 1797, stated:

*As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion as it has in itself no character of enmity [hatred] against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen [Muslims] and as the said States [America] have never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Frazier, *The Religious Beliefs of America's Founders*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> “A Wall of Separation,” Library of Congress, accessed February 22, 2013, <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danbury.html>

<sup>14</sup> “A Wall of Separation.”

<sup>15</sup> Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (Cranbury, NJ: Scholar's Bookshelf, 2005), 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifth Congress of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: William Ross, 1797), 43-44.

My point in this chapter is not to question the faith of the Founders. That is in fact irrelevant to my research. My point is to demonstrate that whatever they privately believed, publicly they chose to erect the wall of separation between church and state. Realizing how divisive religion could be, they issued the First Amendment that prescribed government without religion and religion without government. It is the fact they did not press their personal religious views on the citizens of the republic that makes their heritage timeless. In other words, no matter what they personally believed, it did not constitute the United States a Christian nation.

## 1.2. In God We Trust

If the Founding Fathers did not establish any official religion and their public attitude toward religion remained neutral, then why is it that the Christian symbolism penetrates politics so heavily these days? Who put the motto “In God We Trust” on US currency? And why is it that the Pledge of Allegiance contains the words “one nation under god”? Addressing each of these questions is necessary in order to fully understand the function of today’s sacrificial rhetoric.

First of all, the motto “In God We Trust” was firstly placed on United States coins largely because of the increased religious sentiment existing during the Civil War. Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, is said to have received many appeals from the devout throughout the country, urging that the United States recognize the Deity on United States coins. In 1861, Chase embraced the proposal and instructed James Pollock, Director of the Mint in Philadelphia, to prepare a motto that would acknowledge God’s protection of the country. In the letter to Pollock dated November 20, 1861, he explains that “...no nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, on January 18, 1837, the Congress passed the act that prescribed the mottoes to be placed upon the coins. “In God We Trust” first appeared on the 1864 two-cent coin.<sup>18</sup> Since then, the use of the motto has not been interrupted. It remains a mystery how the act avoided the conflict with the US Constitution and especially the First Amendment, given that it promotes theistic religion at the expense of non theistic religion and a secular lifestyle.

The situation around the national motto escalated in 1956 when the nation was going through hardships of Cold War and McCarthy’s hunt for Communists. In reaction to these threats, the Congress ordered to replace the existing, though unofficial motto “E pluribus unum (One out of many)” with the official “In God We Trust.” President Eisenhower, a devout Christian himself, signed the resolution on July 30, 1956, while encouraging Americans to turn to God and away from secularism: “*Our form of*

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<sup>17</sup> “History of ‘In God We Trust,” U.S. Department of Treasury, accessed February 22, 2013, <http://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/in-god-we-trust.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> “History of ‘In God We Trust.”

*government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious belief, and I don't care what it is.*"<sup>19</sup> Needless to say, a statement like this is very unconstitutional, reflecting a poor knowledge of the founding documents, since the US Constitution prohibits any kind of church-state relations.

The change of the motto was a response to the "threat" of godless Communism, as Communism was generally associated with atheism. The American electorate at the time considered atheism as unpatriotic and un-American as is Communism. As a "protection" against the diabolic ideology, "In God We Trust" was added to paper money in 1957.

This, however, did not stop Eisenhower on his quest to further Christianize public life in the US. On February 7, 1954, Eisenhower attended a sermon preached by Rev. George M. Docherty, pastor of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C.<sup>20</sup> In that sermon Docherty suggested that the words "under God" should be added to the Pledge of Allegiance:

*"There was something missing in the pledge, and that which was missing was the characteristics and definitive factor in the American way of life. Indeed apart from the mention of the phrase, the United States of America, it could be the pledge of any republic. In fact, I could hear little Muscovites repeat a similar pledge to their hammer and sickle flag in Moscow with equal solemnity."*<sup>21</sup>

The sermon had a great impact on those listening, including Eisenhower, who on June 14, 1954, signed the proposal into the law, officially adding the words "under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance. After the proposal was signed, Eisenhower publicly declared:

*From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty. To anyone who truly loves America, nothing could be more inspiring than to contemplate this rededication of our youth, on each school morning,*

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<sup>19</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Freedoms Foundation, Waldorf-Astoria, New York City, New York, 12/22/1952

<sup>20</sup> George M. Docherty, *One Way of Living* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1958), 158.

<sup>21</sup> Docherty, *One Way of Living*, 164.

*to our country's true meaning. . . . In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future.*<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the new version of the Pledge spoke on behalf of all Americans and their beliefs, assuming that everyone believed in a Deity (unmistakably the Judeo-Christian Deity). Such establishment of monotheistic faith appears as harsh and normative as the anti-religious measures in the former Soviet Russia that Rev. Docherty mentioned in his sermon. The addition of "under God" was thus always intended as an endorsement of particular religious and theistic beliefs and that is how it was perceived at the time. However, not only did the "Under God" promote a belief in a particular God, but it also taught that those without a particular belief are untrustworthy and inferior, which is both immoral and unconstitutional. Unfortunately, the current form of the Pledge survived many lawsuits attempting to rule it out as unconstitutional, as the Federal Court numerously ruled that the phrase invokes patriotism, not religious faith, and thus remains valid.<sup>23</sup> In my opinion it is unconstitutional to teach or even to try to suggest that patriotism is in any way linked to whether a person believes in one particular god or any god generally. Those today who would not accept the Pledge of Allegiance to include "one White Nation under God" or "one Nation under Jesus Christ" for the blatant discrimination, are the same people that refuse to acknowledge the comparable bigotry in their national motto.

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<sup>22</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill To Include the Words 'Under God' in the Pledge to the Flag," June 14, 1954.

<sup>23</sup> "Appeals Court Says 'Under God' Not a Prayer," SFGate, accessed February 24, 2013, <http://www.sfgate.com/nation/article/Appeals-Court-says-Under-God-not-a-prayer-3196948.php>

### 1.3. The Case of the National Day of Prayer

What the situation in 1861 and 1954 has in common with today's political atmosphere is indeed the prominent role of Christianity. It was mentioned before that there was an increased religious sentiment during the Civil War in 1861, as well as in the Cold War hardships of 1954. The war times represent marginal situations for every human society, because the confrontation with death (be it either one's own death or the death of others) constitutes the most important marginal situation. In his book *The Sacred Canopy*, Professor Peter L. Berger explains that *"there are events affecting entire societies or social groups that provide massive threats to the reality previously taken for granted. Such situations may occur as the result of natural catastrophe, war, or social upheaval. At such times religious legitimations almost invariably come to the front. Furthermore, whenever a society must motivate its members to kill or to risk their lives, thus consenting to being placed in extreme marginal situations, religious legitimations become important."*<sup>24</sup>

Such political and social upheavals, alias marginal situations, were in the United States closely linked with the Christian awakening. Moreover, the US history has shown that the official expression of violence (e.g. in war) is almost invariably accompanied by religious symbolism and rhetoric. Using the case of National Day of Prayer to outline this phenomenon, it seems that the most turbulent times in the history of the country have two common denominators – the state of war and the Christian "renaissance." Indeed, the first version of what later became the National Day of Prayer appeared in 1863, when Abraham Lincoln officially designated April 30, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. In the proclamation appointing the holiday, he openly revealed the nature of the relationship between the two events, stating:

*...by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?*

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<sup>24</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 44.

*...Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!.. I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.*<sup>25</sup>

The National Day of Prayer was institutionalized in 1952 by President Harry Truman, who signed a bill proclaiming the National Day of Prayer into law. This was in the wake of the tough Cold War period when the war in Korea stalemated. In the official proclamation Truman insisted that *"in times of national crisis we stand in special need of divine support,"*<sup>26</sup> and that all Americans should turn to God (unmistakably the Judeo-Christian Deity; see the references below) in prayer and meditation – *"I do hereby proclaim Friday, July 4, 1952, as a National Day of Prayer, on which all of us, in our churches, in our homes, and in our hearts, may beseech God to grant us wisdom to know the course which we should follow, and strength and patience to pursue that course steadfastly. May we also give thanks to Him for His constant watchfulness over us in every hour of national prosperity and national peril."*<sup>27</sup> There are several reasons why the National Day of Prayer violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

First, it is a federal statute, which was passed in 1952 at the direct suggestion of Rev. Billy Graham, who was invited to hold a revival in Washington, D.C. in early 1952. In an act of Congress, the young evangelist Graham was allowed to conduct a worship service on the Capitol steps on Sunday, February 3, bringing "the Lord Jesus Christ" to the nation.<sup>28</sup>

Second, in the late 1970s (during the Vietnam War) an evangelical group called the National Prayer Committee was formed to govern the National Day of Prayer. This self-proclaimed governing body made up of evangelical leaders from across the USA, "centering on the Lord Jesus Christ", urges people "to join us in praying for the nation

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<sup>25</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Proclamation 97 - Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer," March 30, 1863.

<sup>26</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Proclamation 2978 - National Day of Prayer, 1952," June 17, 1952.

<sup>27</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Proclamation 2978 - National Day of Prayer, 1952," June 17, 1952.

<sup>28</sup> "A Legacy of Revival in the Nation's Capital," Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, accessed February 24, 2013, <http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=6012>



and to work in their spheres of influence to join Jesus in calling Christians to prayer for revival in our land.<sup>29</sup> To further their cause, they eventually created an organization called the National Day of Prayer Task Force, which is dedicated to organizing and promoting prayer observances conforming to a Judeo-Christian system of values.<sup>30</sup> Even though people of all denominations of Christianity and of all other religions are welcome to participate in the events (usually held at the city halls across the nation), the worships are exclusively evangelical Christian.

Third, the official themes for the National Day of Prayer are solely Biblical. The following is a chart of the themes of recent years:

2006: "Honor God" from 1 Samuel 2:30

2007: "America, Unite in Prayer" from 2 Chronicles 7:14

2008: "Prayer! America's Strength and Shield" from Psalm 28:7

2009: "Prayer... America's Hope," from Psalm 33:22

2010: "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway," from Proverbs 8:34

2011: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," from Psalm 91:2, stating: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

2012: "Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the Lord." From Psalm 33:12

The next president to use the National Day of Prayer to justify the "war culture" and its sacrifices was George W. Bush in 2004, the second year of the military invasion of Iraq. In his message he also recognizes the relationship between the state of war and religious legitimations. *"On this National Day of Prayer, we pray especially for the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who are serving around the world to defend the cause of liberty. We are grateful for their courage and sacrifice and ask God to comfort their families while they are away from home. We also pray that*

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<sup>29</sup> "National Prayer Committee," Mission America, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.missionamerica.org/Brix?pageID=22186>

<sup>30</sup> "National Day of Prayer Task Force," National Day of Prayer Task Force, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://nationaldayofprayer.org/>

*the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, and throughout the Greater Middle East, may live in safety and freedom.”*<sup>31</sup>

His proclamation fully confirms what Peter L. Berger assumes to be a psychological dependency on having “a good, meaningful death.” Killing under the auspices of the legitimate authorities has, according to Berger, been in close touch with religious paraphernalia and ritualism, because men going to war face the ecstasy of violence and fear. It is the prayers and blessings (and other incantations) that keep them sane within the realms of the social reality.<sup>32</sup> Religion thus serves in times of war as a world-maintaining force. When the whole society acknowledges the existence of a religiously-legitimated world, the authorities in power (having religious monopoly in education and law) have to constantly re-confirm the reality of this world – this involves its territorial protection, and extension if feasible (through the Crusades and Holy Wars).<sup>33</sup> What is more, the effort to usurp the religious monopoly in education affects students earlier than one would care to admit.

Let me digress here for a second to explain what I mean by “religious monopoly in education.” Working for a non-profit organization based in Newark, New Jersey last spring, I discovered that the local Boys and Girls Club members had to follow an official code established by their mentors. The code was pinned to the wall in the main hallway; its heading carried the official logo of the club and the headline read “Boys and Girls Clubs Code” (as if this was a universal creed of the organization). There were four statements the kids had to officially acknowledge provided they wanted to stay in the club. The first and the most important one said “I believe in God and the right to worship according to my own religion,” followed by “I believe in America and the American way of life in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.” To make this clear – the kids at the club were mainly preschoolers who could not read and write, yet the club administration felt the need to speak on their behalf. It did not surprise me later that the creed originated in 1955 and its author, Aaron Fahringer, scripted it to celebrate the “character development” that has been the cornerstone of the Boys and Girls Club experience. The creeds mentioned above would be the first step in the process of re-

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<sup>31</sup> George W. Bush, "Proclamation 7780 - National Day of Prayer, 2004," April 30, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 48.

confirming the taken-for-granted reality, while the presidential proclamations would represent its peak, since they both target a specific audience with the intention to usurp the religious monopoly and maintain uniformity.

The current president of the United States, Barack Obama, who, just like his predecessor, fueled the 2012 National Day of Prayer proclamation with the sacrificial rhetoric: *“Let us also pay tribute to the men and women of our Armed Forces who have answered our country's call to serve with honor in the pursuit of peace. Our grateful Nation is humbled by the sacrifices made to protect and defend our security and freedom. Let us pray for the continued strength and safety of our service members and their families. While we pause to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice defending liberty, let us remember and lend our voices to the principles for which they fought -- unity, human dignity, and the pursuit of justice.”*<sup>34</sup>

Despite the overwhelming evidence that would rule the holiday unconstitutional, the National Day of Prayer has become a prominent day in the American public life. The Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF), advocating the idea of the separation of church and state, was the first organization to sue the designation of a National Day of Prayer. On October 3, 2008, the Wisconsin-based organization filed suit in a federal court in Madison, naming as defendants President George W. Bush; White House press secretary Dana Perino; Wisconsin governor Jim Doyle; and evangelist Shirley Dobson, the chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. On April 15, 2010, the U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb even ruled that the statute establishing the National Day of Prayer was unconstitutional as “its sole purpose is to encourage all citizens to engage in prayer, an inherently religious exercise that serves no secular function in this context.”<sup>35</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice then filed a notice to appeal the ruling and on April 14, 2011 a panel at the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously overruled Crabb's decision, stating that *“the President is free to make appeals to the public based on many kinds of grounds, including political and religious, and that such requests do not obligate citizens to comply and do not*

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<sup>34</sup> Barack Obama, "Proclamation 8812 - National Day of Prayer, 2012," May 1, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> "Federal Judge: National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional," The Christian Science Monitor, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2010/0415/Federal-judge-National-Day-of-Prayer-is-unconstitutional>

*encroach on citizens' rights.*"<sup>36</sup> In other words, the federal government could declare the "National Day of Anti-Semitism" or even grant Christianity the status of being the official religion, but no one has to "pass by" those declarations.<sup>37</sup>

The recent US presidents, unlike the Founding Fathers, have started to express their personal religious beliefs with particular delight, issuing various religious decrees since the 1950s, deliberately violating the Establishment clause of the First Amendment. The most suspicious circumstances accompanying the National Day of Prayer revolve around the fact that the holiday originated at the direct suggestion of the elite evangelical pastors in the country who later exerted pressure to govern the event (through The National Day of Prayer Task Force). The Task Force's stated goal is to pressure all state governors, mayors and county executives to issue their own National Day of Prayer proclamations and organize prayer gatherings.

It is no coincidence that the leaders of the organization are regular guests to the White House. Many presidential proclamations have invoked various myths, such as that George Washington knelt in prayer in the snow in Valley Forge, for which there is no existing evidence. All presidential proclamations have instructed "all Americans" to observe a National Day of Prayer. All the presidential proclamations have also instructed citizens not only to pray and to set aside a day to pray, but have told them what to pray about. George W. Bush was the first president to regularly host the National Day of Prayer observances (chaired by the NDP Task Force) at the White House, featuring a litany of Christian Fundamentalist leaders. Before that time, the official White House Observances were held during the administrations of President Ronald Reagan (who escalated the Cold War and ordered a massive military buildup), and President George H. W. Bush (who ended the Cold War and launched the Gulf War).<sup>38</sup> As for the speakers at such events, the Task Force requires volunteer prayer coordinators and speakers to sign a fundamentalist statement of faith that declares that "the Holy Bible is the inerrant Word of The Living God" and that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only One by which I can obtain salvation and have an ongoing

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<sup>36</sup> "National Day of Prayer: Unconstitutional?," CBS News, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/04/14/ap/national/main20054020.shtml>

<sup>37</sup> see Judge Barbara B. Crabb Ruling at [http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/dayofprayer\\_standing.PDF](http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/dayofprayer_standing.PDF), accessed February 27, 2013

<sup>38</sup> National Day of Prayer Task Force Knocks Obama White House, US News, accessed February 28, 2013, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/god-and-country/2009/05/04/national-day-of-prayer-task-force-knocks-obama-white-house>

relationship with God.”<sup>39</sup> This itself a very discriminative utterance that excludes all the other religions from public life in the United States, but Franklin Graham, 1999 & 2010 Honorary Chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force, took an even firmer stance on the religious tolerance in the country - after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Graham called Islam a “very evil and wicked religion” and in 2012 he claimed his dedication to “make a difference in Christ’s Name for as many American troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan as possible.” Moreover, on May 1, 2012, he also announced on his websites: *“I urge you to stand with me against those who want to destroy any symbol of the religious heritage that made America so great. Christians who care about our troops need to write positive letters to those in authority in support of ministry to service members on military bases. If we don’t take a stand on issues like these, freedom of religion will continue to disappear in the United States.”*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See the “Statement of Faith,” National Day of Prayer, accessed February 27, 2013, <http://nationaldayofprayer.org/volunteer/>

<sup>40</sup> “Making a Difference for Military Members,” Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, accessed February 27, 2013 <http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=8648>

## 1.4. The Bible vs. the US Constitution

That being said, there is enough evidence to prove that the recent US presidents had been in their decision-making strongly influenced by the elite evangelical fundamentalists, who sought to turn the concept of religious freedom, granted in the US Constitution, upside down to further their cause of the religious/Christian uniformity. Not only does the constant public affirmation of Christian faith being the only way of obtaining the salvation escalate religious intolerance, both in the US and abroad, but it also forcefully aims to diminish and erase other forms of religion/spirituality, which becomes extremely dangerous especially in times of war.

Aside from this, the likes of Rev. Franklin Graham, who claim that America was built on Judeo-Christian principles, rarely bother to explain their reasoning. Once asked what these principles were, President Harry Truman remarked “The fundamental basis for all government is in the Bible. It started with Moses on the mountain...”<sup>41</sup>

The story of Moses reminding the Israelites of the need for exclusive allegiance to one God comes from the Book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Hebrew Bible. This book includes the set of rules commonly known as the Ten Commandments (the code also appears in the Book of Exodus). Using the Protestant version of the Code, I am going to demonstrate how distant is this book when compared to the US Constitution that is supposedly based on it.

The First Commandment – *“I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me”*<sup>42</sup> - violates the First Amendment’s guarantee of free exercise of religion, but it also conflicts with Article VI of the Constitution. The Constitution specifically says that it, not God, is the supreme law of the land, and all the power comes from the people of the United States.

The Second Commandment – *“You shall not make for yourself an idol; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God punishing the children for the iniquity of the parents until the third or fourth generation”*<sup>43</sup> – conflicts with the First Amendment again. The US citizens can make as many idols as they want, while the Constitution also directly

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<sup>41</sup> Michael T Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the founding of Israel* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 34.

<sup>42</sup> Deuteronomy 5:7, New American Standard

<sup>43</sup> Deuteronomy 5:8, New American Standard

prohibits punishing children for their parents' crimes, as illustrated in Article III: "No attainder of treason shall work a corruption of blood."<sup>44</sup> If one is found guilty of a crime, he is the only recipient of the punishment, not their children and definitely not their grand and great-grandchildren.

The Third Commandment – "*Thou shall not take the name of thy Lord thy God in vain*"<sup>45</sup> – infringes the First Amendment in two instances, "*Congress shall make no law respecting an **establishment of religion**, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging **the freedom of speech**, or of the press.*"<sup>46</sup> (emphasis mine)

The Fourth Commandment – "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You shall do no work neither shall your male or female slave.*"<sup>47</sup> Most importantly, the fourth commandment sanctions slavery, which had had an extreme influence on the history of slavery in the United States and ultimately led to the Civil War. Especially Southern planters often cited the Bible as their justification for having slaves (for more details see the Bible Belt region in which conservative evangelical Protestantism plays a key role).

That was just a fraction of all the discrepancies between the two texts. So, as I stated above, there is a fundamental conflict between the two texts. What is more, those who still want to stress that the United States was based on very profound Judeo-Christian ethics such as "You shall not murder," or "You shall not steal," should realize that these principles did not arise from Christianity, but represent very fundamental principles that emerged long before Christ. In Buddhism, there is a basic code of ethics, called The Five Precepts, which traditionally encourages people to abstain from harming living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, and intoxication. These are known to have originated before the birth of the Buddha (around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC). They are formulated as imperatives:

- To abstain from taking life.
- To abstain from taking what is not given.
- To abstain from going wrong about sensuous pleasures.
- To abstain from false speech.

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<sup>44</sup> U.S. Constitution, article III

<sup>45</sup> Deuteronomy 5:11, New American Standard

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Constitution, amend. I.

<sup>47</sup> Deuteronomy 5:12, New American Standard

- To abstain from intoxicants as tending to cloud the mind.<sup>48</sup>

Returning back to the current political situation in the States, how come it is the Judeo-Christian principles, and for instance not the Buddhist ones, that politicians blatantly revere and use to fuel their debates, encouraging millions of Americans to pray and make a sacrifice to their country? Aside from geo-politics, a very plain answer to this would be – try to make a Buddhist go to war. Since Buddhism does not adhere to the idea of one supreme God or atonement achieved through sacrifice, it would be extremely difficult to persuade such a follower to go. In contrast with Buddhism, Christendom freely employed military violence against the unbelievers both outside its gates and inside them. There were the Crusades, the Pogroms, and the Inquisitions resulting in massive slaughters of communities with different customs. Peter L. Berger asserts that “...religious history is understood in evolutionistic terms, with Christianity interpreted as the ‘highest religion’ because of its supposedly unique features. There is a romantic (and pietistic) fascination with the human figure of Jesus. There is an optimistic conception of Christian ethics as furnishing a set of positive values both for the individual and for culture...”<sup>49</sup> From this point of view, one can suggest that it is intolerable for Christians to approve of any other religion because it would mean abandoning the “righteous path” of salvation as presented in the story of Christ. Approving of other religions might be a step backwards for a believer, allowing the possibility of being wrong. After all, evangelism is nothing more than a mere preaching to the individuals that are seen inferior by Christians in order to bring them onto the right path (I would go as far as to say to “civilize” them).

In the pluralistic society functioning as the marketplace of ideas, Christianity surely deserves its place as one of the many contenders. Since religion is constitutionally cherished as a private business of an individual, the government should treat it as such. The problem is that Christian theology does not acknowledge any competition, as the ultimate goal of evangelism is to bring all humans to Christ. That is exactly why the key members of the US government, well aware of this, encourage militant evangelical leaders to speak at the public events to reveal the

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<sup>48</sup> Edward Conze, *Buddhism, its essence and development* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Bros.), 1959.

<sup>49</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 159.



“proper” relationship between believers and government, breaking down the wall of separation between church and state. Biblically speaking, the government is shielded by the Word of God and every citizen should submit to their government the same way they submit to God. Apostle Paul argued that there is no authority except from God, and that those which exist are established by God. All human authority is also delegated to men by God and no one has authority independent of God. He has instituted human government to exercise divinely delegated authority over men – *“..for it (government) is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword in vain; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”*<sup>50</sup>

In other words, every government, democratic or autocratic, heathen or God-fearing, that has the power to rule over its people has been granted that power and authority by God. This reason alone should be sufficient for believers (and non-believers as well) to submit and obey the laws created by the government. Government should praise those who do good while punishing those who do evil – therefore one who is serving God need not question the government, because it is only the law-breakers who look over their shoulder, wondering what the policies mean. Since God has given the government the power to deal with evil, its citizens should leave it to the government to “bear the sword” to avenge the evil deeds. This is why the government fostered by Christian theology forms a perfect administrative body that seeks religious and social uniformity (and submissiveness). This is why men like Franklin Graham are sought out by presidents and powerful political figures – to bring people to God and to control their votes. In 2005, Congressman Randy Forbes of Virginia began unifying other Congressional Members and leaders to stand against public atheism, the “national threat”, believing that through trust in God, prayer, and “strategic” action they can preserve and protect their religious freedom. For that Congressman Forbes obtained a strategic room in the Capitol, Room 219, in which Congressional Members could convene before every session to pray for the country and for the Divine wisdom and intervention in the government affairs. These members later formed the Congressional Prayer Caucus – an official caucus of the U.S. Congress

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<sup>50</sup> Romans 13:4, New American Standard

– to formally acknowledge the important role of God in American life.<sup>51</sup> This is not a conspiracy theory but rather a clear message that the political leaders, including President Obama, want to get across – there is no room for other religions.

Bizarrely enough, there is seemingly no bottom line in punishing the ones the divinely appointed government finds evil, because the authorities have the right to protect the citizens by wielding the “sword” in warfare. Numbers 25:8-13 is one of many Biblical accounts where killing was required to eradicate sin: *The Lord said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the Lord’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel.”*<sup>52</sup> It is clear that in the Old Testament God commanded nations into war (especially Israel). Above all, the book of Deuteronomy speaks the most ferociously against foreign religions and non-believers. As a non-believer, I might be accused of the misinterpretation of the Scripture; however, the next passages are very straightforward and leave no room for speculations over the context.

God warns against worshipping other gods:

*“If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.”*<sup>53</sup>

God commands Israel to go to war (Laws of Welfare):

*“Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for*

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<sup>51</sup> See “Find Room 219: Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation” at <http://findroom219.com/>, accessed February 28, 2013

<sup>52</sup> Numbers 25:4, New American Standard

<sup>53</sup> Deuteronomy 13:6, New American Standard

*the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”<sup>54</sup>*

God orders to destroy the cities and kill the non-combatant population:

*“Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.”<sup>55</sup>*

The New Testaments tends to refrain from speaking harshly of other religions and nations; however, there are a few instances where Jesus approves of using violence under certain circumstances. He addressed issues on the personal level of violence, encouraging individuals to be active in self-defense. In Matthew 10:34 Jesus claims he is going to bring a sword (metaphorically) to Earth on the Day of Judgment to resolve a conflict between believers and unbelievers:

*“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”<sup>56</sup>*

Jesus instructing his disciples to get a sword in preparing them for the problems that were to come:

*“And He said to them - But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. They said, Lord, look, here are two swords. And He said to them - It is enough.”<sup>57</sup>*

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<sup>54</sup> Deuteronomy 20:3-4, New American Standard

<sup>55</sup> Deuteronomy 20:16-17, New American Standard

<sup>56</sup> Matthew 10:34, New American Standard

<sup>57</sup> Luke 22:36-38, New American Standard

## 1.5. The Shift

My work, nonetheless, focuses on the role of Christianity in current American wars in the post-9/11 period that is remarkable for the shift of the sacrificial rhetoric and the inevitable reintroduction of an old conflict between Christendom and Islam. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, reverend Billy Graham stated that "*the God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's a different God and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion.*"<sup>58</sup> This is the same Billy Graham who helped to institutionalize the National Day of Prayer in the 1950s; the same Billy Graham who helped George Bush senior create a strategic rhetoric to win more votes among conservative evangelical Christians; the same Billy Graham who G. W. Bush described as the main person to bring him back to Christ (Bush is a so called "born-again Christian").<sup>59</sup>

I already explained that G. W. Bush had engaged in promoting the Christian faith because of his deep spiritual conviction. Bush's personal faith helped prompt his interest in promoting his "compassionate conservatism" and the faith-based initiative as part of his new administration. Indeed, Bush used religious language more than any president in U.S. history, and some of his key speechwriters came from the evangelical community. Nevertheless, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks Bush's compassionate conservatism and faith-based initiative took on a new tone, no longer speaking plainly about a personal salvation, but biblical themes of good and evil<sup>60</sup> – "*On this day of faith, I've never had more faith in America than I have right now. We will rid the world of the evil-doers.*"<sup>61</sup> Somehow, George W. Bush became convinced that he was appointed by God to lead the United States to a moral battle between good and evil, and that those who are not with the United States are on the wrong side of this divine confrontation.<sup>62</sup> In response to the attacks, the President also publicly stressed that the United States was on a mission, a crusade to fight the terrorism – "*This is a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to*

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<sup>58</sup> Muslim Public Affairs Council, MPAC News, 19 November 2001, quoting Graham from remarks on `NBC Nightly News` on 16 November 2001

<sup>59</sup> *The Jesus Factor*, directed by Raney Aronson (2004; WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston).

<sup>60</sup> Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion," *Sojourners Magazine* (September 2003): 20.

<sup>61</sup> "Remarks by the President Upon Arrival," The White House Archives, accessed March 21, 2013 <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>

<sup>62</sup> Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion," 22.

*understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.*"<sup>63</sup> Moreover, addressing a joint session of Congress and the American People on September 20, 2001 Bush appeared very positive that God sides with the United States – *"The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them."*<sup>64</sup>

The problem here is not that every Christian longs to be faithful to Christ; the problem here is a president who believes that his nation is on a Lord-given righteous crusade. Sanctioning violence and bigotry can be a lethal weapon in the hands of government. In his article "Dangerous Religion" Jim Wallis, Christian writer and the founder of Sojourners magazine, accuses Bush of "bad theology." Wallis explains that *"to fail to speak of evil in the world today is to engage in bad theology. But to speak of "they" being evil and "we" being good, to say that evil is all out there and that in the warfare between good and evil others are either with us or against us—that is also bad theology. Unfortunately, it has become the Bush theology."*<sup>65</sup>

The "Bush theology" deserves to be examined on biblical grounds for it oddly combines the elements of Christian faith with American nationalism and civil religion. It presents a hybrid that became a widely-accepted model of nationalistic religion of the USA, supported by the president. There is a real threat that the tradition of nationalistic religion might launch the theologically presumptuous, messianic, arrogant and idolatrous form of American foreign policy that other nations would have to follow should they wish to remain on the "right side" of the divine conflict. It is simply bad theology for American Christians to presumptively assume the role of Messiah for the rest of the world and in the next chapters I am going to explain why.

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<sup>63</sup> "Remarks by the President Upon Arrival."

<sup>64</sup> "Address to a joint session of Congress and the American People," The White House Archives, accessed March 21, 2013 <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

<sup>65</sup> Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion," 23.

## 2. War Culture and Sacrifices

### 2.1. The Just War Theory

The war in Afghanistan has already become America's longest military conflict. The other "overseas contingency operations" launched by the United States and its allies, which have replaced the "global war on terror," promise to last even longer and determine the shape of what has been called the post-post-Cold War era.

The crusade, as G. W. Bush called the post 9/11 invasions, thus marches on. The Obama administration has continued the wars started by its predecessor under the new name of "overseas contingency operations." Today, the United States and its allies are fighting wars in the predominantly Muslim countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. In his book, *Crusade 2.0: The West's Resurgent War on Islam*, John Feffer discloses that Obama launched "eight times more CIA-directed drone attacks in Pakistan than its predecessor did over two terms."<sup>66</sup> Feffer is convinced that what really keeps the new "Crusaders" in Afghanistan and Iraq is the growing political influence of mainstream Islam. He insists that "to mobilize young people to fight, Western governments needed a flesh-and-blood enemy. The more epic the enemy, the grander the war."<sup>67</sup>

President Bush might have engaged in bad theology when declaring the war on Afghanistan, but his speech was constructed to a nicety, providing a liberal license to proactively fight wars under the cover of a moral authority. A crusade does not only consist of a defensive war, but also extends its blessings to proactive measures. Advocates of crusades perceive a war as a situation where God supports the crusaders and their cause, while opposing their enemies. When the warfare is viewed as a struggle of forces of good and evil, then the means of war become unrestrained, since Crusaders do not believe in the ethics of proportionality. Such approach promotes the merciless total war, where all resources (military, civilian, and material) of one side are mobilized against the whole society of the other side. A total war ignores the non-combatant population and extremely increases the death toll. The crusaders believe

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<sup>66</sup> John Feffer, *Crusade 2.0: The West's Resurgent War on Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011), 14.

<sup>67</sup> John Feffer, *Crusade 2.0: The West's Resurgent War on Islam*, 14.

that they are punishing the wicked (Islam equals wicked, evil religion according to Billy Graham) under a divine moral authority.<sup>68</sup>

I am using the term “Crusaders” because I think it best describes the approach that the United States took to reply to the September 11 attacks. There are three major approaches that Christians should consider before responding to a violent attack, as issues of war and violence are pivotal questions that each Christian must address at some point in their life. Life is sacred but so could be a cause. It is therefore important for Christians to reason about war to choose a strategy that could be morally justified. The three major approaches within the church could be categorized as one of the following platforms: Pacifism, Just War theory, and the Crusaders.

Pacifism encourages Christians to stay out of warfare, answering the aggression only in a non-violent form. Martin Luther King would be the American high-profile example of this approach.

The Just War theory on the other hand contains a set of criteria that must be used to gauge whether the particular war is just or not. The Just War philosophy allows Christians to participate in a defensive war provided their actions adhere to the prescribed rules (all of them) for a moral war. The Just War is not actually a written law, but an interpretation of a moral standard. Here is the short summary of the criteria gathered by a Christian theologian Glenn H. Stassen:

1. Probability of *success*: To kill and maim many people is wrong even for a just cause, if after all the deaths the cause will be lost anyhow.
2. Just *cause*: War may be fought only to protect innocent life, preserve conditions necessary for decent human existence, and secure basic human rights against a real and certain danger.
3. Last *resort*: All peaceful alternatives must have been exhausted.
4. Just *authority*: War may be declared only by those with responsibility for public order (in the US it is the Congress). There should be international responsibility,

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<sup>68</sup> Joseph L Allen, *WAR: A Primer for Christians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) 9-12.

such as the United Nations or a representative regional organization. A revolutionary war can be begun only by leadership truly representative of the people.

5. *Just means*: War must not directly attack noncombatants but only military targets.
6. *Cost proportionality*: The cost of the war to the people and to the international community must not exceed the good if it is fought.
7. *Just intention*: The purpose of war may not be conquest, enslavement, revenge, or an ideological crusade but only the pursuit of peace and justice. Unconditional surrender must be avoided.
8. *Announcement*: The intention to make war and its just causes must be clearly announced, so that the adversary is aware of the seriousness of the situation and of what it must do to avoid war, and so that the people can judge its justice.<sup>69</sup>

Christian theorist Christopher B. Watkins provides a deeper insight into the Crusaders viewpoint in his paper *Christian War Ethics and the Just War Philosophy*. He suggests that just like the Just War philosophers, the Crusaders also believe there might be times when a war is morally justified. A crusade is, however, not only a defensive war, but it also extends to proactive measures to abolish the evil and the Crusaders typically seek the “just punishment.” The probability of success is the only governing criterion for them. Such approach promotes the aforementioned total war, where all resources (military, civilian, and material) of one side are mobilized against the whole society of the other side.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 232.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher B. Watkins, “*Christian War Ethics and the Just War Philosophy*,” Chris Watkins Publications, accessed March 11, 2013, <http://www.chris.watkins.name/publications/JustWar.pdf>



Let me analyze the situation from the American Christians' perspective now. If I put the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to the test, regardless of what George W. Bush claimed, I will still have to conclude that both wars are actually governed by the "Crusaders" strategy, because they violate several criteria of the Just War Theory. Let me start with the war in Afghanistan.

The first violation of the Just War criteria is related to the concepts of Just *means* and *proportionality*. By conservative estimate, at least 16,725 Afghan civilians have been killed directly by the war's violence. According to the extensive database, Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing, between 3,100-3,600 civilians were killed directly by the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom bombing and Special Forces attacks between October 2001 and June 2003. According to the Guardian it is possible that up to 20,000 Afghans may have died during the first four months of the U.S. airstrikes.<sup>71</sup> There is no official figure for the overall number of civilian casualties. However, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported that 2,118 civilians were killed as a result of the armed conflicts in 2008.<sup>72</sup> A year before that, President Hamid Karzai accused the US-led military coalition of "extreme" use of force.<sup>73</sup> Economically speaking, Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz estimated that the financial cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq will amount to at least 3 trillion dollars. In 2007, the wars cost the United States approximately 16 billion dollars a month, which equals the entire annual budget of the United Nations.<sup>74</sup> Even under the Obama administration, the numbers were only increasing. Both wars employed sub-contracting military companies to an extent never seen before. For example, a Virginia-based private company called Vinnel Corporation is paid by the U.S. administration to train the local and foreign armies. By 2010 the revenue of sub-contracting companies exceeded 202 billion dollars.<sup>75</sup> All these numbers are extremely alarming and the amount of violence to civilians in Afghanistan is far from proportional.

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<sup>71</sup> "Forgotten Victims," The Guardian, accessed March 24, 2013,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/may/20/afghanistan.comment>

<sup>72</sup> "2,100 civilians killed in Afghanistan in 2008," ABC News, accessed March 24, 2013,

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-02-04/2100-civilians-killed-in-afghanistan-in-2008-un/282520>

<sup>73</sup> Karzai Decries Civilian Deaths," The Washington Post, accessed March 24, 2013,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/23/AR2007062300355.html>

<sup>74</sup> Linda Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 7.

<sup>75</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Sorrows of Empire* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 55.

The fact that the Afghanistan war is the longest in the US history speaks volumes about its just *cause*. On one hand, I firmly believe that the US had started the conflict as the war of self-defense. After all, Taliban, partnering with Al-Qaeda, refused to meet any of the conditions proposed by the Americans, such as delivering Al-Qaeda leaders to the United States. All peacemaking efforts were exhausted. On the other hand, President Bush in 2001 obviously underestimated the adversary and did not send enough troops into the conflict. The terrain and guerilla attacks presented a challenge bigger than he had expected. As a result, the war stalemated and the coalition, though outnumbering the guerillas heavily, was unable to move forward. In 2009 Obama ordered 33,000 more troops to deploy to Afghanistan to take the initiative. The cost of winning was already too high for the number of troops and resources that were needed to achieve it. Even with the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, the victory was still insecure and the Al-Qaeda members relocated elsewhere (Pakistan etc). The continuation of the war in Afghanistan thus cannot be justified.

The same unfortunately applies to the war in Iraq, where the Just War theory was most likely violated more than twice. Shortly after the September 11 attacks, the US government accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of harboring Al-Qaeda, but no meaningful evidence was ever found. After years, it became obvious that President Bush had appointed Donald Rumsfeld to come up with a plan to overthrow the Iraqi government. Rumsfeld's secret memos (dated Nov 27, 2001) leaked out years after the initial phase of the invasion to reveal that Rumsfeld and his team fabricated several possible justifications for a US-Iraq War. One section of the memo questions "How to start (the war)?" outlining various scenarios. "US discovers Saddam connections to Sept. 11 attacks or to anthrax attacks?" reads one of them. "Disputes over WMD inspections?" suggests another.<sup>76</sup> The US then blatantly accused Iraq of possessing biological weapons, for which they never found any meaningful evidence. In his affected speech at the United Nations in 2003, Bush stated that "*we know that Iraq, in the late 1990s, had several mobile biological weapons labs,*"<sup>77</sup> which was enough for the UN to ratify the military invasion of Iraq. Independent studies have shown that

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<sup>76</sup> "Building momentum for regime change: Rumsfeld's Secret Memos," NBC News, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://tv.msnbc.com/2013/02/16/building-momentum-for-regime-change-rumsfelds-secret-memos/>

<sup>77</sup> "Bush knew Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction," Salon, accessed March 26, 2013, [http://www.salon.com/2007/09/06/bush\\_wmd/](http://www.salon.com/2007/09/06/bush_wmd/)

Bush made 935 false statements about Iraq, desperately trying to persuade the public that there was a direct link between Al-Qaeda and Hussein's regime. That eventually became a widely accepted fact. On at least 532 separate occasions (in speeches, briefings, interviews, testimony, etc) Bush and his three key officials, along with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and White House press secretaries Ari Fleischer and Scott McClellan, stated unequivocally that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and links to Al-Qaeda.<sup>78</sup> This is simply unjustifiable and in direct conflict with the Just *Cause* criteria.

In terms of *means* and *proportionality*, the Bloomberg School of Public Health at John Hopkins University counted the number of war-related dead in Iraq from 2002-2006 at 650,000<sup>79</sup>, which is several times higher than in Afghanistan. Also, reports of rape, sodomy, physical and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners held in Abu Ghraib prison came to public attention in 2004, when a series of disturbing pictures of 17 US soldiers torturing the prisoners was leaked. In 2013, the total cost of the Iraq War was then estimated to have been 1.7 trillion dollars by the Watson Institute of International Studies at Boston University, excessively draining US economy.<sup>80</sup> I could argue that the war in Iraq also violates the principles of the just *intention* and *announcement*, but this is not point of my thesis. While the war is still under way, destabilizing the Middle East under the pretense of "the global war on terrorism," its result and goals remain unclear and I believe it cannot be justified on the grounds of means and proportionality.

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<sup>78</sup> "935 Iraq Falsehoods," The Washington Post, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/01/23/BL2008012301758.html>

<sup>79</sup> Kelly Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation* (Oakville, Conn.: Equinox Pub., 2011), 198.

<sup>80</sup> "Iraq War hits U.S. Economy," Reuters, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/03/02/us-usa-economy-iraq-idUSN2921527420080302?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&sp=true>

## 2.2. Meeting War Culture

*I have tried every day since my son died to make his sacrifice meaningful. Casey died for a country that cares more about who will be the next American Idol rather than how many people will be killed in the next few months.*<sup>81</sup>

– Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq

Proving that both wars are unjust in terms of Christian theology, I want to proceed to question the impulses between Christian notions of sacrifice and military sacrificial framework, for the US Christianity still strangely enables the national idolization of security and death. Militarization does not stand apart as an isolated element in American culture. It has actually become its driving influence to create a phenomenon called a “war-culture”. Kelly Denton-Borhaug, my former professor of Christian theology at Moravian College defines the war-culture as “*the normalized interpretation of the institutions, ethos, and practices of war with ever-increasing facets of daily human life, economy, institutions, and imagination in the United States.*”<sup>82</sup> The description provided by Henry A. Giroux is also striking: “*More than America’s matchless material abundance or even the effusions of its pop culture, the nation’s arsenal of high tech weaponry and the soldiers who employ that arsenal have come to signify who we are and what we stand for...*”<sup>83</sup> One can also define war culture as a profound attempt to militarize everyday life through various institutions that are permeated by militarized values, goals, and experience.

Indeed, war culture directly fuses with consumerism and everyday life in the United States – the biggest food corporations (such as Starbucks, Coca-Cola), automakers (Hummer/General Motors), entertainment industries (Disney; my favorite Disney propaganda film was Donald Duck in Nutzi Land from 1942), and even the most prestigious universities (by 2002 almost 350 colleges and universities conducted a Pentagon-funded research) support the military complex in one way or another. Over 47,000 contractors and over 100,000 subcontractors have today business ties with military. As a result, Americans daily buy products made by these corporations, such as

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<sup>81</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 126.

<sup>82</sup> Kelly Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 36.

Cheerios, Nature Valley Granola bars, or Wolfgang Puck's gourmet pizza.<sup>84</sup> Sociologist Nick Turse writes that *"The high level of military-civilian interpretation in a heavily consumer-driven society means that almost every American is, at least passively, supporting the (military) Complex every time he or she shops for groceries, sends a package, drives a car, or watches TV..."*<sup>85</sup> The militarized language has already penetrated the consumer culture, producing army-like products for everyone. In 2005, Ford introduced its "concept vehicle" called *Synus* with the following description:

*As the population shifts back to big cities, you'll need a rolling urban commander center. Enter the Synus concept vehicle, a mobile techno sanctuary sculpted in urban armor... When parked and placed in secure mode, Synus deploys protective shutters... the flanks and roof are non-opening and bullet resistant... plus, you can monitor your surroundings in real time as seen by the rear-mounted cameras.*<sup>86</sup>

I have been to Detroit to know it is not the nicest city on Earth, but this is a perfect example of the way the militarized language shapes the culture of consumerism, verging on paranoia. Civilian obliviousness to such terminology results from the normative agenda of war culture that is becoming a naturalized characteristic of national life.<sup>87</sup> As a result, people are being persistently distracted from questioning the penetration of the culture of war into the all-important American cultural symbols, such as the automobile.

Recently, I came across an article about Johnny Micheal Spann, the first American casualty of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, revealing the normative nature of the sacrificial rhetoric. Spann had a strong Christian upbringing and is memorialized with a star on the CIA Memorial Wall at CIA headquarters that commemorates those who died in the line of duty. He was posthumously awarded the Intelligence Star and the Exceptional Service Medallion, and his body is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. A memorial to Mike Spann also exists at Qala-i-Jangi (where he was killed), and the near operating base is named in his honor.<sup>88</sup> There are numerous websites,

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<sup>84</sup> Nick Turse, *The Complex: How the military invades our everyday lives* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 271.

<sup>85</sup> Turse, *The Complex*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Giroux, *University in Chains*, 51.

<sup>87</sup> Denton-Borhaug, , *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 49.

<sup>88</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 317.

such as [www.honormikespann.org](http://www.honormikespann.org), or Mike Spann Marine Corps League Detachment at [www.tuscaloosamarines.org](http://www.tuscaloosamarines.org) that glorify Spann's death. The USA Today released in 2010 a transcription of the Spann's last email to his father. His last words were:

*We are at war. Many Americans need to wake up and realize that fact. Somebody wants to destroy what we have and we have to defend it against them. Who cares what other countries are saying, they are not even democratic governments. Let them know that the US does not need a permission from any other nation to respond to the attacks from the last week (the 9/11 attacks). Our constitution gives us that power. The US can and will deal with this trash. Just support your government and military, especially when the bodies start coming back home. The US lost the war in Vietnam because of lack of support at home. Americans should keep flying their flags and support their government. God bless America.*<sup>89</sup>

Spann best exemplified the "crusader" type of soldier and his ultimate sacrifice is now being publicized by national media across the United States, bringing the militarized values to the home front. A series of similar examples had contributed toward the foundation for the before-mentioned American war culture. Spann's legacy openly encourages the public to support the arrogant and idolatrous foreign policy led by the American theological myth of Exceptionalism, while completely ignoring the importance of international law legislature. Furthermore, I fear that the Crusader agenda found its followers even overseas, in people like Anders Behring Breivik, an infamous Islamophobe who killed 77 people in his personal war with "Eurabia" (a theory that Arabs want to Islamize and Arabise Europe) and multiculturalism in Norway in 2011. Hours beforehand, Breivik wrote his own manifesto<sup>90</sup> where he stated that he is "100 percent Christian; a cultural Christian; and a modern day Crusader."<sup>91</sup>

Although I firmly acknowledge that Christianity has generated many admirable figures, I align myself with John Feffer and his statement that "*all religious beliefs seem to produce extremists, and all religions have at one point or another gone to extremes.*"

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<sup>89</sup> "Reflections of War," USA Today, accessed March 11, 2013, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/military/2010-05-27-longest-war-afghanistan\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/military/2010-05-27-longest-war-afghanistan_N.htm)

<sup>90</sup> See Breivik's Manifesto at <http://www.breiviksmanifesto.com/>, accessed March 20, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> "Is Anders Breivik a Christian Terrorist?" Times Union, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Is-Anders-Breivik-a-Christian-terrorist-1624540.php>

*Islam is not inherently, eternally, or uniquely violent, any more than the “Judeo-Christian” tradition that sometimes has insisted it to be so. And Islam the religion is only one small part of what takes place in the Muslim World.”*<sup>92</sup> Even though Breivik was probably a “different” kind of Christian than Spann, they were both products of the violent, uncompromising ideology aiming to punish the “wicked.”

What brought Spann’s death to the center of public attention was his “will to sacrifice”. This “will to sacrifice” has its Christian roots and became a key element in forming American civic/military selfhood. Denton-Borhaug argues that *“In Western Christianity, religion slowly fed into this development of civic/military sacrificial-self identity; over time, the Christian values of caritas (Christian love for God, self, and neighbor) was increasingly applied to sanctify and justify death for the fatherland.”*<sup>93</sup>

So, the soldier who willingly sacrificed his own life did not do it only for his God (male sovereign), but also for his homeland. The modern day soldier who is faithful even unto death has his predecessor in a Christian martyr who died for his faith. Why is such sacrificial justification important? Well, arguably, without it, the state would only have to rely on the power of coercion. Denton-Borhaug goes on to illustrate that *“the quasi-religious language of sacrifice on the part of the U.S. Administration easily meshed with sacrificial self-understanding in military culture and practice in the post-9/11 period of the United States.”*<sup>94</sup> Additionally, there is a “communal ecstasy” within the military culture, explaining the willingness to sacrifice, and giving dying for others a mystical quality. One then see the connection between their self-sacrifice and the willingness of martyrs to die for their cause.<sup>95</sup> This “mystical” quality of self-sacrifice was what led the teenagers of Hitlerjugend into martyrdom operations in Germany at the end of the Second World War. It is known that “they had been fed on legends of heroism for as long as they could remember.”<sup>96</sup> In an extensive study on war violence, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman explains that the presence or absence of fellow-soldiers plays a critical role in a soldier’s decision whether or not to kill. In the absence of group influence, many soldiers chose not to kill the enemy. Vice versa, when soldiers chose to kill, the motivation of group solidarity and communion proved to be

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<sup>92</sup> John Feffer, *Crusade 2.0: The West’s Resurgent War on Islam*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 69.

<sup>94</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 72.

<sup>96</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 72.

all-important.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting that mentality of Islamic suicide bombers is assumed to be “evil” and influenced by religious fundamentalism, while the “communal ecstasy” experienced by American soldiers is justified by the values of heroism and embedded religious sacrifice. Language of sacrifice thus slips from specifically Christian religious formulations into national “secular” tropes, resulting in an unquestioned presumption for war and a sacrificial national identity in American civil religion, which is strongly connected to the war and the need for an invincible military.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1995), 155.

<sup>98</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 75.



### 2.3. Christian sacrifice and War Culture

*“Glorification of the war and sanctification of the soldier’s sacrifice on the front by bishops of the Protestant national churches were even worse, because they conveyed the message that Christ is present in the soldier who gives his life for his friends, and anyone who is killed in the noble cause of his Fatherland will be forever engraved in the memory of his people. One can still find monuments of Christ-like dying soldiers in the memorials of World War I.”<sup>99</sup>*

The theme of sacrifice is one of the oldest images in Christianity derived from the practice of offering of food, objects, or the lives of animals to a higher purpose. It is act of worship that cleanses and purifies the faithful before God. In Trinitarian Christian teaching, God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, sacrificing his first-born son to accomplish the reconciliation of God and humanity, which had separated itself from God through original sin. Christ’s suffering and death saved the rest of the humanity from damnation and satisfied the offense to God’s honor; Jesus becomes a scapegoat, the “Lamb of God” who restored the relationship between God and humanity. The title “Lamb of God” is therefore a metaphor for a perfect sacrificial offering that appears in the Gospel of John – *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”<sup>100</sup>*

Furthermore, in his crucifixion Christ conquers death (for instance, the Moravian Church uses “Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow him” motto as its official seal) and saves the world from evil. The term *Christus victor* portrays innocent Jesus as a warrior who dies on the battlefield, liberating humanity from the clutches of Satan and the consequences of sin. His sacrifice is seen as necessary to pay the price and win the battle with evil (so that order can be restored).<sup>101</sup> Denton-Bourhaug offers a striking comparison between the imagery of *Christus victory* and American military identity development when she writes *“just as Jesus freely offers himself in place of sinful humanity, so the soldier offers himself ‘without thought of recognition or gain,’ as the Soldier’s Handbook states.”* The Soldier’s Handbook of the U.S. Department of the Army cited by Denton-Borhaug includes more self-sacrificial themes that draw upon

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<sup>99</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, “The Cross as a Military Symbol for Sacrifice,” in Marit Trelstad, *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 262.

<sup>100</sup> John 1:29, New American Standard

<sup>101</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 77.

the doctrine of atonement. One of them reads “*the greatest means of accomplishing selfless service is to dedicate (**sacrifice**) yourself to the teamwork (**to a higher purpose**) that is the underlying strength of the Army.*”<sup>102</sup> (emphasis mine) There is a destructive parallel between an act of self-sacrifice and salvation (grace). By dying like Christ, soldiers are promised grace, understanding, and salvation. Just as the sacrifice of Jesus is declared theologically necessary for Christian salvation, so the mechanism of sacrifice explains and rationalizes the necessity of soldiers’ sacrifice in war. The loss of life and property in war is exchanged for something of “greater” worth. As theologian Jean Elshtain puts it well, “*The death of the warrior achieves a ‘consecrated meaning,’ and confers dignity upon the coercive power of the state.*”<sup>103</sup> It must be acknowledged that religious institutions portraying the work of Christ as the ultimate sacrifice for human salvation deliberately feed into war-culture.<sup>104</sup> Much Christian theology shares with war-culture the assumption that to resist sacrificial violence inevitably leads to consequential violence as the “necessary” conclusion. Indeed, from very early times humans have believed that violence will save their religious, social and political disputes. Many contemporary theologians are not oblivious to that. However, these soteriological schemes that either revere Jesus’ death or prescribe sacrifice as the “necessary” solution to realities of human sin and social violence should be very suspicious to the contemporary American society.

An example of this parallel was a picture that became viral two years ago showing a badly wounded soldier receiving treatment in a medevac helicopter. The soldier was Pfc. Kyle Hockenberry and the picture showed medics working on Hockenberry after he stepped on a road mine. His shirt was off and his tattoo reading “For those I love, I will sacrifice” clearly visible. The picture and Hockenberry’s story have been shared on a variety of blogs and media websites, such as Time.com, or New York Post. The “prophetic” tattoo, as the New York Post called it, received an extreme attention.<sup>105</sup> A facebook group called “Praying for Kyle Hockenberry” now has almost 4,000 members, where people share pictures of the very same tattoo and celebrate

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<sup>102</sup> Department of the Army, *Soldier’s Handbook* (Alexandria, VA: Byrrd Enterprises, 1998), 3.

<sup>103</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, ‘Sovereignty, Identity and Sacrifice’, *Gendered States: Feminist Visions of International Relations Theory* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 146.

<sup>104</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 125.

<sup>105</sup> “Wounded GI’s prophetic tattoo traced to NYer’s lyrics,” New York Post, accessed March 30, 2013, [http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/tat\\_the\\_truth\\_dbhv3NBkBI9e8WOo2eGHIP](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/tat_the_truth_dbhv3NBkBI9e8WOo2eGHIP)

Kyle as an amazing Christ-like hero. Kyle has become a public figure; many celebrities held fund-raising events for him, and when he returned home for good a new house was specially designed for him through "Building for America's Bravest," a program sponsored by the Tunnel to Towers Foundation and the Gary Sinise Foundation. Sinise, who is a devout Roman Catholic, the star of "CSI: New York" and perhaps best known for his role as a soldier who lost both legs in Vietnam in the film "Forrest Gump," held a charity concert for Hockenberry in his hometown, raising supposedly around 200,000 dollars. Hockenberry said he enjoyed speaking with Sinise, who has been very active in supporting the military, especially in the years after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.<sup>106</sup>

For a brief comparison: A friend of mine, member of Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team, was badly wounded during a missile attack in Logar, Afghanistan last year. Lukas has been in comma for months while doctors remain skeptical about his state. From the military website that informed about the attack, I learned that if I wanted to support Lukas in his recovery, I should send him a postcard. The same applied for other Czech veterans that were badly wounded there. No parades, concerts, fund-raising, or newspaper headlines. This only reassured me of the importance of self-sacrifice in American war culture and I began to analyze it deeply.

The social status of American soldiers is emphatically sacred and their sacrifice hallowed. I observed that those who challenged the sacrificial practice in the post 9/11 America were either ridiculed or sidelined by both national media and the State administration. Such was the case of Cindy Sheehan, mother of deceased soldier Casey Sheehan, killed in Iraq. Mrs. Sheehan attempted to meet with President Bush to discuss the topics of sacrifice (such as "What is the noble cause everyone is dying for?") in the way that would disrupt the streamlined ideology of sacrifice and necessity. Bush repeatedly refused to meet with her and she was publicly ridiculed for "hating America" by people like Bill O'Reilly.<sup>107</sup> It became apparent that those who questioned the sacrifices of the war were to be treated as second-class citizens and traitors. Denton-Borhaug provides a powerful feminist insight into the case, writing *"mothers of soldiers who have died, daughters of the deployed and widows all*

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<sup>106</sup> "Pfc. Kyle Hockenberry: I'd do it all over again," The Marietta Times, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.mariettatimes.com/page/content.detail/id/541070/Pfc--Kyle-Hockenberry---I-d-do-it-all-over-again-.html?nav=5002>

<sup>107</sup> "One day after smearing protester Cindy Sheenan," Media Matters, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://mediamatters.org/research/2005/08/11/one-day-after-smearing-protester-cindy-sheehan/133638>

*represent during times of war symbols of national sacrifice. Citizens are encouraged to grieve with them and thus underscore the meaningfulness of the war. In contrast, the ridiculing and sidelining of Sheehan makes sense when we take into account the potentially deeply disruptive nature of her questions to the national sacrificial trope in the Iraq war. The sacrificial narrative suggests that the sacrifice of widows, children and mothers should be met with support, encouragement and the thanks of a grateful nation...*"<sup>108</sup>

Regardless of what citizens have to say about the war, the sacrificial propaganda does not slow down. Unsurprisingly, in the wake of the War in Iraq in 2003, the Time Magazine chose the American soldier as TIME's Person of the Year, explaining their decision:

*"For uncommon skills and service, for the choices each one of them has made and the ones still ahead, for the challenge of defending not only our freedoms but those barely stirring half a world away, the American soldier is TIME's Person of the Year... It is worth remembering that our pilots and sailors and soldiers are, for starters, all volunteers, in contrast to most nations, which conscript those who serve in their armed forces."*<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, the Christian practice of sacrifice drawing upon *Christus victor* imagery is nothing new to the American popular culture. For instance, there was a series of Christian-real time strategy video games set in the post-apocalyptic world called *Left Behind*, developed by Left Behind Games based in the USA. The first edition of the game, *Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, has three sequels – *Left Behind: Tribulation Forces*, *Left Behind 3: Rise of the Antichrist*, and *Left Behind 4: World at War*. Upon its release in 2006, the game was subject to criticism from various groups for it promoted religious violence, bigotry and intolerance, as players were encouraged to convert or kill people for Christ. Council on American-Islamic Relations urged to stop retailing the game for it dehumanized other religions (the game's enemy team often included

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<sup>108</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 79.

<sup>109</sup> "Person of The Year 2003: The American Soldier," Time Magazine, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1006533-1,00.html>

people with Muslim-sounding names).<sup>110</sup> I had a privilege to play the third sequel, *Rise of the Antichrist*, where players can play as the Antichrist, but can never win the game. In short, the Antichrist team included fictional rock stars and folks with Muslim-sounding names, while the righteous army featured gospel singers, missionaries, exorcists, healers and medics. The “good people” used singing and praying to convert believers, while the “bad people” played rock n roll music. Also, the non-believers are killed by believers if they refuse to join the good side, but the sin of murder can be cleansed by praying, giving the player a huge game advantage.

I also recall being struck by the hyper-violent movie *The Passion of the Christ* by Mel Gibson that was overflowing with the sacrificial imagery and punishment. The film was a great success in the United States and during my studies in Pennsylvania I witnessed how literal it was perceived by especially conservative Christians. Since the movie belonged to the post 9/11 sacrificial framework, no one was ready to question its overtly violent nature. *The Passion of Christ* received endorsement from most known evangelical leaders and churches in the USA, for instance: Billy Graham, Rick Warren, Camp Crusade for Christ, Southern Baptist Convention, Seventh-Day Adventist Church and many more. The United Methodist Church posted on its websites that the movie is “a one-of-a-kind evangelism opportunity”<sup>111</sup> to convert non-believers. As a matter of fact, a 2005 study focused on Americans and their religious/political commitments showed that “religious traditionalists” were much more likely to advocate the War in Iraq as a just war than non-religious. They also demonstrated higher tendencies to support the pre-emptive military intervention. Most importantly, evangelical Christians and traditionalist Catholic ranked also as the most ardent supporters of the Gibson’s movie.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “Muslim group protests ‘Left Behind’ game,” UPI.com, accessed April 8, 2013, [http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Security-Industry/2006/12/20/Muslim-group-protests-Left-Behind-game/UPI-83971166641853/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2006/12/20/Muslim-group-protests-Left-Behind-game/UPI-83971166641853/)

<sup>111</sup> “Many churches look to ‘Passion’ as evangelism tool,” The People of The United Methodist Church, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=3316>

<sup>112</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 83.

## 2.4. Guns and Bibles

One may argue that such a survey is just another attempt to undermine the position of church in the United States. But the truth is that the conservative Christians (just like anybody else) are in the US military by choice, which makes it hard to believe that their religion would be exploited. Instead, church and the state administration seem to work hand in hand to build a strong military-industrial complex thoroughly supported by the pathetic sacrificial framework. A 2004 report on religious preferences of military personnel conducted by the Population Reference Bureau found that only 21% of service members identified as Atheists or as having “no religion preference”. The report also revealed that 35% identified as Protestants, 22% as Catholic/Orthodox, 11% as Other Christian (that means that almost 70% of the US military is either Protestant or Catholic) and less than 5% as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu.<sup>113</sup>

There soon developed an unholy alliance between evangelical Christians and the military, as in January 2010 ABC News reported that Trijicon, a Michigan-based arms manufacture, has been inscribing “secret codes” for New Testament verses on high-powered rifles used by U.S. Army and Marine Corps in Afghanistan and Iraq. Citations included references to Jesus Christ and the company is supposed to provide up to 800 000 sights to the Marine Corps. The company spokesman said that the inscriptions have always been there and there was nothing wrong about it. On the contrary, the military administration said that they were unaware of it.<sup>114</sup> A photo then appeared on the official Department of Defense website showing Iraqi soldiers being trained by U.S. troops with the “Jesus” rifles equipped with the bible-coded sights.<sup>115</sup>

The Harper’s Magazine reported in May 2009 that several US soldiers painted a large red Arabic message on their Bradley Fighting Vehicle (a tank-like fighting vehicle) that read “Jesus Killed Mohammed.”<sup>116</sup> As the vehicle was driven through Samarra

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<sup>113</sup> David R. Segal, Mady Weschler Segal, *America’s Military Population* (Population Reference Bureau, Vol. 59, No. 4., December 2004), 25.

<sup>114</sup> “U.S. Military Weapons Inscribed With Secret Bible Codes,” ABC News, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/us-military-weapons-inscribed-secret-jesus-bible-codes/story?id=9575794#.UVGbTxdhXng>

<sup>115</sup> “U.S. Military Weapons Inscribed With Secret Bible Codes.”

<sup>116</sup> Jeff Sharlet, “Jesus Killed Mohammed: The Crusade for a Christian Military,” *Harper’s Magazine* (May 2009): 32, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://archive.harpers.org/2009/05/pdf/HarpersMagazine-2009-05-0082488.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJXATU3VRJAAA66RA&Expires=1365510523&Signature=VzZr2hIGK%2BX9nJ6dl6YVhQLACXs%3D>

(Samarra is considered a holy city of Islam), it was drawing fire from nearly every doorway. Lieutenant John D. DeGiulio, the prime instigator of the painting, was very fond of *The Passion of the Christ* and thought the movie had been a sign that he would survive. *"Each time I go into combat I get closer to God,"*<sup>117</sup> he would later say. Likewise, Marine Corps of the 4th Tank Battalion printed "New Testament" on the main gun of an M1A1 Abrams tank near Haditha, Iraq, with crosses hanging from the cannon.<sup>118</sup> The photo of the tank originally appeared on the official website of the United States Marine Corps on May 5, 2005. It was censored and removed after a massive wave of criticism. Apart from painting fanatic messages on their fighting vehicles, American soldiers were also caught desecrating Islamic sites in Samarra, spray-painting local mosques with crosses.<sup>119</sup>

So far, no Army department has been more active in enforcing faith than Air Force. In his book *Under Orders: A Spiritual Handbook for Military Personnel*, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel (and also Evangelical Lutheran Church chaplain) William McCoy stresses the necessity of religion, preferably Christianity, for a properly functioning army. He claims that the lack of belief or the wrong beliefs would "bring havoc to what needs cohesion and team confidence."<sup>120</sup> McCoy is positive that "*under the rubric of free speech and the twisted idea of the separation of church and state there has evolved more and more an anti-Christian bias in this country,*" and, "*...being Christian should bring goodness to our culture.*"<sup>121</sup> This directly implies that the lack of faith on the battlefield negatively affects the soldiers' ability to fight and to be effective team members. McCoy's book comes with an astonishing endorsement: "*Under Orders should be in every rucksack for those moments when Soldiers need spiritual energy,*"<sup>122</sup> reads an afterword from General David Petraeus, the former senior U.S. commander in Iraq, now one of the top commanders at U.S. Central Command. Petraeus's endorsement represents a blatant violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, promoting the unconstitutional Christian exceptionalism.

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<sup>117</sup> Jeff Sharlet, "Jesus Killed Mohammed: The Crusade for a Christian Military," 32.

<sup>118</sup> "Marine tank's biblical name draws hefty criticism," Washington Times, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/may/26/20050526-111716-9797r/>

<sup>119</sup> Jeff Sharlet, "Jesus Killed Mohammed: The Crusade for a Christian Military," 32.

<sup>120</sup> "Petraeus Endorses 'Spiritual Handbook'," Huffington Post, accessed April 8, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-rodda/petraeus-endorses-spiritu\\_b\\_119242.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-rodda/petraeus-endorses-spiritu_b_119242.html)

<sup>121</sup> "Petraeus Endorses 'Spiritual Handbook',"

<sup>122</sup> „Petraeus Endorses 'Spiritual Handbook',"

In 2009, evangelical Christian soldiers in Afghanistan handed out Bibles in the Pashtu and Dari languages to local Afghans and operated under instructions from their chaplain to "hunt people for Jesus." Al Jazeera English broadcasted a video in which a group of U.S. Soldiers at Bagram Air Base are seen discussing how to distribute Bibles printed in the Pashtu and Dari languages among local Afghans<sup>123</sup>. In the video the chaplain points out that it is against the military code to proselytize. "But you can give gifts," answers one of the soldiers. The chaplain then urges the group:

*"The Special Forces guys, they hunt men. Basically, we do the same things as Christians. We hunt people for Jesus. We do, we hunt them down. Get the hound of heaven after them, so we get them into the Kingdom. That's what we do, that's our business,"* he says.<sup>124</sup>

The Bibles were mailed to a Sgt. James Watt from his hometown church while he was stationed at Bagram, but the army officials claimed the Bibles were confiscated so that they could not be distributed. The Pentagon spokesman Col. Mark Wright said that the preacher did not break any rules, because the military confiscated the Bibles before there were distributed (without any further details) and that the video is misleading. According to the army officials, the preacher did not mean that soldiers should hunt for Afghan souls, but was speaking only in general terms. The Al Jazeera broadcast concludes with a report that 60% of all military chaplains would identify themselves as conservative evangelical Christians. More specifically, more than two thirds of the military's 2,900 active-duty chaplains are affiliated with evangelical or Pentecostal denominations.<sup>125</sup> The line between proselytizing and evangelizing is understandably hard to draw, but some kind of solution must be found if potential uproars in a very Islamic Afghan society are to be avoided.

Yet, more video evidence of evangelical Christian groups using soldiers to proselytize Muslims in a war zone appeared. In the video from Iraq, Army chaplain Capt. Chris Rusack, is seen boasting about getting the Swahili Bibles into Iraq, in spite of the army regulations forbidding such practice.<sup>126</sup> The chaplain admits that Swahili

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<sup>123</sup> "Soldiers in Afghanistan Given Bibles," Huffington Post, accessed March 15, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/04/soldiers-in-afghanistan-g\\_n\\_195674.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/04/soldiers-in-afghanistan-g_n_195674.html)

<sup>124</sup> "Soldiers in Afghanistan Given Bibles,"

<sup>125</sup> "Soldiers in Afghanistan Given Bibles,"

<sup>126</sup> "MRFF Responds to Military's Denial That U.S. Troops Are Proselytizing Muslims," Huffington Post, accessed April 7, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-rodde/mrff-responds-to-military\\_b\\_195860.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-rodde/mrff-responds-to-military_b_195860.html)



language Bibles were being sent in to Iraq to evangelize the Ugandan workers employed by the U.S. military. The Army representatives stated that nothing like that was ever happening in Iraq. Nonetheless, after an hour of researching the issue, I came across the Soldiers Bible Ministry, an organization that focuses on shipping Bibles to Iraq. Their websites state that the organization's main goal is *"to put Bibles into the hands of our military men and women serving worldwide at a time when they greatly need the power of the Word of God to bring them encouragement and strength. It is our prayer that the Bibles and accompanying study materials will lead them not only to repentance and salvation, but also guide them into a strong relationship with the Living God as He draws all men to Himself (John 12:32)."*<sup>127</sup> I also found out that Chaplain Chris Rusack is officially enlisted as the member of the organization: *"Chaplain Chris Rusack of the 101<sup>st</sup> U.S. Army Airborne of Fort Campbell, KY, has been a tremendous blessing to this ministry. He is only one of the chaplains who remind us that the work of the LORD is very much alive and real every day! We are able to reach beyond the language barrier with the message of hope and salvation in Jesus Christ."*<sup>128</sup> According to the Soldiers Bible Ministry, nearly 100,000 Bibles (in various languages) and Bible study materials requested by chaplains around the world.<sup>129</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Soldiers Bible Ministry is one of the many organizations to send Bibles to Iraq. There is an organization called Christian Aid Mission aiming to print/purchase and distribute 50,000 copies of Bibles in Arabic and Aramaic, including children's Bibles. Cooperating with evangelical chaplains in Iraq, they are dedicated not only to provide the copies to the military personnel and allied forces, but also to *"go to public schools, hospitals and societies and represent our faith and talk about the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ,"* and *"to fill up vans with Bibles and drive through the cities and villages and trust God to direct us to those we should give Bibles and the Gospel as they are walking in the streets."*<sup>130</sup> In terms of numbers, the organization is as active as the Soldiers Bible Ministry, giving out about 100,000 Bibles in Arabic, Aramaic, and the two dialects of Sorini and Bahdini of the Kurdish language. On top of it all, the

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<sup>127</sup> "Why the need?" Soldiers Bible Ministry, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2009/861/print/>

<sup>128</sup> "Why the need?"

<sup>129</sup> "Why the need?"

<sup>130</sup> "Christmas Bibles for Iraq," Christian Aid Mission, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://christianaidmission.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/christmas-bibles-for-iraq/>

organization aims to *“distribute a DVD of the Jesus Film. Each DVD has a plan of salvation in the end of the film that leads the person to surrender his life to the Lord. A minority of people who can’t read and write can get a great help with this DVD (a total of roughly 30,000 DVDs).”*<sup>131</sup> Their mission statement concludes with a disturbing message: *“Even if we receive enough funds to give out 50,000 Bibles this Christmas, most of the 30 million people in Iraq will still have had no access to a Bible. There are oil-rich Muslim countries that promote Islam and provide many millions for distributing Qurans but we have no government or rich foundations to support us. But we have the power of the Gospel that God powerfully works through His Word. That Gospel must go throughout the country. It must.”*<sup>132</sup> In addition, other Arabic-language Christian books (mainly Gospels and New Testaments) are being shipped into the war zones by organizations such as Worldwide Military Baptist Missions. In their newsletter from 2009, the organization stated that in the previous year (2008) over 226,000 gospel tracts, some 21,000 Bibles, New Testaments and 404 Discipleship kits were sent to war zones and US military bases around the world.<sup>133</sup>

I am rather suspicious that these organized religious operations facilitated the creation of the Crusade attempting to convert Muslims in and around Iraq under the surveillance of the US army. Before the invasion, an organization named Campus for Christ set up a program (Military Ministry) that allows anyone to send a soldier a so-called “Rapid Deployment Kit,” containing a New Testament Bible, a 90-day prayer devotional, and a handbook instructing soldiers in the methods of witnessing to others. It is deliberately designed to proselytize and reinforce Christian faith. The company sent over 2.4 million of these kits to members of the U.S. Army in Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>134</sup> Given the fact there was about 150,000 US soldiers in Iraq in 2008, 68,000 in Afghanistan, and another 15,000 in Kuwait, there must be a heavy surplus of the Rapid Deployment Kits to hand out. And there are still many more private companies as well as individuals that continue to flood Iraq and surrounding countries with Bibles. All of these organizations openly boast about collaboration with

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<sup>131</sup> “Christmas Bibles for Iraq,”

<sup>132</sup> “Christmas Bibles for Iraq,”

<sup>133</sup> “MRFF Responds to Military’s Denial That U.S. Troops Are Proselytizing Muslims,”

<sup>134</sup> “RDK Shipments pass 2.4 million mark!” Military Ministry, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.militaryministry.org/2012/03/01/rdk-shipments/>

army personnel when it comes to distributing the materials. Needless to say, they usually do not hand out the Bibles and other religious materials for free.

Now, the question arises – is this all legal? Any kind of proselytizing is strictly prohibited by the U.S. military code. Soldiers are not supposed to be apostles. Although every soldier who wants a religious book (be it the Bible, Quran, Talmud etc.) should be able to get one, the Army should not ignore the surplus of tons of Bibles that secretly come to the war zones. Moreover, the U.S. army should not tolerate religious propaganda, as thousands of these Bibles (and other Christian tracts) are given to chaplains who are part of missionaries with overtly fundamentalist mission statements, exploiting the situation of people afflicted by war, and raising religious tension in the region that is traditionally not Christian. There were reported cases of American missionaries privately traveling to Iraq disguised as humanitarian workers to hand out millions of Christian tracts to Iraqi people. One of them, Joe Hanna, an evangelical from Ohio, traveled to Iraq in 2003 to "save" Muslims from their "false" religion. In Baghdad he met two other missionary teams. One of them had shipped 1.3 million Christian tracts to Iraq. Mr. Hanna describes Islam as "false" and cites St John's Gospel, saying: "Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist."<sup>135</sup> He also stated that the US army remains oblivious to such journeys and that all it took to get into the war-zone was an American passport. Before going to Iraq, Mr. Hanna attended seminars for missionaries to the Arab world.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> "Bible Belt missionaries set out on a war for souls in Iraq," The Telegraph, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1450359/Bible-Belt-missionaries-set-out-on-a-war-for-souls-in-Iraq.html>

<sup>136</sup> "Bible Belt missionaries set out on a war for souls in Iraq,"

## 2.5. The results of proselytizing

To conclude this chapter it would be only fair to reveal how many US troops in the war zones might have been exposed to any kind of Muslim proselytizing by their fellow soldiers, allied forces, or non-combatants. Given that Islam is often compared to Christianity in terms of its aggressiveness toward other religions, one may ponder whether the proselytizing takes place also on the other side of the conflict. According to Defense Department figures, some 3,557 military personnel identify themselves as Muslim among 1.4 million people in the active-duty population. As a minority they have to face various stereotypes regarding their faith, and their patriotism is often subject to suspicion. Abdi Akgun, a Muslim Marine, who was deployed to Iraq, said he was haunted by the possibility that he might end up killing innocent civilians. *"I don't want to stain my faith, I don't want to stain my fellow Muslims, and I also don't want to stain my country's flag,"*<sup>137</sup> he said in an interview for New York Times in 2009. The hesitation to kill other Muslims in warfare is one of the main reasons why US troops find Islamic faith of their fellow soldiers suspicious. Several Muslim servicemen said in interviews that they were often called "haajis" and "ragheads"<sup>138</sup> by other American soldiers. Amjad Khan, serving in the Army for eight years, said that upon his deployment to Iraq he was singled out by a senior officer who said "I have to watch my back because you might go nuts."<sup>139</sup> The situation escalated dramatically after several cases of fragging done by Muslim-American soldiers appeared in 2003 and 2005. Such was the case of Hasan Akbar, a black American Muslim, who in the wake of Iraq invasion in March 2003 carried out a political fragging when he rolled grenades into command tents. Akbar said he opposed the war and refused to kill fellow Muslims. Shortly before the attack, Akbar repeatedly complained about religious and racial harassment in his unit to his superiors. In the view of prosecution, Akbar was found a "hate-filled, ideologically-driven murderer."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> "Complications Grow for Muslims Serving in U.S. Military," New York Times, accessed April 6, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/09/us/09muslim.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/09/us/09muslim.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>138</sup> "Complications Grow for Muslims Serving in U.S. Military,"

<sup>139</sup> "Complications Grow for Muslims Serving in U.S. Military,"

<sup>140</sup> "Profile: US Soldier Hasan Akbar," BBC News, accessed April 7, 2013, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4496989.stm>

As of 2013, there were eight American soldiers who publicly converted to Islam since the beginning of the “War on Terror.” The last of them, army officer James Grant, reportedly changed his name to Muhammad Asif and embraced Islam in the Watapur district, Kunar province, Afghanistan this year. Grant insisted that he found Islam the “true” and “best” religion.<sup>141</sup> What he means by “true” and “best,” is probably the way Muslims approach warfare. Unlike Christianity, Islam does not tolerate any form of total war (such as Crusade), but only allows war in self-defense (Qur'an 22:39), to defend Islam (rather than to spread it), and to protect those who have been removed from their homes by force because they are Muslims (Qur'an 22:40). In fact, Islam speaks strongly against unrestricted conflicts; Qur'an orders to *“Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. Indeed. God does not love transgressors.”*<sup>142</sup> Moreover, Muslims believe that murdering innocent leads to punishment in Hell: *“whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely,”*<sup>143</sup> and their conduct of war is very similar to the Christian Just War Theory, banning the killing of combatants who had been captured or wounded: *“So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds, and either [confer] favor afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens.”*<sup>144</sup>

Muslims, like Christians, are also encouraged to proselytize and preach their faith to “non-believers” or people of other religions. The Arabic word for preaching Islam is Dawah, which literally translates as “making an invitation” to a dialogue. There are many Dawah movements around the world, such as Tablighi Jamaat, The Society of the Muslim Brothers, or Islamic Education and Research Academy based in London, UK. Though they are very active movements with millions of members, I could not find any evidence that these organizations would be proselytizing foreigners or foreign troops in the war-torn countries of Iraq and Afghanistan. The largest of them, the Society of the Muslim Brothers violently opposed Western colonialism, and helped overthrow the pro-western monarchies in Egypt and other Muslim countries during

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<sup>141</sup> “US Army Officer Accepts Islam in Afghanistan,” Cii Broadcasting, accessed April 7, 2013, <http://www.ciibroadcasting.com/2013/01/03/us-army-officer-accepts-islam-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>142</sup> Qur'an 2:190, Sahih International

<sup>143</sup> Qur'an 5:32, Sahih International

<sup>144</sup> Qur'an 47:4, Sahih International

the early 20th century, however, it does not seem to be involved in proselytizing foreigners in the Middle East.

In his article *They Want Jesus Instead*, evangelical leader and former presidential counsel Charles Colson cited that in Iraq “more than 5,000 Muslim converts to Christianity have been identified **since the end of major combat operations**, with 14 new churches opened in Baghdad, and dozens of new churches opened in Kurdistan, some of which have 500 to 800 members,”<sup>145</sup> (emphasis mine). His claim is supported by an Islamic cleric Ahmad al-Qatani, who in an interview with Aljazeera TV stated that some six million Muslims convert to Christianity annually.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, journalist and respected Middle East expert Joel C. Rosenberg adds that “*there were only 17 Christians from Islam in Afghanistan in 2001. But there are more than 10,000 believers at present. Every week dozens of baptisms are being held there... There were only 500 Christians in Iran in 1979, but more than one million Iranians believe in Jesus Christ today.*”<sup>147</sup> Tens of thousands of converts from Islam versus eight converts from Christianity since the beginning of the military intervention in the Middle East – that is a lesson in proselytizing. Nonetheless, if one compares the efforts made by both sides to convert believers, the numbers are not that surprising.

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<sup>145</sup> “They want Jesus Instead,” Breakpoint, accessed April 7, 2013, <http://www.breakpoint.org/commentaries/2464-they-want-jesus-instead>

<sup>146</sup> David Dunlap, *Written Aforetime: Selected Articles from Bible and Life Newsletter From 1993-2009* (Xulon Press, 2008), 132.

<sup>147</sup> David Dunlap, *Written Aforetime*, 133.

## 3. The Global Impact

### 3.1. American Foreign Policy and the Biblical Worldview

*"On Easter we hold in our hearts those who will be spending this holiday far from home – our troops... I deeply appreciate the sacrifices that they and their families are making... On Easter, we especially remember those who have given their lives for the cause of freedom. These brave individuals have lived out the words of the Gospel: 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends...'"<sup>148</sup>*

*George W. Bush, Easter 2008*

There are improper actions at high military levels that not only infringe the rights given by the Constitution but, at a very dangerous time, also send the wrong message to people in the Middle East that those in the US military see themselves engaged in a Christian crusade. In the previous chapter I was trying to demonstrate how heavily this agenda is backed up by the American war culture through specific sacrificial rhetoric and products. The abuse of authority to advance fundamental Christian faith has become a problem even for members of other branches of Christianity within the US Army. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation has already received over 5,000 complaints about such practice from active-duty and retired military personnel. 95 percent of the complaints came from Mainline Christians who felt that their religion was being hijacked by extremists.<sup>149</sup>

If this practice is to continue in future, it is going to significantly destabilize the American foreign policy and legislature. Michael Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation is afraid that *"There's an eschatologically obsessed version of Christianity that ... is trying to make American foreign and domestic policy conterminous with their biblical worldview... there's improper pressure within the military command structure to make members join them (fundamentalists)."*<sup>150</sup> It has been documented that the evangelical Christian community in the United States

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<sup>148</sup> "President's Radio Address, Easter 2008," The White House: President George W. Bush, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/03/20080322.html>

<sup>149</sup> "Are U.S. troops being force-fed Christianity?" Christian Science Monitor, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1004/p13s02-lire.html>

<sup>150</sup> "Are U.S. troops being force-fed Christianity?"

quickly united to support the war in Iraq.<sup>151</sup> Their understanding of the problem of evil and of the God-given responsibility to punish the wrongdoers easily slide into the rhetoric of aggression. Evangelicals tend to find conflicts normal and label the enemy “evil” (or at least unsaved). They also support the state in its fight with evil so that religious and political “freedom” could be spread. Apocalyptic biblical literature and prophecies play a crucial role in the fight bestowing the invincible power of Christ upon his believers. Christ’s Second Coming is in biblical terms going to be another war on the “unsaved”, as Christ is viewed as “the strident warrior-king who comes to defeat the Antichrist”<sup>152</sup> (whatever happened to the gentle peacemaker). Christian traditions of nonviolence are thus largely overshadowed by the gospel narratives that describe angry Jesus cleansing the Temple with force. These narratives could easily transform any war conflict between two sovereign nations into the cosmic battle between Jesus (and his followers) and Satan (and the “unsaved”). The Christian imagery of the Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross should be divorced from American popular understanding of civil sacrifice. People should not be led to believe that the “necessary” sacrifices made in war preserve the American way of life and fundamental Evangelists should stop feeding this dangerous ideology.

The post 9/11 period in the United States could be characterized by demand for the unquestioned obedience and subordination from the citizens, as the government assumed the role of divine ruler who knows what is best for the nation and its enemies. Those who want to question the government’s intentions are shunned, belittled and rebuked in the same way as Jesus rebuked Peter for questioning his mission (“Get behind me, Satan!”<sup>153</sup>). American Christianity and Patriotism share the quality of being intolerant of skeptics. Their vision of loyalty is based purely on a black and white distinction between “us” and “them” (see the Cindy Sheehan case in the previous chapter). Americans tend to identify themselves as the moral, charitable and peace-loving side of the conflict (“us”), while the enemy (“them”) is aggressive, irrational and evil. Victimage rhetoric that occurred after 9/11 glorifies the ultimate sacrifices made by the US soldiers, and at the same time shifts “collateral sacrifices” of

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<sup>151</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 83.

<sup>152</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 183.

<sup>153</sup> Matthew 16:23, New American Standard



war (such as the deaths of Iraqis and Afghanis) off the table.<sup>154</sup> In other words, the loss of American lives equaled an attack on American national sovereignty – these lives were publicly grieved and memorialized. On the other hand, other losses, such as the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the Middle East, are considered less important and unworthy of attention. American post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler asks,

*How is it that certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war; other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as 'grievable'?*<sup>155</sup> This should warn the US allies that their presence in the conflict does not only mean joining in the religious war, but also that their contribution to it is not paid any attention in the United States. It is the American soldiers who are on a “heroic” mission and their bodies are somehow more human (that means worth mourning).

Professor of Religion, Jeffrey Stout warns that ideologies of necessity serve in times of exigency to manipulate people. “Beware of leaders pleading necessity,”<sup>156</sup> he writes. History has shown that whenever leaders’ immoral acts (such as tortures or bombing of civilians) become public, politicians commonly declare that the situation required extreme and “necessary” measures in order to preserve the social good and security.<sup>157</sup> Stout continues *“The necessity excuse belongs to a vicious cycle that has been detrimental to democracy in contexts as different as the final phase of the war against Japan, nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, the Balkans in the 1990s, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the global struggle against terrorism.”*<sup>158</sup> From this point of view, suffering becomes necessary for human well-being and also, in Christian terms, for human salvation. The 9/11 period showed that the logic of sacrifice effectively controls not only religious meanings, but is also equally effective in controlling communication channels with the state powers. The nature of sacrificialism thus remains to be the central conflict in western Christianity and demands a deeper analysis.

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<sup>154</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 204.

<sup>155</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 32.

<sup>156</sup> Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 186.

<sup>157</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 118.

<sup>158</sup> Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 186.

What is more, the myth of redemptive violence with its connections to Christianity is deeply embedded in American war culture. Violence and death are seen as necessary means to achieve “freedom” and please the government (that already assumed the role of divine ruler/God) as all the citizens are encouraged to co-suffer and mourn with soldiers. The passion of Christ has become an analogy for the experience of the nation as a whole. Denton-Borhaug rightly assumes that it was this “strange, forestalled US grief that became a usable resource in the drive toward war after 9/11.”<sup>159</sup> It is true that this hinge of sacrifice between war-culture, American self-identity and religion has its roots in the beginning of American history and that it continues to draw more explicitly from Christian religious formulations, but the intensity of this relationship reached its peak in the development of what I called the modern-day crusade (a kind of total war targeting more than the enemy soldiers). Such crusades employ the whole societies in order to support and work for the military machinery that is upheld by the war culture. The United States is currently by far the most dominant salesperson of weapons to the rest of the world, getting approximately 68 percent of total global sales. The US is also responsible for 41.5 percent of all global military expenditures (followed by China with 5.8 percent).<sup>160</sup> By weakening the influence of the American war culture, more and more links will be revealed between military and civilian/religious institutions. I believe that contemporary theologians must find a way to debunk the framework of blood sacrifices uniting American patriotism, war-culture and Christianity. There must be a shift from revering sacrifice and death to celebrating life. The necessity of Jesus’ death should be questioned and its presence in American popular culture deeply analyzed. Otherwise, Christian sacrificial models along with the celebration of violence in Christian atonement will only further maximize and nurture the American war culture.

I would like to argue that the wall of separation between church and state in the United States is already crumbling (as explained in Chapter one) and that the fundamental Protestantism could only tear it down completely. The model of the state governed by the church has proved to be ill historically and would not treat its citizens equally. Why? Because a government that is enforcing religious uniformity is not a

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<sup>159</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 197.

<sup>160</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Report, “Recent Trends in Military Expenditure,” 21 October 2009. Retrieved March 20, 2012 from <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/resultoutput/trends>

democratic government. At the heart of democracy there is individual freedom. While believers would in such case enjoy exclusive privileges granted by their support to the church-governed government (and God), non-believers would be most likely left behind and persecuted. This becomes extremely dangerous in the global context, as it could give rise to an aggressive, ideologically-driven form of foreign policy targeting any non-Christian nation as its arch enemy. The Islamic countries of the Middle East might have been the first ones to be bullied because of their faith or lack thereof.

The most important shift in American foreign policy after 9/11 was that it became all about terrorism and took precedence over everything else. Terrorism continues to be the primary concern, but this is not a sufficient viewpoint. If American foreign policy is going to engage this century, it should recognize a more interdependent view of the world rather than frame it predominantly through terrorism. Invasions to Iraq and Afghanistan showed that the large campaign against terrorism was not successful. Americans have been condemning the brutality of terrorists and dictators, yet have failed to acknowledge that they themselves are the source of rage in many parts of the Arab world. They rightly recognized that terrorism is a threat that must be addressed, but failed to realize that it is not an existential menace akin to the military and ideological challenges posed by German Nazism and Soviet communism.

### 3.2. Islamophobia after the Boston Marathon Bombing

The Victimhood rhetoric, so typical for the 9/11 period, was once again revived in the wake of April's Boston Marathon bomb attacks when three people were killed and almost two hundred injured. Internet was immediately flooded with comments that eagerly put the blame on Muslims, as media reported a Saudi citizen was supposedly arrested and interrogated. The life in the US stopped that day. Sport events, concerts and meetings were paused so that everyone could pray and mourn with the victims. Pictures of people affected by the blast flooded the web. The local authorities have not identified any suspects yet a plethora of minds on Twitter have clearly been made up as to who committed the act<sup>161</sup>:

*"Patriot Day? Tax Day? Boston, home of the Tea Party? Obviously these bombings were perpetrated by Muslims. Or maybe illegal aliens." – Spike Priggen*

*"Guaranteed some stupid rag head is to blame for these Boston bombings."*

– Michael Knight

*"So a nigger/rag head was responsible for the Boston bombing. Not surprising!"*

– Rev. Norman Price

*"Then 40% of US Muslims need to find a new country to live in."*

– John Betts

*"If we get rid of all these damn raghead terrorists, we wouldn't have these bombings. #prayforboston"*

– Andy Ackerman

Twitter was actually so heavily overcome by xenophobia and Islamophobia that people took notice and began sending out warnings to people of color (POC) in the area who may face backlash. There was an evident allusion to the anti-Muslim rhetoric in 2001, proving that the religious indoctrination ("us" and "them") is still

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<sup>161</sup> Roqayah Chamseddine, "Innocent until proven Muslim," Mondoweiss, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://mondoweiss.net/2013/04/innocent-proven-muslim.html>

strongly felt. Glenn Greenwald from the Guardian did not miss the hysteria and pointed out that *“The rush, one might say the eagerness, to conclude that the attackers were Muslim was palpable and unseemly, even without any real evidence. The New York Post quickly claimed that the prime suspect was a Saudi national (while also inaccurately reporting that 12 people had been confirmed dead). The Post’s insinuation of responsibility was also suggested on CNN by Former Bush Homeland Security Adviser Fran Townsend (“We know that there is one Saudi national who was wounded in the leg who is being spoken to”). Former Democratic Rep. Jane Harman went on CNN to grossly speculate that Muslim groups were behind the attack. Anti-Muslim bigots like Pam Geller predictably announced that this was ‘Jihad in America’.”*<sup>162</sup> Moreover, Greenwald noticed that even after decades Americans still refuse to refrain from xenophobia and accusing “evil” aliens of such deeds. He writes, *“the rush to proclaim the guilty party to be Muslim is seen in particular over and over with such events. Recall that on the day of the 2011 Oslo massacre by a right-wing, Muslim-hating extremist, the New York Times spent virtually the entire day strongly suggesting in its headlines that an Islamic extremist group was responsible, a claim other major news outlets (including the BBC and Washington Post) then repeated as fact. The same thing happened with the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, when most major US media outlets strongly suggested that the perpetrators were Muslims.”*<sup>163</sup>

This Victimage rhetoric is a part of the war culture that was a result of the religious belief in American exceptionalism. The belief in American exceptionalism developed concurrently with a form of imperialism throughout the end of the Cold War and the 1990s. With the United States cementing their military hegemony and assuming roles within international institutions, the belief that the position of the United States in the world was to be the “good force” fighting against the antagonistic “evil” of the Iraqi “villainous nation” became widespread. The US allies, such as Canada, United Kingdom, Japan, and Argentina (but surprisingly also Qatar or Saudi Arabia) are then forced by NATO to join the ideological mission that was never really a defensive war for very little or no recognition at all.

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<sup>162</sup> Glenn Greenwald, “The Boston bombing produces familiar and revealing reactions,” The Guardian, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/apr/16/boston-marathon-explosions-notes-reactions>

<sup>163</sup> Glenn Greenwald, “The Boston bombing produces familiar and revealing reactions,”

### 3.3. Just Peacemaking

I have demonstrated that all three major Christian approaches to war (the Just War Theory, Pacifism, and the Crusade) are extremely vulnerable to misuse and after some time automatically usually develop into militarism, war and ideologically-driven forms of violent conflicts. The Just War Theory reinforces the myth of redemptive violence and bloody sacrificialism, supporting the military intervention, failing to recognize the roots of the conflict. As a result, the whole societies are affected and devastated by the atrocities of war. Likewise, Pacifism lacks clear vision and pathway for specific ways to address injustice, giving way to “pre-emptive” military intervention. There must be a shift in American foreign policy from a theology of “necessary sacrifices” to a theology of peacemaking that would be ethically justifiable to prevent the future conflicts. Theologian Glen Stassen offers ten peacemaking points to lessen the destructiveness of war and provide opportunity for preventing ideological conflicts. Ten peacemaking practices are:

1. Support Nonviolent Direct Action.
2. Take Independent Initiatives to Reduce Threat.
3. Use Cooperative Conflict Resolution.
4. Acknowledge Responsibility for Conflict and Injustice.
5. Advance Democracy, Human Rights and Religious Liberty.
6. Foster Just and Sustainable Economic Development.
7. Work with Emerging Cooperative Forces in the International System.
8. Strengthen the United Nations and International Efforts for Cooperation and Human Right.
9. Reduce Offensive Weapons and Weapons Trade.
10. Encourage Grassroots Peacemaking Groups and Voluntary Associations.<sup>164</sup>

However, the very first step to do is to take the United States out of their “vicious cycles” of fear, guilt and sin and to debunk the ambiguous symbol of

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<sup>164</sup> Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*, 209-240.

“sacrifice” that is penetrating war culture so heavily. What do I mean by vicious cycles? Stassen writes that *“Our (American) fear for safety has led us to trust in the false security of arms; our sin of war has led us to take life; and now we are in danger of taking our own lives as well.”*<sup>165</sup> “To take out of the vicious cycles” means to self-reflect on the past deeds and the whole agenda of the post 9/11 administration. The United States has to take responsibility and admit that their “pre-emptive” wars significantly destabilized the Middle East region and escalated religious tensions. The most vicious cycles of the 9/11 era were thus, again, the eagerness to demonstrate the US military potential and the overdependence on American self-righteousness. Stassen makes it clear that the face of the enemy has always been purposefully distorted so that there was no room for peacemaking: *“We (the US) led the coalition against the Soviet Union and developed an anti-ideology that served not only purposes of containment but also our sense of rivalry, our self-righteousness, and our elite’s economic interests in resisting needed reform. We cast the Soviet Union in the image of Hitler, and therefore missed some openings for conflict resolution. Then when the Soviet Union turned, we cast the Ayatollah Khomeini as the new Hitler and built up Saddam Hussein’s army in its eighty-year war against Iran. And then we cast Saddam as the new Hitler.”*<sup>166</sup> Once the United States is ready to officially acknowledge that the so-called “pre-emptive” wars on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan are huge failure (and the majority of Americans has been already disillusioned by the war in Iraq), it can tackle the manipulative capacity of sacrificial rhetoric. By doing this, soldiers will not be mistaken for martyrs anymore and the “necessity of war” will not be supported by the necessity of Christ’s suffering and death.

I think that American citizens should be more active in debunking this old deadly link between politics and religion, being aware of the fact that both wars on terror could have been prevented by appropriate peace-talking and peacemaking. There are several steps general public should follow:

- Debunk the cynical practice of borrowing religious language to manipulate public interpretation.

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<sup>165</sup> Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*, 219.

<sup>166</sup> Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*, 250.

- Expose religious mystification and glorification that has been tied to the state administration regarding the “necessity of sacrifice” (rejects bloody sacrifices in the name of peacemaking). Investigate sacrificial formulations in public speeches, such as President Obama’s justification for war in his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 2009: *“Peace entails sacrifice ... The United States of America has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms. The service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform has promoted peace and prosperity.”*<sup>167</sup>
- Promote increased awareness of the ways the discourse of sacrifice and victory is manipulated in the public realm.
- Endorse greater public and ecclesial discussion regarding the construction of an ethically justifiable role for religion in public life.
- Deepen the analysis of the religious symbols in military culture.<sup>168</sup>

To conclude my work, I propose that American citizens reject any kind of rhetoric requiring them to devotedly serve the “security” regime that manipulates their sense of fear and sin. American self-identity should not be based on the sacrifice of citizens, or on violence toward other nations/faith communities as “the necessary means” to maintain the national continuity.

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<sup>167</sup> “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize,” 12 October 2009, The Whitehouse.org, accessed April 19, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>

<sup>168</sup> Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*, 90.



## Conclusion

Throughout my thesis I have been gathering enough evidence to prove that the current American war conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are religiously-driven, modern-day Crusades. Both wars are heavily endorsed by prominent Evangelical leaders across the United States and political leaders tend to borrow Christian imagery of necessary sacrifice to electrify their proclamations and thus create a drive for the war. American Christianity enabled the existence of the so-called “war culture”, which directly fused into American popular culture and consumerism. As a result, there are profound efforts to militarize everyday life through various institutions that are permeated by militarized values, goals, and experience.

In the post 9/11 period, the US government, through religious language, assumed the role of God’s chosen nation that engaged in the divine battle with the Antichrist (Islamic nations of the Middle East) with a task to “rid the world of evil” and punish the wrongdoers. Americans tend to identify themselves as the moral, charitable and peace-loving side of the conflict (“us”), while the enemy (“them”) is aggressive, irrational and evil. Victimage rhetoric that occurred after 9/11 glorifies the ultimate sacrifices made by the US soldiers, and at the same time shifts “collateral sacrifices” of war (such as the deaths of Iraqis and Afghanis) off the table. Under both the Bush and Obama administration, citizens were encouraged to sacrifice their lives for this “noble cause” and thus prove their patriotism and Americanism. The Christian imagery of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross served as an encouragement for such sacrifices, as soldiers are publicly celebrated as the Christ-like martyrs. Major Evangelical leaders of the country feed Islamophobia by endorsing the presidential sacrificial language, labeling Islam an “evil and wicked religion”.

What is more, there is the myth of redemptive violence with its connections to Christianity that is deeply embedded in American war culture. Violence and death are seen as necessary means to achieve “freedom” and please the government (that already assumed the role of God’s servant) as all the citizens are encouraged to co-suffer and mourn with soldiers. The passion of Christ has become an analogy for the experience of the nation as a whole. Christian traditions of nonviolence are thus

largely overshadowed by the gospel narratives that describe an angry Jesus cleansing the Temple with force. These narratives could easily transform any war conflict between two sovereign nations into the cosmic battle between Jesus and his followers and Satan along with the “unsaved”. This becomes extremely dangerous in the global context, as it could give rise to an aggressive, ideologically-driven form of foreign policy targeting any non-Christian nation as its arch enemy. The Islamic countries of the Middle East might have been the first ones to be bullied because of their faith or lack thereof.

I suggest that contemporary theologians must find a way to debunk the framework of blood sacrifices uniting American patriotism, war-culture and Christianity. There must be a shift from revering sacrifice and death to celebrating life. The necessity of Jesus’ death should be questioned and its presence in American popular culture deeply analyzed. Otherwise, Christian sacrificial models along with the celebration of violence in Christian atonement will only further maximize and nurture the American war culture.

There must be a shift in American foreign policy from a theology of “necessary sacrifices” to a theology of peacemaking that would be ethically justifiable to prevent future conflicts. I also suggested that American citizens be more active in debunking this old, deadly link between politics and religion, being aware of the fact that both wars on terror could have been prevented by appropriate peace-talking and peacemaking. That being said, I proposed several steps the general public should follow in order to destabilize war culture and its links to fundamental Christian doctrines:

- Debunk the cynical practice of borrowing religious language to manipulate public interpretation.
- Expose religious mystification and glorification that has been tied to the state administration regarding the “necessity of sacrifice” (rejects bloody sacrifices in the name of peacemaking). Investigate sacrificial formulations in public speeches, such as President Obama’s justification for war in his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 2009: *“Peace entails sacrifice ... The United States of America has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood*

*of our citizens and the strength of our arms. The service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform has promoted peace and prosperity.”*<sup>169</sup>

- Promote increased awareness of the ways the discourse of sacrifice and victory is manipulated in the public realm.
- Endorse greater public and ecclesial discussion regarding the construction of an ethically justifiable role for religion in public life.

Deepen the analysis of the religious symbols in military culture.

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<sup>169</sup> “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize,” 12 October 2009, The Whitehouse.org, accessed April 19, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>

## Závěr

Ve své diplomové práci jsem nasbíral dostatek důkazů pro tvrzení, že americké vojenské konflikty v Iráku a Afghánistánu jsou novodobé, nábožensky motivované, křížové výpravy. Obě války jsou mohutně podporovány předními osobnostmi evangelické církve v USA, které přímo ovlivňují dění ve státní správě. Političtí lídři navíc v dobách krize (a především za válečného stavu) rádi sahají k náboženským metaforám týkajících se „nutnosti obětování“ k zdůraznění závažnosti vládních nařízení. Tyto náboženské metafory volající po nezbytnosti krvavých obětí, pocházejí z křesťanství a významně vystupňovaly situaci po teroristických útocích z 11. září. 2001. Americké křesťanství umožnilo v USA vznik takzvané „válečné kultury“, která posléze penetrovala populární kulturu a konzumerismus. V podstatě se jedná o snahu zmilitarizovat denní život Američanů prostřednictvím institucí napojených na armádu, armádní kulturu a armádní hodnoty.

Vláda Spojených států po 11. září 2001 zapojila náboženskou rétoriku k tomu, aby si osvojila roli „vyvoleného národa“, který má za úkol svést biblickou bitvu s nepřítelem Boha, Antikristem (jinými slovy - Muslimskými národy Blízkého východu), potrestat pachatele útoků a zbavit svět zla. Američané se v tomto duelu vidí jako morální, milosrdná a mírotvorná strana dobra, jež musí porazit iracionálně jednající, ďábelské nepřátele. Náboženská rétorika glorifikuje úmrtí amerických vojáků a současně diktuje americkým občanům vnímat nadměrná úmrtí civilistů ve válečných zónách jako přirozený vedlejší produkt válčení. Od dob Bushovy vlády jsou občané navíc vehementně nabádáni obětovat své životy pro „vyšší věc“ a prokázat tak svůj patriotismus a Amerikanismus. Kristova smrt na kříži je obecně vnímána jako vzor takového sebeobětování a vojáci umírající na bojišti jsou přirovnáváni ke Kristovským mučedníkům. Přední osobnosti evangelické církve v USA, jako například Franklin Graham nebo Chuck Colson, pak často veřejně přiživují Islamofóbiu a nazývají Islám „ďábelským a zvráceným“ náboženstvím.

S křesťanstvím se navíc pojí mýtus „vykupitelského násilí“, který je hlavním motorem fungování válečné kultury v USA. Násilí a smrt jsou v něm vnímány jako nezbytné prostředky pro dosažení „svobody“ a potěšení vlády (která se delegovala do role Božího služebníka) a společnost tak cítí, že musí pro své vojáky adekvátně truchlit

a trpět. Utrpení Krista se tak stává analogií pro celistvou zkušenost národa, přičemž křesťanské tradice pasivní rezistence jsou odsuzovány jako neefektivní. Za vzor se místo toho používají příběhy z evangelií, kde Ježíš násilně čistí svůj Chrám od zla. Tyto mytologické příběhy mohou rychle přetransformovat jakýkoliv válečný konflikt mezi dvěma suverénními státy na prastarý biblický střet dobra se zlem, kde ti „dobří“ bojují na straně Boha a ti „zlí“ tvoří Satanovu armádu „nespasených“. Domnívám se, že taková ideologie se může stát extrémně nebezpečnou především v globálním kontextu, kde by v budoucnu mohla vzniknout agresivní forma ideologicky-řízené zahraniční politiky, vybírající si za nepřítel kterýkoliv nekřesťanský stát. Je možné, že současné války v Iráku a Afghánistánu by v takovém případě byly prvním z případů, kdy byl moderní stát napaden pro odlišnou či „nesprávnou“ víru (ideologii).

Ve své práci jsem nastínil, jakým směrem by se měla ubírat americká teologie. Mělo by dojít k rekonstrukci ideologie „nezbytnosti válečných obětí“, která je jakýmsi pojítkem mezi americkým patriotismem, válečnou kulturou a křesťanstvím. Američtí teologové by měli ustoupit od uctívání takových obětí a smrti jakožto vykoupení a spásy. Idea „nevyhnutelnosti“ Ježíšovy smrti na kříži by se měla podrobit hlubšímu zkoumání, jinak hrozí, že násilná smrt bude i nadále vnímána a oslavována jako jediný způsob vykoupení a nadále maximálně vyživovat americkou válečnou kulturu.

Co se týče zahraniční politiky, navrhnul jsem, aby se dal větší prostor mírovým snahám, a aby do procesu přispěli i hlavní představitelé křesťanských církví v USA. Zdá se, že někteří teologové už se do něj aktivně zapojili a upozorňují na praktiky spolupráce státu a církve, které jsou výslovně zakázány americkou ústavou. Jakmile dostanou mírové hovory v americké zahraniční politice více prostoru, zamezí se většině válečných konfliktů. Rovněž nabádám americkou veřejnost, aby podporovala pevnou rozluku státu a církve, protože model státu řízeného církví měl v minulosti katastrofické následky. Americká veřejnost by si měla uvědomit, že obě „preventivní“ války s terorismem na Blízkém východě byly velmi neefektivní a dalo se jim zabránit. V úplném závěru své práce jsem v několika bodech nastínil, jak může americká veřejnost sama destabilizovat válečnou kulturu a odkrýt její smrtící propojení s fundamentalistickými křesťanskými doktrínami.

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## Annotation

This diploma thesis analyzes the role of Christianity in current American wars. Firstly, the thesis examines the separation of church and state in the United States today in relation to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Secondly, it aims to investigate to what extent the current combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan could be seen as religiously-inspired. The main focus is on Christianity and its presence in military planning, strategies and American war culture. It reveals the links between Christian notions of salvation and sacrifice and the aims of the military-industrial complex. Ultimately, the significance of Christian sacrificial rhetoric - in other words, the element that is crucially shaping the present US foreign policy - is explained in the global context.

### Key words:

Christianity    American wars    Christian sacrificial rhetoric    Iraq    Afghanistan  
Sacrifice    War culture

## Anotace

Tato diplomová práce analyzuje úlohu křesťanství v současných amerických válkách (v Iráku a Afghánistánu). Ve své první části zkoumá princip rozluky státu a církve v USA a to hlavně ve vztahu k prvnímu dodatku americké ústavy. Ve druhé kapitole autor shromažďuje důkazy pro tvrzení, že se křesťanství přímo projevuje ve vojenském plánování a probíhajících válečných operacích. Velký důraz je kladen na vysvětlení vzniku takzvané „vojenské kultury“ v USA a jejího napojení na fundamentalistické křesťanství, které usnadňuje politickým lídrům země okořenit jejich rétoriku o křesťanské metafory obětování a vykoupení. Vliv a dopad takového náboženského jazyka je v poslední kapitole zkoumán v globálním kontextu.

### Klíčová slova:

křesťanství    americké války    Irák    Afghánistán    obětování    vojenská  
kultura