

**Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking**  
 Marc Gopin (Oxford University Press, 2000, 312pp, \$29.95)

Marc Gopin has attempted to address, analyze, and suggest remedies for a particular form of violence prominent in our world today: religious violence. He pursues this aim with learning, sensitivity, compassionate understanding, and a fund of conflict-resolution experience that both deepens and, at times, limits his vision. Despite those limitations, this is a volume that challenges, illuminates, and suggests significant initiatives to be pursued. This burgeoning Jewish quest for peace, not as prominent in recent years as in preceding decades, is becoming increasing more important as we seek more humane ways to resolve peacefully the inevitable conflicts among individuals and groups.

By religious violence, Gopin refers primarily to the phenomenon of religious militancy and violence commonly associated with the growth of fundamentalism almost everywhere in the world today. He views this growth partly as the result of the failure of the growing liberal consensus to address simultaneously two human needs: the human need for integration and the human need for uniqueness. He develops a "theology of the outsider" (*ger*), arguing that it is not boundaries as such, but the interpretation of boundaries, that exacerbates conflicts.

Noting a new field of study, that of Religion and Conflict Resolution, he suggests the need to focus on emotional as well as cognitive work, symbolic actions as well as dialogue, and the comprehension of hermeneutics (interpretation of texts and traditions) as vital to enlisting religious energy and dedication in support of peacemaking and peaceful resolutions of conflicts. In this context, the work of Hans Gadamer receives attention in both text and endnotes. With patience and valuable detail, Gopin tries to help the secular mind understand how religious teachings and the possible range of their interpretation may be the key to engaging the fundamentalists in working with others toward the prevention or peaceful resolution of violence-filled confrontations.

Jewish, Muslim, and Mennonite traditions ground the volume in realities often hidden from the outsider. For those of us unacquainted with the "co-existence theologies" of Samuel David Luzzatto and Elijah Benamozegh, 19th-century Orthodox Italian Jewish thinkers, Gopin's presentations will be of special interest. He analyzes the failure of liberal, largely secular peace parties in Israel to take account of the

religious concerns for continuity and identity that currently fuel the anti-peace sentiments among the ultra-Orthodox, and suggests ways of encouraging the latter to find and emphasize the "prosocial" elements in Judaism that could enlist genuine Orthodox support for the peace process.

Some emphases and omissions give me pause. A recurrent theme is peacemaking versus justice: that the purported pursuit of justice can sometimes mask hostility and coercion. One wonders if any genuine peace can last without a solid foundation of justice. In discussing this tension, Gopin quotes Zechariah 8:16 and refers to Psalm 85, yet seems curiously reserved about the prophetic stance.

Missing also, I find, is the acknowledgment of another, possibly greater, religious source of violence in our world: the deeply felt injunction that we be engaged in "resistance to evil and saving lives" by whatever means possible. "You are not to stand by the blood of your neighbor, I am YHWH!" (Leviticus 19:16, Everett Fox translation). The impulse to intervene on behalf of others has been, for millions of human beings throughout the ages, a response to this or similar, widely accepted religious injunctions; and most such interventions have historically employed violence. Only during the past century have serious, nonviolent direct action methods been used on a mass scale, most visibly by Gandhi and King.

For all of its merits, I worry about a volume that directs the reader to hermeneutic niceties while failing to mention such crucial works as Joan Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (1965), Gene Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), or Ackerman and Kruegler's recent (1994) *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*. Conflict resolution and nonviolent direct action are complementary approaches to the avoidance of Armageddon and need to be uttered in the same breath lest Jeremiah's twice-repeated warning apply: "They have treated the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11)

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