

# Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim ‘Human Bombers’

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To understand Muslim ‘human bombers’, we obviously must see them within the discourse of jihad, but also within that of ‘sacrifices’ and ‘gifts’. From this perspective, ‘human bombers’ act because of their social relationships – whether these are with other human beings or with divine persons, conditions, or states of affairs. ‘Human bombings’ are not, therefore, simply matters of utilitarian military tactics, but are also religious and social as gifts, martyrdoms and sacrifices. As ‘sacrifices’, contemporary ‘human bombers’ deviate from the Muslim norm of the sacrificial restraint exemplified by Abraham, and conform instead to a new extremist view of sacrifice as total annihilation.

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The way we ‘talk the talk’ sometimes conforms to the way we ‘walk the walk’; the way we think about things sometimes determines how we will act. The heavy artillery of political and religious rhetoric is routinely wheeled into place alongside the machinery of military combat. Thus, whether it is the world of the latest *intifada* or that of post-9/11, the struggle to control the discourse about these conflicts is just as fiercely contested on the battlefield of language and concept as are the material struggles related to them. In the pages of this publication, Raphael Israeli has argued correctly that careful use of terminology is therefore ‘not a matter of mere semantics, but of great importance in order to discern notions and mindsets and their significance’;<sup>1</sup> I agree. In thinking about al-Qaeda, for example, it is vital that we think about them in ways that illuminate what they do and are. Should they be thought of as hijackers and murderers, suicides and fanatics, or as martyrs, saints, sacrifices, and ‘gifts’?<sup>2</sup> And, what of the Palestinian bombers? Are they also martyrs or suicides, sacrifice, homicide, ‘gifts’ and/or what Raphael Israeli calls them in the quest for a neutral designation – ‘human bombers’?<sup>3</sup>

This article attempts to assess conceptual issues thrown up by naming the particular phenomena that Israeli calls ‘human bombs’. It proposes that we need to pay greater attention to the ‘sacrificial’ designations of these ‘human bombings’ as made by Muslims and which are rooted in Islamic discourse. This is done not in the interests of celebrating the acts of the ‘human bombers’, but for the sake of understanding them better. When we

succeed in understanding the sacrificial aspect of the Islamic ‘human bombings’, I believe we will better understand the purposes and facilitating structures of these acts. Until we do so, we will miss something central to what they are – at least in the minds of those perpetrating these acts.

### **Jihad, Sacrifice and the Many Voices of the ‘Human Bombers’**

Before working toward an analysis of ‘human bombings’ in sacrificial terms, two points must be kept in mind: first, the relation of the ‘human bombers’ to mainstream Islam and second, the content of the ‘human bomber’ ideology. First, ‘human bombers’ are a modern deviant form of Islam, in ‘opposition’ to mainstream Islam, although disproportionately influential in ways that we are only now discovering. And accordingly, as extreme forms of Islam are finding embodiment in movements such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hizballah, and others, they and the innovations they assert are often widely rejected by mainstream Muslims.<sup>4</sup> As such, the rise of the Muslim ‘human bombers’ signals tensions within Islam itself. Second, the image of external, militant *jihad* must be kept firmly in focus as a leading conception of how ‘human bombers’ see themselves.

Regarding sacrifice and suicide in particular, it is, indeed, arguable that ‘*jihad*’ holds the key. I shall refer at length to Raphael Israeli’s persuasive arguments that *jihad* certainly overshadows and invalidates the view that ‘human bombers’ should be called ‘suicides’. Raphael Israeli notes, for example, that even for extremists, the Quranic prohibition against taking one’s life creates cognitive dissonance. Even if a ‘human bomber’ may claim purity of motive, Islamic theology always leaves the final judgment to Allah. So, self-inflicted death, even with conscious religious intent, can never guarantee one’s place in Paradise.<sup>5</sup>

I am also considerably less sure that *jihad* is a mightier concept in these examples of self-inflicted death than ‘sacrifice’. In fact, I am arguing that ‘sacrifice’ is set on a course of its own, although it is woven into the discourse of *jihad* as well. At the very least, I shall try to show how *multivalent* the discourse about ‘human bombers’ is, with ‘sacrifice’ being one of the most prominent ‘voices’ making up the chorus.

Nonetheless, a place for ‘*jihad*’ at the head of the conceptual table cannot easily be denied. In some cases, ‘sacrifice’ might be subsumed to the notion of *jihad*. The recent ‘appendix to an issue of the Muslim fundamentalist organ *al-Islam wa-Filastin* (Islam and Palestine)’, referred to by Raphael Israeli as a ‘manual of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism’, makes this point. There, we hear the author tell us that self-sacrifice is merely what *jihad* requires.<sup>6</sup>

‘Human bombings’ are about killing Jews, Israelis and eliminating Israel itself. The declarations of Hamas and other organizations involved in

them have made this abundantly clear. Little is mentioned of sacrifice in the Charter of Hamas, for example, but a great deal is said of eliminating Israel and *jihad*.<sup>7</sup> Hamas, for example, focuses on the suffering inflicted on the enemy by the 'human bombers' rather than 'extolling their own suffering and sacrifice'. Hizballah likewise demands that the deaths of their 'human bombers' be justified by the number of casualties caused the enemy.<sup>8</sup> These examples, informed as they are by the discourse of *jihad*, should also counsel caution about speaking too simply of sacrifice in connection with the 'human bombers', since sacrifices are not typically directed *against* the interests of another.

Despite the clear *jihadist* conception behind 'human bombings', they persist in being conceived as sacrifices by their perpetrators – even if this produces a 'convoluted' or internally conflicted discourse.<sup>9</sup> Beyond their action in service of *jihad*, the 'human bombings' are also seen as supreme gifts given in the interests of enhancing the conditions of others. Multivalence reigns. One way that this gap between the utility of military attack and the symbolism of the sacrificial deed is bridged will be by recourse to the alternative description of these 'human bombings' as 'martyrdom operations'. They are deaths suffered in active struggle on behalf of Islam or Palestine. Thus, sacrifice bombers can thus also, and at the same time, be martyrdom bombers. But this only adds yet another 'voice' to what I have already referred to as a kind of 'chorus' of voices all singing in unison provided by the 'human bombings'.

Even if we grant *jihad* a prominent place at the conceptual high-table of 'human bombings', we may nevertheless have to adopt something even more of the viewpoint of a segment of Islam that views them as *sacrifices* to understand even some *jihadist* aspects of 'human bombings'.<sup>10</sup> I urge that more attention needs to be paid to nuances, qualifications and inner contradictions of the standard interpretation of 'human bombings' as simple instances of *jihad* attacks. Jihad is only a part of the 'human bombers' story. Thus, even as practical military acts of *jihad*, these operations are fraught with an ambiguity and multivalence that I shall try to exploit in bringing to the fore the idea of sacrifice.

Even from a strictly military point of view, it seems strategically of dubious efficiency to undertake operations that in effect guarantee the loss of one's fighters in every assault.<sup>11</sup> Ideally, for a movement aimed at actual military victory, it would seem to make more sense if, instead of killing themselves in the process of making their attacks, the 'human bombers' could have gone on killing many more Israelis in subsequent non-suicidal attacks. Osama bin Laden surely continues to inspire more terror today as potentially alive than he would have had he died in a martyrdom operation in Afghanistan. Although perhaps militarily defensible – if only for the

terror incited and for the economic costs to Israel – the strictly military rationality of these operations does not seem necessarily or undividedly the only priority of these self-inflicted deaths.

‘Human bombers’ however, have a kind of efficiency of their own. Indeed, as Kramer has shown about the Lebanese ‘human bombers’ in the 1980s, self-martyrdom must be productive in order to receive clerical sanction. Killing oneself in a futile and unproductive attack wins no merit.<sup>12</sup> The ‘human bombers’ can get close; they can choose their time and place of attack with great precision; they cannot be interrogated afterwards for information about their future plans. Still, strictly from the perspective of the ugly calculus of *jihadist* military efficiency, the loss of such devoted fighters at some point may be subject to the law of diminishing returns. But then again, the demographic imbalance between an Arab Muslim population in the many tens of millions against Israel’s five million make such calculations rather theoretical. Ambiguity and multivalence affect this calculation of a rational ends-means calculus.

With Raphael Israeli, then, I believe that we need to adopt an even more ‘Islamic frame of reference for definition and perhaps a diagnosis... if we are to comprehend the underlying motives of this sort of unparalleled mode of self-sacrifice’.<sup>13</sup> A great part of that ‘Islamic frame of reference’ for the ‘human bombings’ is sacrifice. If in Israel/Palestine one goal of these deaths is to attack others outright in *jihad*, then another, simultaneous one, is to create a Palestinian political entity by making a *sacrificial* offering to Allah and the *umma*. While the ‘human bombers’ aim to kill Jews, they also are embedded in their families and communities, and in a world encompassed by a supreme being that has a political teleology of its own beyond killing Jews. The meaning of the actions of the ‘human bombers’ derives at least in part from both the web of human and divine relationships in which they seem themselves living now, and as they imagine their extended families and people living in the future. There is more to ‘human bombers’ than *jihad*, and certainly more than suicide. There is sacrifice.

### **Sacrifice or Suicide?**

Once attention is drawn to talk of violence we see rather quickly that words like sacrifice, suicide or homicide are not neutral designations, but ‘loaded’ words – evaluations of certain actions. This is to say that language becomes an *integral part* of the physical struggles involved, and not things set aside and independent of them. Calling a death a suicide or homicide is rhetorically a means of loading it with a certain dubious value while calling it a sacrifice or act of martyrdom is to raise it to transcendent heights – thereby, of course, to religious levels of discourse and behavior. In calling

a death sacrifice, it is typically ennobled, raised to a level above the profane calculation of individual cost-benefit analysis – to the level of a so-called 'higher' good, whether that be of a nation or some transnational or transcendent reference, like a religion. For this reason, the neutral term coined by Raphael Israeli, 'human bombers', serves a useful purpose.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, we will need to clear up some conceptual or terminological issues from the outset.

As for terminology, Raphael Israeli has recently made some useful contributions to the discussion of why 'human bombers' should not be classified as suicides. In the case of Palestinian 'human bombers', Israeli argues it is better to call them 'Islamikaze'.<sup>15</sup> Palestinian 'human bombers' do not fit the 'psychological or pathological' profile of a suicide,<sup>16</sup> but rather conform more to that of the Japanese 'kamikaze' – in explicit contrast to 'suicides' such as 'hara kiri'. Israeli likewise reports that al-Qaeda even maintained formal 'Kamikaze Barracks' in Afghanistan!<sup>17</sup>

In support of this rejection of the description of the 'human bombers' as 'suicides', Israeli notes how the motivational profile of suicides differ from those whom Israeli calls 'Islamikazes' and 'human bombers'.<sup>18</sup> Like 'kamikazes', the 'human bombers' are dedicated to 'wreaking havoc on their enemies', and not primarily to their own destruction;<sup>19</sup> they seek to minimize their own losses, while maximizing those of the enemy.<sup>20</sup> They, in short, embody the active ethic of militant *jihad* that we discussed at the outset, not that of a self-destructive retreat from a troubled world.

### **Suicide or Sacrifice? A Sociological and Religious Solution**

While accepting Israeli's analyses in terms of personal psychological motivations as useful and instructive, the phenomenon of 'human bombers' needs much more by way of *sociological* and theological analysis. In this view, human bombing – whether to do *jihad*, sacrifice or even to commit suicide – happens not only because of personal, self-contained motivational structures, but also because of their *relationships with others* (whether these be relationships with other human beings or with divine superhuman persons, conditions, or states of affairs). As interesting as Israeli's analyses are, they are *sociologically* and *religiously* inadequate, because they are at best only incipient attempts to bring this perspective to bear on 'human bombings'. I wish to exploit this lack and to develop at least one kind of sociological or and religious perspective to bear on 'human bombers'.<sup>21</sup>

To do this, I wish to dwell briefly on France of over a hundred years ago, in the midst of an outburst of anarchist terrorist violence, impending war, and an epidemic of suicides. The great French sociologist Émile

Durkheim obsessed about these issues, about the way that they could best be minimized and explained, and about the possible hidden connections among these apparently disparate phenomena that escaped the untutored eye. How do we account for the disparities among different populations in terms of the occurrence of suicide in modern France? Why were French Protestants more likely to commit suicide than, say, French Catholics of roughly the same socio-economic and regional membership? Should we regard these suicides in the same or different light as we regard death in a hopeless cause on the battlefield?

While sociologists will recognize Durkheim for his first book on this subject, aptly titled *Suicide*, it is not so well appreciated that his theory of sacrifice in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) and that of his co-workers, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss in *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (1899), are conceptually linked with the work on suicide.<sup>22</sup> Again, were the suicides among rootless industrial workers, for example, related at all to the prospect of 'suicidal' infantry assaults in the upcoming war? Or were these kinds of death only superficially similar in their hopelessness? Further in this vein, in *Suicide*, Durkheim was particularly puzzled about how to conceive the occurrence of what he called 'altruistic suicide' – cases of individuals giving up their lives – sacrificially – for others, as say in a war where a soldier dies to save his comrades. Since he was viscerally averse to suicide in any form, Durkheim puzzled over the question of how it was possible that these altruistic suicides were seen by otherwise admirable societies as praiseworthy?

If those who praised altruistic suicides were correct in their valuation, should we not call them something else that signals their lofty moral stature? Are they not a sort of 'sacrifice' instead? And, if we chose to do so, what were we implying in our use of the term 'sacrifice'? Did it mean that the 'sacrifices' incurred in dying for one's comrades were like sacrifices elsewhere, say, in the Catholic 'sacrifice' of the Mass, or in sacrifices in the world religions, like that done on the *Hajj* by Muslims? And, if there was something linking these various uses of the word 'sacrifice', what could it be?

Durkheim made little or no progress on this dilemma, although the conceptual thread relating suicide to sacrifice that he left dangling was to be picked up a generation later by one of his most talented co-workers, Maurice Halbwachs. While hugely loyal to the Durkheimian legacy, Halbwachs was never satisfied with the way that Durkheim handled the conceptual relation of suicide to sacrifice. In a dedicated study of his own on suicide, *The Causes of Suicide* (1930), Halbwachs revisited the question of the relation of suicide to other kinds of deaths, in particular to those highly regarded, such as altruistic or sacrificial deaths in warfare.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Halbwachs came up with a formula that seemed to him at any rate to ease the conceptual tangle over sacrifice and suicide left behind by Durkheim. Curiously, Halbwachs' solution was to be more Durkheimian than Durkheim, in a way. He simply made relative the matter of usage by referring these terms to their social contexts. Whether something was a 'sacrifice' rather than a 'suicide' depended upon the viewpoint of the respective societies of reference. Halbwachs tells us that 'society claims sacrifice as its own proper work', accomplished 'within the bosom of the community, where all the spiritual forces converge...' <sup>24</sup>

Society thus 'presides' over sacrifice, says Halbwachs; it 'organizes' it and 'takes responsibility for it'. By contrast, society 'repudiates' suicide. <sup>25</sup> Thus to Durkheim's attempt to define suicide – 'We call suicide all those cases of death resulting from an action taken by the victim themselves, and with the intention or the prospect of killing oneself' – Halbwachs first added the phrase 'and which is not at the same time a sacrifice'. <sup>26</sup>

This seemingly innocuous formula brought sacrifice and suicide into conceptual relationship to one another as limiting cases of each other. Halbwachs was, in effect, saying that the only feature making suicidal and sacrificial deaths different was society's *attitude*. Suicide and sacrifice differ because of their relation to society. A death, such as that of a *sati* in traditional India might be considered a sacrifice under the conditions typically prevailing there, but it most certainly 'becomes a suicide if it loses its ritual form'. <sup>27</sup> Halbwachs' insight is one that I think we can capitalize upon in discussing the matters of religious violence.

As if confirming the value of the sociological apperception that Halbwachs' conceptual work brings to our subject, Avishai Margalit recently published an analysis of the so-called suicide bombings in Israel and the territories worthy of Durkheim and Halbwachs. While these deaths seem to be the calculated utilitarian acts of individuals, Margalit argues that they are motivated by a vengeance marked by a strong desire for 'spectacular revenge'. They are thus exemplary signs that are intended for certain audiences to read and receive, and are therefore profoundly social acts. Their success seems necessarily to rely upon the kind of communal recognition and subsequent ritual celebration of the operations by the community from which the bomber comes. Margalit observes as well how much social prestige accrues to the bombers. Everyone knows their names, Margalit tells us that even 'small children' know the names of human bombers. <sup>28</sup>

Raphael Israeli also brings home the point of the '*jihadist*' nature of the 'human bomber' attacks, as we have already discussed. But, he notes beyond this that such an individual death is a profoundly *social* act: it is done so that the 'entire Islamic *umma* is rescued'. <sup>29</sup> Bin Laden likewise

made clear that in his mind, the 9/11 hijackers belong intimately to the community and are duly celebrated: 'The 19 brothers who sacrificed their lives in the sake of Allah were rewarded by this victory that we rejoice today'.<sup>30</sup> Or, if we are to take radical Islamist Palestinians seriously in describing the self-immolating deaths in Israel and the territories as 'martyrdoms', then we need to think about these acts of religious violence in ways that we have not perhaps yet done thoroughly – as 'sacrifices'.<sup>31</sup>

This is precisely what Halbwachs had in mind in speaking of society 'claiming sacrifice as its own proper work', of sacrifice accomplished 'within the bosom of the community, where all the spiritual forces converge...' or of a society that 'presides' over sacrifice, 'organizes' it and 'takes responsibility for it'.<sup>32</sup> Sacrifice is a profoundly *social* action, essentially involving a network of relationships, typically, as we will see, actualized in terms of systems of social exchange. Sacrifice is not something to be understood solely in terms of the dynamics of an individual's psyche.<sup>33</sup>

What is more, sacrifice is not just a social deed. It also has potent religious resonance. Durkheim and another two of his co-workers, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, argued that sacrifice is more than just a socially sanctioned kind of self-inflicted death. It is also a 'making holy', as the Latin origins of the term indicate –*sacri-ficium*'.<sup>34</sup> Sacrifice for the Durkheimians is indeed a giving up or giving of *that makes something holy*. Thus, for Durkheimians, these 'human bombings' would not tend to be conceived as simply utilitarian acts. As we have learned, the 'human bombers' are regarded as 'sacred' by their communities of reference. They have been 'made holy' in the eyes of the community that 'accepts' them and their deed. They are elevated to lofty moral, and indeed, religious, levels, as sacrificial *victims* themselves or as kinds of holy saints.

Thus, bin Laden celebrated 'Hani Hanjour from Al-Ta'if, the destroyer of the center of the US defense – the Pentagon – in appropriate words relating to this newly perceived reality of the self-sacrificing 'human bomber' 'victim'. He concludes that because of this act of self-immolation Hani Hnajour should win acceptance by Allah, thus sealing his having *been made holy* in the process of his human bombing: 'Clear purity and a splendid sacrifice. We beseech Allah to accept him as a martyr'.<sup>35</sup> Finally, like those one regards as holy, the bombers cast themselves as innocents. As young people, and now notably young women, indeed, in many respects, they are classic candidates for attributed innocence. Thus, especially when young 'human bombers' die in the course of an operation itself deemed morally meritorious, they attempt to turn the moral tables on



the enemy. It is as if they are saying in their self-destruction: 'See what you have made us do!'<sup>36</sup>

The point to be made here – that the language of sacrifice and suicide are 'loaded' – is to say that their meanings are relational. Unless Americans see how al-Qaeda can imagine things in this way, I do not believe that we will be able to access their deeper processes of thought. I am urging us at least to take up Halbwachs' point and see what those promoting these deaths and self-immolations thought they were doing, and consequently why they think they are right in so doing.

Taking together both that social recognition and high religious or moral qualities of innocence color these bombing operations, I conclude that these are neither easily described as straightforward utilitarian attacks nor pitiful suicides. They are not mere attacks because they are systematically careless of preserving the life of the attacker and in doing so seem to take their meaning and rationales from the prestige accorded them by their social group of reference and their transcendent religious location.<sup>37</sup>

They are, nonetheless, not just suicides, in part because they remain offensive attacks, but also because they have high moral or religious purpose imputed to them. This is why I argue that we should see if we could gain further insight into these phenomena by taking seriously other sorts of descriptions that accommodate the social and religious-moral qualities of these acts. In this case, I suggest that we can acquire just these sorts of insights by referring to the insider point of view of these deaths and immolations. From within this world-view, these bombings and immolations are routinely and regularly described as 'martyrdoms' and 'sacrifices'.<sup>38</sup>

### **Mighty Shi'a Martyrs**

In broaching the question of *the* Muslim view of sacrifice and martyrdom, we must be careful not to offend the diversity of Muslim opinion, here made acute, as we will see, by the modern innovations introduced into the discourse of sacrifice, martyrdom and *jihad* by the Islamists. As it turns out, that diversity of Muslim opinion runs along rather different lines than it has in the past. No longer, as we will now see, are Shi'a and Sunni quite as opposed to one another as those we may call moderates and extremists – no matter what their sectarian affiliation.

In order to gauge this deviation from Muslim traditions, both of greater longevity and much broader present-day allegiance, we can see how the Muslim (here primarily Sunni) *mainstream* regards 'martyrdom' or 'sacrifice'. Much of this will be familiar to Western readers, since both the notion of martyr and sacrifice derive from elements of a common

Abrahamic tradition, and mean roughly what they do in Judaism and Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

Of the two notions, however, 'martyrdom', shows the most difference in meaning for Muslims and Christians. Instead of the passive Christian sense of martyr as a literal 'witness' on Allah's behalf, the Sunnis see all deaths suffered in active struggle on behalf of Islam as martyrdoms.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, Christians seem less certain, although not always consistent from time to time and place to place, about the application of the title of 'martyr' to all cases in which Christians might have died in some connection with the interests of Christianity.<sup>41</sup> Thus, for example, while in a context where one might have expected official ecclesiastical sanctioning of death in battle against the enemies of the Church, such as in the Crusades, 'references to martyrdom are quite, but not very, common', and then primarily found in the writings of the medieval historians of the crusades, often from addresses given to crusading societies.<sup>42</sup> But by the twelfth century, martyrdom had become 'an integral part of the crusading experience', with the likes of St Bernard of Clairvaux articulating its ideal.<sup>43</sup>

It still, however, seems rare to find either those who participated in the Crusades, or even those who died in battle during a Crusade, officially canonized as 'martyrs' because of that participation.<sup>44</sup> This appears so even under the broadest definition of a 'crusade' – the eight generally recognized Crusades dating roughly from 1095 to 1699.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of a Crusader who subsequently becomes a 'saint' – but still not martyr – was San Juan de Capistrano. In 1454, he assisted at the Diet at Frankfort in its deliberations concerning a 'crusade against the Turks for the relief of Hungary'. Against the Turks at Belgrade, Juan actually led a 'wing' of the army commanded by the fifteenth-century Catholic patriot and governor of Hungary, Janos Hunyady.<sup>46</sup>

Another example of the sainted crusader – although again not canonized for his martyrdom – was Louis IX of France. He led both the Sixth and the Seventh Crusades, and died in 1270 at the outset of the Seventh. And, while he suffered captivity and imprisonment by the Muslims from 1244 to 1249, he was not declared a 'martyr' for this, or for any other reason, at his canonization by Pope Boniface VIII in 1297. Actually Louis survived his many ordeals in the Levant only to die of dysentery. Similarly, the thirteenth-century Yorkshire Crusader, St Leonard of Resesby, attained sainthood apparently in some obscure connection with his miraculous release from a Saracen prison, and not because of any death – martyrdom or otherwise – suffered for attempting to liberate the 'Holy Land'.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, while there seems to be no evidence of Crusaders officially canonized as 'martyrs' for their having died in a Crusade, those who suffered persecution or death by the Muslims were described as martyrs, following the spirit of the classic pattern. The old passive pattern of dying for the faith by refusing to betray it is retained in the Crusades, although also supplemented. Thus, in an eleventh-century account of the *First Crusade, The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, a medieval historian of the Crusades, Guibert of Nogent, says that 'We have heard of many who, captured by the pagans and ordered to deny the sacraments of faith, preferred to expose their heads to the sword than to betray the Christian faith in which they had been instructed'.

These count as martyrs for Guibert.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the theme of an active martyrdom, as preached before Guibert's time, and thus before the First Crusade, may well have prepared the way for recruitment of its participants and for the legitimacy of their efforts as evidenced in Guibert's history.<sup>49</sup> Thus Guibert's sensibilities in regards to Christian warriors as martyrs rests on the centuries-old prestige of martyrdom, properly reaffirmed to characterize the deaths in battle of Christian knights, at least since the time of Charlemagne.<sup>50</sup>

On the other side, the lack of such consistent and robust canonical recognition may, in large part, only be a feature of a peculiarity in its bureaucratic mechanisms of implementation. The Roman Church tended to discourage the pursuit of martyrdom after Constantine's Edict of Milan and the official recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Empire. The Roman Church certainly forbade Christians 'seeking' martyrdom, and counseled a piety of prudence in its place.<sup>51</sup> But, when we turn to levels of ecclesiastical recognition below the canonical level, and especially in the struggles where Christians find themselves pitted against non-Christian forces, such as Islam or Nazism, an altogether different attitude prevails.<sup>52</sup> There, the classic passive pattern seems to have adapted to the aggressive tendencies of popular and non-canonical piety and preaching of the early Crusades.<sup>53</sup> Here, an active conception of the warrior martyr obliterates the differences between Christianity and Islam.<sup>54</sup> Once again, Guibert of Nogent's *The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, provides the text:

No land on earth will ever see soldiers of such nobility fighting together. If you wish, I shall relate the story of every kingdom, speak of battles done everywhere; none of these will be able to equal either the nobility or the force of these men. They left their paternal lands, abandoned conjugal bonds, their children were unattractive to them, remaining at home was punishment for them; in every knight the desire for martyrdom burns.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, since Islam does not possess a single canonical law or law-giving body, we are left with what amounts to a rough consensus among its major systems of jurisprudence. There, the overwhelming consensus of Muslim tradition, furthermore, holds that martyrdom is not a ‘status to be achieved by the individual warrior, and performed as though it were his own private act of worship’.<sup>56</sup> It is instead a defined social role, as Halbwachs would well understand, heavily regulated by communal standards, debated extensively in that most social of languages – that of jurisprudence. It is, in any event, always ‘something bestowed by Allah as a favor on the warrior for his selflessness and devotion to the community’s defense’. It is never an individual act voluntarily undertaken on one’s own authority.<sup>57</sup> And, it certainly is never suicide.

According to recent observers of the Islamic world, however, the contemporary theology of Muslim martyrdom has taken even greater turns from the common Abrahamic root in recent times. In the hands of Sunni extremists, it has been described as ‘an entirely modern innovation...’ since it would ‘justify calling someone who kills civilians and noncombatants a “martyr”’.<sup>58</sup> Martyrdom in this way is seen as ‘a human response to the call of Allah to sacrifice oneself for the sake of Islam, and to inflict loss on the enemies of Allah’.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is utterly non-traditional for Sunni extremists to refer to a Palestinian ‘suicide’ bomber as a ‘martyr’ – (*sheheen*) or Osama bin Laden to the 9/11 suicide hijackers in the same way. ‘Violence’, in Islamic tradition, instead ‘must be proportional and that, in repelling an aggressor, only the necessary amount of force should be used’.<sup>60</sup> Yet, the Islamist extremists claim that ‘martyrdom is a pure act of worship, pleasing to Allah, irrespective of Allah’s specific command’. This, their Muslim critics charge, is simply ‘a terrifying new kind of nihilism’, influenced, as we will see, by radicalized Shi’a militants like Hizballah and the Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>61</sup>

A similar kind of extremist transformation of traditional concepts of martyrdom also conspicuously marks the Shi’a, long noted for the prominent place reserved in their spirituality and ritual life for the idea of martyr. The Shi’a notion of martyrdom is rooted in the commemoration of the death of Muhammed’s grandson, Imam Husayn in 680 in a straightforward military battle at the hands of the forces of the local Umayyad governor, Ubayadallah ibn Ziyad at Karbala in present-day Iraq. No martyrdom, in the strict literal sense of the word, thus originally took place. Some scholars suggest that Husayn was simply poorly prepared for war, and in all respects, this was just a political struggle with the Umayyads. Shi’a piety nonetheless plays upon the failures of others to aid Husayn, upon his abandonment by those from whom he had expected assistance, whether wisely or not.

The pathos of the death of Husayn thus produced at least two religious consequences. First, the Shi'a religious imagination is driven by a sense of guilt about responsibility for Husayn's death. His devotees affirm that, if history could be reversed, modern day Shi'a would rush to Husayn's aid.<sup>62</sup> But since history cannot be undone, Shi'a devotees ritually re-enact efforts to aid Husayn, or indeed to shed blood and even die for him. Pious members of the Shi'a community in *Ashura* commemorate this ritual participation in the drama of Husayn's death annually on the tenth day of the Muslim month of Muharram.<sup>63</sup>

These ritual practices seek to demonstrate willingness on the part of the faithful to undergo privation and death in a mystical attempt to show that they would have risked all to save Husayn, had they been present at Karbala in 680. Thus, ritual self-flagellation (*mâtam*) expresses and realizes a resolve to share the fate of Husayn or mystically to come to his aid. By ritual extension, in our own day, this resolve to save Husayn is converted into the willingness to accept death in order to fight other Muslims threatening the Shi'a people, as shown by the deaths of young Iranian soldiers in defense of the Islam of the Iranian revolution against Iraq.<sup>64</sup> Some Iranian prisoners of war, upon being released from Iraqi captivity, confessed 'shame' at not having died in order to defend the new Islamic republic of Iran.<sup>65</sup>

Second, rising to the level of symbol, Husayn then becomes increasingly regarded as having died a martyr's death on the Sunni pattern – as an active fighter against injustice. Those following Husayn thus resolve to prepare themselves to be martyrs as well. Martyrdom thus takes on a more active aspect, for example, in reinterpretations of Husayn's death as a sacrificial struggle – against Muslims or anti-Islamic practices by either Muslims or non-Muslims alike.

Opposition to a supposedly non-Islamic institution, such as the monarchy of the (Muslim) Umayyads is said by some Shi'a to have caused Husayn's military campaign in the first place. Raphael Israeli has argued that the Sunni extremists reflect the influence of Shi'a militants such as Hizballah in Lebanon, and advance this extreme version of martyrdom in contemporary days. Even more radical since 1986, and spurred on by the theological innovations of the Ayatollah Khomeini, they have also projected onto the victimization of Imam Husayn at Karbala in 680 CE a hitherto unknown desire for his own self-immolation in the course of *jihad*!<sup>66</sup> Therefore, there is a cross-fertilization of extremist ideologies and theologies of both the Sunni and Shi'a, and an emergence of a radical ideology of martyrdom, self-immolating sacrifice and *jihad* – culminating in one way or another in the phenomenon of the 'human bombers'.

### Abraham or the Prophet, Routine or Extreme?

Despite the increased influence of Shi'a conceptions of sacrifice and martyrdom upon the entire Muslim world, attention must be given to the longstanding, widespread and still prevailing views of sacrifice proper to the majority Sunni population. One of the common words for sacrifice here is 'adha' – the same 'adha' as in the name of the great feast celebrating the end of Ramadan, the 'Eid al adha'. The roots of sacrifice in such ritual contexts reach down into the very traditions of ritual sacrifice in Islam. These traditions are generally conditioned by Muslim readiness to *give of* themselves for Allah and is commonplace for the Muslim community in its routine of *zakat*, the charitable giving counted as one of the pillars of Islam. But, all is not so unproblematic.

Theologically, a crisis lies in wait in the offering for Muslims, since in the face of an omnipotent deity it is hard to see how devotees could justify limiting the extent of their devotion and giving by routines and rituals, however piously engaged. In narrative form, this crisis comes to a head in the case of Abraham's problematic attempted sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>67</sup> Understanding the exact complex nature of Abraham's obedience, his willingness to give to the utmost what Allah requires, and Allah's relaxation of the demand for Isaac's life in turn inform the thinking about sacrifice for Muslims. This is regardless of whether these sacrifices are ritual, existential or metaphoric. Abraham becomes a model for pious Muslims to emulate in their everyday lives, even if the meaning of the model is contested.<sup>68</sup>

In general, the Abraham/Isaac story has legitimized a moderate view of sacrifice. In our own time, however, in at least two ways, the moderate model has been challenged by the rise of modern deviations from the traditional Abraham model. In both cases, the tone and extent of sacrifice are ratcheted up either by replacing Abraham with Muhammad as the model of sacrificial behavior<sup>69</sup> or an extreme interpretation of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac.

In the case where the Prophet replaces Abraham, he is cast as the chief example of both *self*-sacrificial death and self-sacrifice ('*tad'hia*') that is linked essentially with *jihad*. Abraham seems to exemplify moderate, everyday, prudent sacrifice – a giving *of* a victim or a portion of one's treasure, by contrast with the total giving *up* signaled by modern extremist commentary on the example of Muhammad. Thus, the choice as to the kind of sacrifice demanded of the Muslim would depend upon whether or not Muslims felt that the *umma*'s very existence was threatened – a highly subjective matter. In normal times, the prudent 'giving *of*' would suffice. But *in extremis*, the ultimate 'giving *up*' would become the norm.<sup>70</sup> As

Raphael Israeli notes, extremist scholars support this interpretation of the Prophet's behavior in times of extreme danger. They point to:

the famous Hadith, where the Prophet undertook to die for Allah, to come back to life and then die once again. This means that there was no bigger goal in the Prophet's own existence than to die for Allah, and repeatedly so. Therefore, this tenet constitutes, in the author's mind, a divine guideline that applies everywhere at all times.

Annihilating self-sacrifice thus becomes integral to situations where *jihad* is enjoined. This sort of self-immolating *jihad* should then become 'the standard behavior of all Muslims who seek battle at the highest level of risk' – although not, apparently, at levels of routine, everyday risks.<sup>71</sup>

Before considering both the tradition of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac and its uses by the extremists, a theological note is in order. It seems to me that, like other theological efforts such as theodicy, the efforts undertaken by these extremist Muslim theologians to reconcile their advocacy of self-sacrifice with the explicit Quranic declaration of the 'sanctity of human life' are bound to look 'convoluted'.<sup>72</sup> These interpretations *look* convoluted because they *are*! Like perennial efforts to 'justify the ways of God to men', the Islamists are not likely to reconcile all things, because the levels of divine and human discourse are so essentially different. Furthermore, these extremist interpretations are also likely to continue to both *look and be* convoluted because they seek – impossibly, I would argue – to force the many rushing streams of Islamic theology into a channeled orthodoxy.

### **Abraham's Dilemma: Total Sacrifice or Prudent Sacrifice?**

Of all sacrifices performed by Sunnis, the most exemplary, traditional and routine is that done during the *Hajj* in remembrance of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac. The extremists are challenging its prestige today in several ways. At a key point in the *Hajj*, pious Muslims will ritually slaughter and sacrifice an intermediary victim, traditionally a bovine animal, such as a goat. In this way, the pious *Hajji* give of themselves in the act of ritual sacrifice ('qurbani') – literally a 'bringing near' (that is, to Allah).<sup>73</sup>

This sacrifice is so much part of everyday Muslim spiritual formation that efforts are made for *any and all* Muslims to perform it. Thus, since it is expensive both to make the *Hajj* to Mecca, and to purchase a suitable sacrificial animal for qurbani, elaborate means have been devised for universal participation in this sacrifice. Thus, although £140 is the price quoted for a sheep in Palestine, for a relatively small sum of £45 pious

Muslims wishing to perform their qurbani can send either corned or frozen portions of a properly butchered sheep to their less fortunate Palestinian brothers and sisters.<sup>74</sup>

Deployed and embedded even more broadly in Islamic religious life, the term *qurbani* is often used more generally to name all aspects of Muslim charitable giving.<sup>75</sup> There is, for example, a website called 'On-Line Qurbani' where one is invited to donate to feed families in several countries.<sup>76</sup> Far from anything to do with *jihad*, then, a critical strand in the Muslim understanding of sacrifice (*qurbani*) is that of a *gift*, and as a limited, modest or even partial one at that.

Considering this emphasis on *normal* Muslim sacrifice as the prudent *giving of* over the extreme *giving up*, despite the pervasiveness of the Muslim sacrificial tradition, in both ritual and moral senses, self-immolation, self-sacrifice and certainly human sacrifice are never optional. Along with the ritual sacrifice of bovine animals, it is instead the limited practices of self-denial, such as mortification, fasting, and charitable giving that are regarded as paradigmatically sacrificial. Thus, joining with Abraham in substituting as a sacrament an animal victim for the sacrifice of Isaac, Sunni Muslims do what may be regarded as sacrifices of the spirit, of bodily mortification or gifts of their material wealth, in further imitation of the submissive spirit to Allah's command. Highest on this list of rituals connected with sacrifice is the 'feast of sacrifice' – the festival banquet bringing to an end the period of self-denial typical of Ramadan – the Eid al Adha. The extreme of *giving up* is held at arm's length distance from normal everyday Islam.

But Abraham's sacrifice, no matter how interpreted under normal circumstances and across the great length of Muslim history, is still embedded in a story that relates humans to an incomprehensible divinity. Because of this essential connection with the divine will, the nuances of the story also become the bases of consequential interpretive disputes among Muslims bearing on how extreme the sacrifice demanded of people really might be.

For example, given the Quranic reverence for human life, how was it that Allah *really* command Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac? Was this order, perhaps, a devious piece of deception set to test Abraham's loyalty to Quranic values? Therefore, did – either or both – Abraham or Isaac accept this command, as earnest and true? Or, did they hear it as something laced with divine irony or only meant to be enacted symbolically – say by substituting a ram, as Muslims today do in the *Hajj's* ritual sacrifices? Other interpreters, less enamored of the Quranic valuation of human life and more impressed with the equally Quranic assertion of the mystery of divinity's ways, claim that both father and son



did indeed embrace the command to sacrifice Isaac literally and earnestly. *Giving up* gradually begins to push *giving of* off center stage, at least among these interpreters:

People today may see themselves as individuals and that they are independent, that they have no responsibility to anybody, that the *ahkam sharia* does not apply to them. They don't care about what the Muslim Ummah is facing; they say that Islam only applies to individuals in their houses and should have no affect in life.

Did Ibrahim [Abraham] (as) carry this idea that he is independent, that he is an 'individual' who does not have to take the orders of anybody. Was he selfish? Did Ismael [Isaac] take his own benefit rather than what Allah had commanded? Did Ibrahim (as) disobey the command of Allah to sacrifice his son? On the basis that he was an individual and that was against his benefit?<sup>77</sup>

The answer to this series of rhetorical questions is that he did not.

Other Muslims, (I shall call them Muslim humanists) however, take the contrary view that Abraham always understood the command to be a kind of test to see if he could distinguish a diabolic deception from a divine order. Would he follow an unrighteous order – an order in conflict with Quranic values and Allah's true nature? In defense of this interpretive tactic, the Muslim humanists note that the patriarch did, after all, arrive at the idea of sacrificing Isaac by the mitigating medium of a dream. The Quran tells us straightforwardly that Abraham says to Isaac: 'O my son, I have seen in a *dream* that I should sacrifice you'.<sup>78</sup> The Muslim humanists deny that Allah would ever sanction the sacrifice of a human individual – even as a test. They project a rather different sort of sense of Allah and human obligations to Allah than those who do not. For them, Islam values the human individual.<sup>79</sup>

A modern-day Muslim humanist argues by analogy: 'how is a wall built? How do the individual blocks "join ranks" to turn into a solid and impregnable wall?' The answer comes swiftly and clearly in terms of an assertion of the value of the human individual: 'As a wall is composed of many building blocks, so must our communities be built upon the strengths of individuals like yourself...'<sup>80</sup> Therefore, in the story of Abraham and Isaac, there was never really any danger of either of them understanding the command to sacrifice Isaac as earnest and straightforward, since this would contravene Allah's well known valuing of the integrity of the human individual.

There are also other ways in which the interpretations of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac reinforce the position of Muslim humanism.

One may shift the particular aspect of the episode to be celebrated, for example. Some interpreters focus on features of this complex incident other than *either* Abraham or Isaac's submission, or Abraham's restraint, however minimal it may have been. In these cases, it is the *sparing* of Isaac from death that Muslims hold dear and emblematic of the incident. In the example following, taken significantly from a religious-political context, Abraham's sacrifice is read as about *saving* Isaac from any sort of sacrifice at all. The duty of Muslims, the text tells us, is:

to remove the real knife from the throat of oppressed Muslims from Bosnia to Kashmir, from Somalia to Palestine . Let us revolt against the heartless worshipers that we have become. Remember our Eid is not an Eid of victory. It is the Eid of sacrifice (adha).<sup>81</sup>

Still other Muslim humanist interpreters of this classic episode of the Abrahamic tradition also dispute whether Abraham himself *really meant* to sacrifice his son at all. In reality, Abraham intended instead only to assent to Allah's command in a kind of perfunctory way, knowing full well that Allah would provide a substitute – as indeed Allah did.<sup>82</sup>

In any case, both the potential ferocity of the divine will as well as the willingness of people to follow such commands are mitigated equally well in the objective Quranic text (a dream) and in the interpretations of this incident. Furthermore, whatever previous positions one may have held, Muslims generally share the same conclusion to the Abraham sacrifice story – namely humans are not sacrificed in Islam.<sup>83</sup>

Rendered as a formula of the mainstream, Muslim sacrifice as a 'giving *of*' oneself, of one's alienable property – animals, portions of one's wealth, and so on – is very highly valued and enjoined; but sacrifice as a 'giving *up*' – as a total negation of self or an inalienable subject (Isaac) – is at most highly questionable – at least in the Quran and some of the commentarial literature that I have cited. There is, it must be emphasized, only so much that one can read out of scripture that actually shapes a religion at a particular time. But based on both Quranic and commentarial authority, Muslims seem very much like Jews and Christians when it comes to sacrifice. Indeed, while it may well be that Allah *could in principle* require absolute self-immolation – since Allah is the supreme being and does after all require absolute submission – the extreme of annihilationist sacrifice is not the kind of sacrifice Allah decides, out of the mysteries of the divine will, to require. There, a goat will do, as it were. As the modern tract, 'Sacrifice: The Making of a Muslim' declares, sacrifice is a central Muslim value, but it is sacrifice as 'giving *of*' not of the extreme *giving up*:

First, imagine where we would be today without the heroic efforts, sacrifices, and patience of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his devoted Companions in building the vibrant Islamic society of Madinah? ...

Sacrifice means giving up things which are valued or desired. Those things may be (1) tangible, countable like our time, wealth or life, or (2) intangible, immeasurable, like our feelings, attitudes, opinions or aspirations. They are given up for the sake of something that is more worthy or more urgent to us (Quran 6:162). Without sacrifice our lives would be devoid of harmony and cooperation, full of conflict, and prey to self-centredness and immediate gratification of desires.

Making explicit that sacrifice as 'giving up' – as annihilation of self or others – is not required, this tract goes on to assert how deeply Muslims value human life:

How is a wall built? How do the individual blocks 'join ranks' to turn into a solid and impregnable wall? As a wall is composed of many building blocks, so must our communities be built upon the strengths of individuals like yourself....

When the wall is seen from a distance, the blocks may look indistinguishable due to their uniformity, but like human beings, each retains its inner individuality. *No one is required to sacrifice this...* (emphasis added).<sup>84</sup>

### **Sacrifices Are Also Special Kinds of Gifts**

From this rich tradition of Muslim sacrificial discourse, we can use some of the things we have learned from the comparative study of religions to illuminate Muslim sacrifice. I would single out three aspects for particular note. As I intimated earlier, at least in part, Muslims see sacrifice as a very peculiar kind of gift. But, sacrifice is also peculiar as a kind of gift in that the gift (as victim) is destroyed in the process of giving it. Finally, in the course of this act of destruction and giving, the gift/victim is made holy or sacred – a *sacri-ficium*.<sup>85</sup> In thus considering sacrifice as a special kind of gift, sacrifice will show all the same characteristics of gifts in general, but with the added feature of at least portions of the sacrificial gift being alienated from the human realm in the process of something being made sacred. This can be elaborated in connection with the 'human bombers' in considering first the obligatory quality of the gift.

The author of the single-most influential book on gift, Marcel Mauss, argued that gifts are never free, despite what people tend to think about their disinterestedness and spontaneity. Despite the show of pure generosity gift-givers typically display, gifts are always given under obligation<sup>86</sup>— the obligations to give, to receive the gift, and to reciprocate. A kind of systematic deception prevails between the appearance of freedom in giving, and its actual restricted nature.

In the initial instance, the giver first feels obliged to give – as anyone invited to a birthday party or wedding will keenly appreciate, or as anyone burdened by the onslaught of Christmas shopping and its endless obligations can attest. Taking matters a step further beyond the obligation to *give*, there is, second, the additional obligation to receive or accept the gift. As the obligations of Christmas shopping should recall, the obligation to *accept* or *receive* the gift can be quite oppressive – adding as well to the weight of the cloud of obligation that settles on the gift in the first place. And, topping both these first two obligations is a third, perhaps even more strongly felt, namely, the obligation to reciprocate, to give in return. This recursive logic accounts for the way that gift exchange develops into ‘rings’, cycles or systems of *exchange*, as Malinowski first demonstrated in his analysis of *kula* from his 1922 *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.<sup>87</sup>

That a ‘human bombing’ can be understood as a ‘gift’, a sacrifice, may first seem absurd. To explain, ‘gift’ is a very capacious notion and phenomenon, capable of very wide application. It is not limited to handsomely wrapped ‘presents’ or the items for sale in a ‘gift shop’! Literally anything can become a gift, given the understanding Mauss provides of it. All that is required in a presentation or exchange is the telltale gap between the appearance of disinterestedness and spontaneity on the one side and the reality of the threefold set of obligations on the other. Thus, gifts come in many forms – in actions, deeds or objects of all sorts, in greetings, courtesies, kindnesses, or gestures, in legacies, time dedicated or in deference paid to others, and of course in all the myriad ‘things’ people give to one another.

None of this means, of course, that just because *anything* can be a gift, that *everything* is a gift. As a subclass of exchange, gift is not, for example, a form of unidirectional access to goods or services, like taking, theft or creation *ex nihilo*. Gift involves an offering, but one that likewise entails an exchange.

Gifts also differ from other common sorts of exchange, such as economic exchanges like buying and selling, ‘truck and barter’, or mere commercial transactions. Gifts are ‘*in theory*’ voluntary, and disinterested. They have an aura of ‘freedom’ about them, although we usually tend to make too much of this in our sentimentalizing of alternatives to economic

society. In straightforward economic transactions, everyone knows that the deal is 'interested' by definition, regardless of how much pretense may be made in the course of the transaction. The attempt to conceal the commercial and self-interested nature of these exchanges beneath the disarming veil of 'gift' and even 'sacrifice' have reached ever greater levels of absurdity, such as in contemporary advertising claims for a particular department store 'sale' where 'everything must be sacrificed'!

As I have already averred in discussing the case of Abraham – and here we begin to broach the matter of sacrifice – gift also can range from a moderate 'giving of' or a more extreme 'giving up'. Gifts can range from alienations of a part of one's goods or services to near-total alienations thereof. These may range from an ordinary expenditure of time or resources such as in routine philanthropic grants or common holiday gift giving, through to special gifts, such as the *giving of* family treasure or heirlooms to members of the next generation, or in the most extreme cases, to the kinds of large scale, massive (relative or absolute) giving *away* that characterize something like the potlatch of the Northwest Pacific Native American folk.

In these last extreme forms of giving, we seem to shade into, if not arrive at, sacrifices, because no ordinary reciprocation or exchange seems possible. What is given in potlatch is destroyed, as is the victim in a proper ritual sacrifice. Indeed, the point of potlatch giving is to make it virtually impossible for the initial gift to be reciprocated without courting ruin. Small wonder that Mauss called potlatch the 'monster child of the gift system'.<sup>88</sup> Recalling the earlier discussion of sacrifice as a special mode of giving in which the given is typically destroyed, and is so made (or at least regarded as) holy or sacred, how does this relate to 'human bombers'? Perhaps monstrous in its own way, I believe that the same sense of gift exchanges articulated by Mauss will apply equally well to 'human bombings' as sacrifices.

### **'Human Bombers' as Sacrificial Gifts**

Without minimizing the importance of the utilitarian *jihadist* conception of these bombings, as well as their multivalence, some of the many strands of meaning can be picked up that hang from the claim that these so-called suicide or martyrdom bombings need also to be considered carefully as sacrificial gifts. The elements of sacrifice are there in such abundance and pervasiveness that it would be irresponsible to ignore them. Whether the sacrificial factors weigh more than practical ones will have to be determined, perhaps on a case-by-case basis.

But, they at least need to be factored into the equation of the motivation

of so-called suicide operations committed by radical Muslims. Once they are factored into the equation, the careful researcher will need to measure and weight the results of the mix between the sacrificial and practical aspects of these operations, assuming that this is analytically possible due to the multivalent and perhaps hopelessly confused nature of motivation here. In order that this factoring may begin, the discussion of these bombings and deaths as sacrificial gifts can be expanded.

There is, first, no doubt that the Palestinian bombers give themselves in a spirit of obligation characteristic of the gift described above. Their deaths are seen as a sacred duty to sacrifice, to give themselves up totally. That they seek the deaths of as many Israelis as they can take with them only witnesses to the multivalence of their acts. Significant here is the fact that even when the attacks sometimes fail, the bombers will detonate their charges anyway. This implies that foremost in the minds of some bombers is the intention to give up one's life in the process – to sacrifice – even when no practical benefit in terms of an attack can be accrued.

I am further persuaded of the wisdom of describing bombings and related death as gifts, sacrifices from other data originating from beyond the radicalized Muslim world. Consider, for example, the self-descriptions of the notorious Black Tiger units of the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, or as they prefer to call it, of Tamil Eelam. While the Black Tiger bombings have had considerable utilitarian value in killing many Sri Lankan soldiers in deliberately offensive operations, the Black Tigers typically see these operations as 'gifts'.

Further distancing themselves from mere suicides in any form, a recent *New York Times* article reports a Tamil leader as saying that the Black Tigers explicitly decline to use the word 'suicide bombing' for their operations. The Tamil name for these operations is 'thatkodai', meaning to 'give' oneself, as opposed to the word 'thatkolai', meaning simply to 'kill oneself'. 'A "thatkodai" is a gift of the self – self-immolation, or self-gift', said a Tamil Tiger representative. 'When one enlists, there is no remuneration. The only promise is I am prepared to give everything I have, including my life. It is an oath to the nation', the same leader went on.<sup>89</sup>

This therefore returns us to the matter of the socially and religiously formed mind of the bomber, and most of all to the conception that they may have of their action. Here, what escapes the observer of narrow purview is the network of social relations in which an individual bomber is located. Fixating only on the individual bomber, or the individual bomber as an agent posed *against* someone, hides that the bombers see themselves as embedded in a network of social relations to which they may be said to *belong or want to belong*. Sacrificial gift makes a triumphant return. Once

grasped as a relational reality, it becomes natural to ask *to whom and for whom* then, are the lives of these Palestinians given up? Gifts are necessarily relational, not solitary actions. Recalling the logic of obligation inherent in gift, we may then ask who is obliged to accept them?

One answer arises as to the intended recipients of sacrifice. If we link these self-immolations closely with the ritual sacrifices of Ramadan and *Hajj*, they are intended for Allah. This was, bin Laden tells us, how the WTC-Pentagon hijackers were meant to be seen. The theological problem that I see in this case is that the gifts given exceed what Allah expects of pious Muslims. Muslim sacrifice is normatively a giving *of*, rather than the extreme giving *up* typical of the hijackers and self-immolating bombers. Indeed, there are many references in the current literature issuing from Muslims saying that such deeds of self-immolation are illegitimate and at odds with Islam. This however may only underline the radical and original aspects of bin Laden's version of Islam.

If we then press the question about who – beside Allah – is obliged to accept these gifts, I think we can grasp how and why the political arena is the natural place for these deaths to occur, and why on top of this, they merit the description of being 'sacrifices'. In the case of the Israel/Palestine dispute, besides Allah, I suggest that it is Palestine or the imagined community of Palestine that – at least in the minds of the bombers – is *obliged* to accept the offering of the death of such a self-immolating bomber. It is literally and ritually *for Palestine and Palestinians* that these sacrifices are offered, who therefore are *obliged* to accept them, and then in some appropriate and equivalent way, to reciprocate.

In light of the relational nature of sacrificial gifts of themselves made by the 'human bombers', certain policy consequences might flow. Thus, to the extent that the actors and the communities to which they belong view these bombings as 'sacrifices' and 'gifts', they might be encouraged or deterred in the way ordinary gifts are encouraged or discouraged. If the aim were to deter these operations, the *societies of reference* in question here would have to make it clear that such gifts are not desired, or that they are inappropriate. Offers of such a gift would be rejected.

Thus, the social logic of such a deed as a gift, as a sacrifice, would to some extent be encouraged or undermined in the same way, respectively, that a desired suitor or an unwanted one were urged on or dissuaded. Their gifts could be, respectively, increased or stopped by clear welcome or, alternatively, refusal to accept them. The success or failure of sacrifice bombings then is relational. It would seem then to depend on the willingness of the intended recipient to accept the gift. Perhaps instead of seeking to dissuade sacrifice bombings by concentrating on the bomber as an individual unit of analysis, we need to concentrate on those for whom the bombers bomb.

This points to the weakness of our cruder forms of economic explanation of such matters, further enfeebled by liberal guilt, that economic disadvantage breeds such bombings. The facts are quite the contrary, since it is now well attested that most of the sacrifice bombers are formally educated and hail from comfortably middle-class families.<sup>90</sup>

Finally, who is to reciprocate for the sacrificial gifts thus offered? And, how are they to reciprocate? By the logic I have sketched, it would be Palestine and Palestinians who are expected to reciprocate for these deaths. And, how? By continuing the struggle, of course, but by continuing a struggle in which what is at stake is Palestine itself – or at least a *certain* imagined community of Palestine. As long as we are thinking about Palestine, it would be well to recall that sacrificial death for Israel has as well always been held in high regard. In the famous Israeli nationalistic poem, Natan Altermann's 'The Silver Platter', we meet a young couple – significantly pure and innocent as sacrificial victims are classically represented – confronting the nation with the sacrificial price that must be paid for the continued existence of Israeli nationhood itself. The poem concludes with their final words:

‘We are the silver platter  
On which the Jewish state has been given you’.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, although some commentators on the Warsaw Ghetto Rising see it, like Masada, as a ‘suicidal’ gesture, what also seems clear is that even in sacrificing their lives in a fight they knew could not succeed militarily, the ghetto fighters knew that they were doing their part in making Israel. ‘All we had were grenades, some guns and bottles with flammable liquid. We were like ants attacking a regular army that had conquered all of Europe... We did it to honor all the Jews’, recalled Masza Putermilch, 79, a Jewish ghetto fighter who spoke at the Warsaw commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Rising in April of 2003.<sup>92</sup> The only response to their sacrificial gift was to reciprocate by following through with the foundation of the real historical state of Israel.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Gift of Sacrificial Death Makes ‘Human Bombers’ Holy**

Now what of sacrificial gifts as those special kinds of gifts that involve a ‘making holy’? Beyond being a rite that destroys something, sacrifice is one that transforms something offered – the victim – into something else – something sanctified. The sacrificed Passover lamb becomes, for Christians at least, and by several steps admittedly, the Lamb of God. Thus, the part of the victim that is destroyed is, as it were, and in theory, alienated to the gods. That which is sacrificed is what *belongs* to the gods,



and is therefore sacred. The victim becomes *ipso facto* sacred in being *sacri-ficed*.

By extension, much that comes into contact with that which has been made sacred by the sacrifice, itself becomes sacred by contagion. The sacrificial precinct, that place where the 'making sacred' happens, becomes *ipso facto* a sacred place, a place bounded by *tabus* and removed from ordinary concourse. The officers of sacrifice, those who pay for the rite, those who receive the sacrificial communion, *all* participate in the sacredness created by the sacrificial act of this special kind of giving. Raphael Israeli notes accordingly that the notorious videos produced before the bombing are devised to provide education and the image of 'role models' for further 'human bombers'; they are far from being like the typical self-pitying or despairing suicide note.<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, the form in which the community supports the 'human bombers' draws on a variety of standardized, local religious models. The meager belongings of the 'human bombers' are collected and revered as 'relics'. Songs are composed about them and their acts, and sung openly in the streets. Their pictures 'become the object of worship-like adoration'. The families of the 'human bombers', by a kind of contagion of the sacred, are viewed as 'precious in the eyes of the public'. They are viewed with 'awe and admiration'.<sup>95</sup>

The notion that these immolations are offered to or for Palestine permits us to dwell for a moment on the peculiar property of sacrificial gifts to making things holy. As the term 'sacrifice' indicates, the immolation consists of a gift, but it is also at the same time, a 'making holy'. The paschal lamb, like the goat in 'qurbani', for instance, is not 'holy' until sacrificed. Thus, in performing sacrifice for the sake of Palestine, is the bomber made holy. At the same time, the sacrifice performed there makes the territory of Palestine 'holy', since Palestine is a site of an event of making something holy, as well as an intended recipient of sacrifice.

One affirms the precincts of its 'holy of holies' – its national borders – much as the WTC site is now generally considered a sacred site, if we are to judge by the persistent invocation of the heroism of the firefighters and police lost in the collapse of the buildings.<sup>96</sup> Nothing of the same sacredness seems to have adhered to the Pentagon, where many lives were also lost, but no conspicuous acts of sacrifice on the part of rescuers were much noted or perhaps even performed. Perhaps coincidentally, this *intifada* bears the name al-Aqsa *intifada*, referring to the mosque located within the 66-acre site known to Muslims as the Haram al Sharif ('the Noble Sanctuary') and to Jews as the Har ha-bayit or Temple Mount, both holy, although contested, territories. Whether pretense or not, this *intifada*, at least in the eyes of some – or at least enough – Palestinians

was provoked by Sharon's visit/intrusion into the sacred place of the Haram al Sharif.

Informants in Israel tell me that the Israelis immediately erase any evidence that the sites of Palestinian sacrifice/suicide bombings have ever been the sites of such acts. These sites become, as it were, negative memorials – places of deliberate forgetting – by their rapid return to normal profane uses. Contrast these unmarked sites of loss of Jewish life to others, such as embodied in the memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto Rising. There the event is embraced with considerable pride, and as well, with deep sorrow.<sup>97</sup> And compare again the Ghetto Rising memorial to the difficulties afflicting modern representation of the death camps. After so many years, they are still waiting to be classified appropriately. Are these to be seen as museums, monuments (to what?), or cemeteries?<sup>98</sup> If all this is so for Jews, in a future Palestinian state, one might well imagine that the very same sites of sacrifice/suicide bombings will become memorials to the bombers who did their sacrificial deeds on what is now for Palestinians sacred ground.

In the understanding of sacrifice as an act of destruction, there is contained at least the opening for a rejection of a utilitarian or pragmatic calculus. While sacrifice may confer benefits, there is no immediate return, no one-for-one correspondence between what is given and what is gained. Indeed, in sacrifice, it may seem that *nothing* is returned at all to the person offering the sacrifice, and certainly not in the sense of something immediately reciprocated. The sacrificial gift in most respects is thus removed from normal circulation or exchange.

Although an animal, for example, given in sacrifice is often shared to be eaten by those offering the sacrifice in a kind of communion meal, at least a portion of the sacrifice is *given* to the 'gods' to be eaten – and in being so, is *removed* from the world of humans. It is no longer available for *practical* human purposes, such as further exchange and is, by virtue of that, made *sacred*.

The removal of the sacrificial victim from the human world, of course, has never stopped people from calculating how their particular gift to the gods might win them some handsome, if remote and unpredictable, reciprocation. This is to say that just because *part*, at least, of the victim is removed from the human world something is not removed from the divine world and returned to the human. People never seem to stop calculating their advantages or working the angles. We probably all remain political and economic animals, even at times when we seem to shed concerns for power or gain. What in part makes sacrifice so intriguing, however, is how it seems capable of working both sides of the street of disinterestedness and gain.

### **Nation-Building and Meaning-Making by Sacrifice**

Thus, despite the extremity of radical Islam's interpretation of sacrifice, those goals must be understood and the means by which the realization of the goals are imagined through the interpretive lens of sacrifice. They are sacrifice bombings as much as martyrdoms or suicide/homicide bombings. We need to understand what other – sacrificial – goals the deaths and immolations are meant to bring about. Appeal to 'sacrifice' may aid focus. The kinds of extreme sacrifices of giving up are not arguably the normative sacrifices as giving of such as what Abraham performed, or what mainline Muslims do. Human sacrifice is precisely what Abraham finally did not do, and what the Abraham-inspired religions eventually declined to engage in at a certain point in their development.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, these suicides or homicides are sacrificial gifts of an extreme sort, offered to attain something in exchange – Palestine – to keep it alive, to realize it, to create it, in return for the sacrifice of young lives.<sup>100</sup>

The main reason nation building in this way reeks so of religion is, then, because nationalism is exposed as religious. Whatever else they may be, nations are, like religions, meaning-making entities of a grand and transcendent sort, creating an aura of sacredness about all their central doings. Not only do national borders mark boundaries of a sacred precinct as 'tabu' to the intruder (as do any temple's holy of holies), but also the accessories of nationalism – its flags, monuments and anthems – partake of the same transcendent religious glow as a sacred being.

In terms of national ritual, nationalism has taught us notably that 'sacrifice' will routinely be required of individual citizens in one form or another. In sacrifice the nation (and religions of certain kinds) are revealed as the highest forms of collectivity demanding human loyalty, transcending palpable human individuality. Thus far at least, for all the efforts of universal cosmopolitan 'humanity' to rally people to common human causes, it has yet to outdo the nation or religion in calling forth the loyalty of people and in getting them to lay down their lives. Whether the same can be said for the newer trans-national ambitions of al-Qaeda remains to be seen. (Part of the larger significance of attempts of trans-national religious movements, like al-Qaeda, as briefly successful in Taliban Afghanistan, or recently as threatened in Indonesia, is precisely to challenge and overwhelm the nation-state. How the nation-state will react to such attempts to usurp its monopoly over the use of force within its own borders remains to be seen.)

Benedict Anderson has argued that the readiness of individuals to kill others, and to sacrifice themselves, can only be understood in terms of the religious nature of fellowship achieved by the nation-state – that place

where religion and nation are not usefully distinguishable.<sup>101</sup> People do not sacrifice themselves for ‘administrative units’, such as the EU, but for *nations* – whether actual or imagined – like Bosnia, Serbia, Ireland, Israel and Palestine, or potentially for *religions* like Islam or Christianity.

Thus, we would be wise to pay attention to differences in language about violence in politics corresponding to differences in fundamental viewpoint. From an Israeli viewpoint, the independence struggle was fought for the imagined community of the ‘nation of Israel’, and not for the ‘mandate of Palestine’ – even though the two territories are virtually identical. In that struggle, the deaths of Jewish fighters counted as ‘sacrifices’ and martyrdoms, and not – as the British, who were arrayed against them, insisted – as ‘terrorist atrocities’.

Similarly, from a contemporary Israeli view that seeks to contain or deny Palestinian ‘nationality’, those who die in so-called suicide or homicide bombing are ‘murderers’ ‘terrorists’ or pathetic madmen. But, seen from the viewpoint of those who want to make the imagined community of Palestine into a nation-state, these suicide or homicide ‘bombers’ are better seen as ‘sacrifice’ bombers, martyring themselves for ‘Palestine’, Islam. For them, these deaths are meaningful, and in this way ‘religious’ deaths, not the random acts of madmen or visceral responses of an overly stimulated organism.

Therefore the West Bank and Gaza are not for the Palestinian religious nationalists the ‘administrative units’ that they are for Israel, any more than the imagined community of Israel was regarded as the British Mandate of Palestine for the Jewish independence fighters. The reason that nationalism is so saturated in religious meaning is that ‘administrative units’ do not create meaning while religions and nations do *nothing* but create meaning – however gruesome it may be.<sup>102</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Raphael Israeli, ‘Islamikaze and their Significance’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9/3 (1997) p.96.
2. E-mail communication from Horace Jeffery Hodges’ regarding a transcript of a Bin Laden video in which bin Laden asks Allah to ‘accept these gifts’, referring to the 9/11 hijackers. jefferyhodges@yahoo.com Subject: Re: A Query about the Logic of Sacrifice in the Actions of Al-Qaeda (Wed, 24 July 2002).
3. I shall adopt what seems to me the neutral designation coined by Raphael Israeli: ‘human bomb’ and ‘human bombers’. Israeli (note 1) p.96.
4. Ibid. pp.96–112, Raphael Israeli ‘A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism’ *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14/4 (2002) pp.23–40.
5. Israeli (note 4) ‘A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism’ p.35.
6. Ibid. pp.34–5.

7. Israeli (note 1) p.111.
8. Israeli (note 4) p.30.
9. See also Martin Kramer, 'Sacrifice and 'Self-Martyrdom' in Shi'ite Lebanon', in Martin Kramer (ed) *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996). The convoluted nature of this may indeed be a sign of the ideological struggles in full play within Islam itself. Ibid.
10. Here, I share Kramer's views about 'human bombers' in Lebanon. Kramer (note 9).
11. David C. Rapoport notes that the Assassins did not assign highest priority to the efficiency of their operations. (David C. Rapoport, 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions', *The American Political Science Review* 78/3 (1984) p.675).
12. Martin Kramer, 'Sacrifice and "Self-Martyrdom" in Shi'ite Lebanon', in Martin Kramer (ed), *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 1996).
13. Israeli (note 1) p.107.
14. Ibid. p.96.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid. p.96. See other references to Israeli's reliance on psychological and psychiatric analysis on pages 104, 106.
17. Ibid. p.97.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. p.99.
20. Ibid. p.107.
21. Raphael Israeli occasionally speaks in social terms in passages where he addresses the matter of the communal 'acceptance' and support of 'human bombers', or in which he speaks of the role of the 'human bombers' as 'rescuing the *Umma*' (Israeli (note 4) p.37).
22. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (trans) (New York City: Free Press 1951) and Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, W. D. Halls (trans) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1964).
23. Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Causes Du Suicide* (Paris: Alcan 1930).
24. Ibid. p.477.
25. Ibid. p.475.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. p.477.
28. Avishai Margalit, 'The Suicide Bombers', *The New York Review of Books*, 16 January 2003, p.38.
29. Israeli (note 4) p.37.
30. <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/aljazeeraatape020415.html>  
See also an interview with Al-Qaeda defector, "Max"  
'MAX' Yeah, you know, each of them wanted to sacrifice on Osama bin Laden. They want to spend their money and their – everything – to sacrifice themselves on bin Laden. There was, you know, anyone that bin Laden asked them to do – to kill themselves, to sacrifice themselves on bin Laden. He won't say no. There are a thousand people; they want to sacrifice themselves on bin Laden.  
<http://www.pastornet.net.au/jmm/aasi/aasi0496.htm>
31. See 'Eid message to the Ummah from Shaikh Ahmad Yaseen on the struggle in Palestine <http://www.muslimmedia.com/archives/movement02/hamas-eid.htm>  
*Significance of Eid:*  
'These are the signs of our Ismail's. Let us search for them in ourselves and let us slaughter them to move towards Allah (swt) and to remove the real knife from the throat of oppressed Muslims from Bosnia to Kashmir, from Somalia to Palestine . Let us revolt against the heartless worshippers that we have become. Remember our Eid is not an Eid of victory. It is the Eid of sacrifice (adha)'

<http://www.guidedones.com/metapage/frq/eidadha10.htm>

*Sacrifice and nationhood*

'We know what Palestine needs from us', said Reham. 'Jihad. If Usama had chosen differently, he would have been living for himself, but failing Palestine. Everyone should choose sacrifice until we restore our rights. Israelis occupying our land and we have to get rid of it. Jihad is the only way'. Then Reham turned to me: 'I am sorry that I am not the shahid', she said. 'Osama took my wish to be a martyr and preceded me. We were in a race and he beat me. It's what I've always wanted to do'.

Sandra Jordan, 'The women who would die for Allah', *New Statesman* 14 Jan. 2002 [http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_0/m0FQP/4570\\_131/82135394/p2/article.jhtml?term=%2B%22sacrifice%22+%2Bpalestine](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0FQP/4570_131/82135394/p2/article.jhtml?term=%2B%22sacrifice%22+%2Bpalestine)

32. Ibid.
33. Martin Kramer also stresses the 'social' nature of the 'human bombings'. Kramer (note 9) p.5.
34. Hubert and Mauss (note 21).
35. In another comment by Bin Laden linking sacrifice and martyrdom: 'Hani Hanjour, from Al-Ta'if, the destroyer of the centre of the US defence, the Pentagon. Clear purity and a splendid sacrifice. We beseech Allah to accept him as a martyr'. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/2248894.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2248894.stm)
36. Margalit (note27) p.38.
37. David C. Rapoport, 'Some General Observations of Religion and Violence, in Mark Juergensmeyer (ed), *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*, (London: Frank Cass 1992), pp.120–21.
38. Ibid. But, see two recent articles that do pay attention to this religious rhetoric. John Kelsay, 'Suicide Bombers: The 'Just War' Debate, Islamic Style', *Christian Century*, 14 August 2002. R. Scott Appleby, 'Visions of Sacrifice, Roots of Terrorism', *Christian Century*, 17 Oct. 2002.
39. Explicit links are made by Muslims to precedents for Islamic sacrifice in the Jewish bible: <http://www.al-islam.org/islaminthebible/18.htm>
40. H.E.J. Cowdrey, 'Martyrdom and the First Crusade', in P. Edbury (ed) *Crusade and Settlement*, (Cardiff: University of Wales 1985), p.46, cites Isidore of Seville as articulating the classic Christian definition of 'martyrs' as 'Christ's witnesses' in that they 'bore sufferings (*passiones*) and strove for truth even to death'.
41. Cowdrey cites the canonizations in the eleventh century of certain leaders of the Patarenes, a Milanese reform movement seeking a rule of clerical celibacy and the proscription of simony. Ibid pp.48–9 and [http://www.medievalchurch.org.uk/h\\_cath\\_pat.html](http://www.medievalchurch.org.uk/h_cath_pat.html)
42. Cowdrey (note 40) pp.50–51.
43. Ibid p.53.
44. Note indeed how Pope Urban II, in addressing the religious of the congregation of Vallombrosa in 7 Oct. 1096, discouraged great shows of self-immolating martyrdom. 'We have heard that some of you want to set out with the knights who are making for Jerusalem with the good intention of liberating Christianity. This is the right kind of sacrifice, but it is planned by the wrong kind of person. For we were stimulating the minds of knights to go on this expedition, since they might be able to restrain the savagery of the Saracens by their arms and restore the Christians to their former freedom: we do not want those who have abandoned the world and have vowed themselves to spiritual warfare either to bear arms or to go on this journey; we go so far as to forbid them to do so. And we forbid religious – clerics or monks – to set out in this company without the permission of their bishops or abbots in accordance with the rule of the holy canons. The discretion of your religious profession must prevent you in this business from running the risk of either insulting the apostolic see or endangering your own souls. We have heard it, said that your confrère, the abbot or the monastery of St Reparata, is considering leaving the order shared

by your congregation in common. And so in this present letter we send him an order, and by that we mean we forbid him to dare to rule the same monastery any longer without the permission of your common abbot, whom you call your major abbot. And if he does not obey, he or anyone else who perhaps dares to leave your congregation should be cut off with the sword of apostolic excommunication.'

(Pope Urban II, 'Four Letters on Crusading from Pope Urban II', in Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith (eds) *The Crusades: Idea and Reality 1095–1274* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1981). I also thank Richard Hecht, University of California, Santa Barbara for his advice on crusader martyrs.

45. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04543c.htm>
46. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09736b.htm>
47. <http://users.erols.com/saintpat/ss/1106.htm>
48. Guibert of Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Robert Levine (trans) (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer 1997). <http://www.bu.edu/english/levine/guibprol.htm>
49. Cowdrey (note 40) Ibid.
50. Ibid. pp.47–8.
51. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09736b.htm>
52. Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, Carmelite nun and recently canonized in 1998, is regarded in the Roman Catholic Church by both Catholic laity and hierarchy as a 'martyr' for having cared for other inmates in Auschwitz and to have been murdered there by the Nazis.
53. Incidentally, the medievalist, Jean Flori, has broken with the habit of looking on the Crusades as pilgrimage, even as 'armed pilgrimage', and has argued that they were 'holy wars', that is to say, the equivalent of *jihads*! Jean Flori, *La Guerre Sainte: La Formation de l'Idée de Croisade dans l'Accident Chrétien* (Paris: Auber 2001).
54. Cowdrey (note 40). Jean Flori, 'Mort et martyre des guerriers vers 1100: l'exemple de la première croisade', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 34 (1991). cited in Giles Constable, 'The Historiography of the Crusades', in Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (eds) *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: Dunbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection 2001).
55. Nogent (note 42) Ibid. <http://www.bu.edu/english/levine/guibprol.htm>
56. Kanan Makiya and Hassan Mneimneh, 'Manual for a "Raid"', *New York Review of Books* 49/3 no. 1 (17 January 2002), p.21.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid. p.20.
59. Israeli (note 4) p.35.
60. Ibid. p.30. Makiya and Mneimneh, (note 48) p.21.
61. Makiya and Mneimneh (note 48), p.21.
62. Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution* (Princeton: Markus Wiener 1997) p.41.
63. Ibid. pp.41–88.
64. Ibid. pp.143, 150.
65. Ibid. p.150.
66. Israeli (note 1) p.96.
67. On 'qurbani' see <http://www.muslimindia.com/qurbani.htm>. It is worth noting that the early tradition was divided as to whether this sacrifice involved Isaac – on Mount Moria, and his subsequent actual sacrificing of a goat provided by Allah instead of his son. My colleague, Michael Feener informs me that in modern times, despite explicit Quranic passage to the contrary (Al-Saffat, 37: 112–3), many Muslims say that Ishmael, not Isaac, was the subject involved here! This likewise fits well the numerous departures from Muslim tradition described by Khaled M. Abou El Fadl. (Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *And*

*God Knows the Soldiers: The Authoritative and Authoritarian in Islamic Discourses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 2001.) Thus, in the article, 'Khutba – Lessons from the Story of Ibrahim (AS)' 3 April 1998, the author states that 'Ibrahim (as) was ordered by Allah to sacrifice his own son for the sake of Allah and his son *Ismael* (Isaac)...'. (my emphasis)

[http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim\(as\).html](http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim(as).html)

I cite here as well the Quranic passage from sura, 'The Rangers' (Al-Saffat, 37: 112–3), where it concludes the account of Abraham's sparing of Isaac/Ishaq. See note 78 for full passage:

(37.112) And We gave him the good news of Ishaq, a prophet among the good ones.  
(37.113) And We showered Our blessings on him and on Ishaq; and of their offspring are the doers of good, and (also) those who are clearly unjust to their own souls.

68. The terminology of sacrifice in Islam is particularly rich. In the primary instances, it refers to literal ritual sacrifice. 'Udhiyah' refers to the animal (camel, cattle or sheep) that is sacrificed as an act of worship to Allah. Note also 'Id al'Adha' (or Eid Al-Adha) is the 'Feast of the Sacrifice'.
69. See El Fadl (note 59) on the pre-eminence of the authority of Muhammad and his early companions among Muslim extremists and the denigration of later Muslim traditions and institutions.
70. Here the author Malik ibn Anas in his *Ahadith al-Jami' al 'Saghir in Qira'a a fi Fiqh al-Shahada* (footnote 17) pp.7–9 marks three cases where this self-sacrificial 'giving up' is permitted. The first is the case where a chance to survive the risk to one's life is at least no less than that of losing it; the second, is where Muslims are so outmatched that they must resort to audacious measures in order to equalize the struggle; the third, is where such self-sacrificial acts cannot be avoided. Here, acts of self-sacrifice in jihad become martyrdoms by virtue of them being actions that save the entire *umma*. Israeli (note 4) pp.33–4.
71. Ibid. Israeli here refers to Malik ibn Anas, *Ahadith al-Jami' al 'Saghir in Qira'a a fi Fiqh al-Shahada* (footnote 17) p.4.
72. Israeli (note 4) p.32.
73. My thanks to my colleague, Michael Feener, for these points of Arabic meaning.
74. <http://isgkc.org/udhiya.htm>. See price list of proper sacrificial animals. Interpal, a relief effort for Palestinians offers a special opportunity for Muslims to send corned or frozen lamb to Palestine, thus combining both their religious sacrificial duty with relief aid to the poor of Palestine. (<http://www.interpal.org/web/pdf/Qurbani99.pdf>)
75. [http://www.nooruddinonline.com/donation\\_centers.htm](http://www.nooruddinonline.com/donation_centers.htm)
76. <http://islamicity.com/mosque/Hajj/Udhiya.htm>
77. In the article, 'Khutba - Lessons from the story of Ibrahim (AS)', 3 April 1998, the author argues that both father and son accept the command to sacrifice Isaac. 'Ibrahim (as) was ordered by Allah to sacrifice his own son for the sake of Allah and his son Ismael (as) willingly accepted because it was an order from Allah (SWT)'.  
[http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim\(as\).html](http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim(as).html)
78. Abraham's act of sacrifice in the Quran gives the following account:  
(Abraham prayed:) My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But when he became of age to work with him, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; so consider what is your view. He said: O my father, do as you are commanded; if Allah please you will find me patient. So when they had both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him saying, O Abraham, you have indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. (Surah Al-Saffat 37: 100–7)  
There, however, is considerable dispute among Muslims as to whether Allah ordained it.  
<http://www.submission.org/Ismael.html>



79. In the article, 'Khutba - Lessons from the story of Ibrahim (AS)' 3 April 1998, the author argues that both father and son accept the command to sacrifice Ishmael – note, as I have observed, *not* Isaac: 'Ibrahim (as) was ordered by Allah to sacrifice his own son for the sake of Allah and his son Ismael (as) willingly accepted because it was an order from Allah (SWT)'.  
[http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim\(as\).html](http://www.shu.ac.uk/students/union/socs/Islamic/khtba-ibrahim(as).html)
80. <http://www.youngmuslims.ca/publications/sacrifice.asp>
81. *Significance of Eid*:  
 'These are the signs of our Ismail's. Let us search for them in ourselves and let us slaughter them to move towards Allah (swt) and to remove the real knife from the throat of oppressed Muslims from Bosnia to Kashmir, from Somalia to Palestine. Let us revolt against the heartless worshippers that we have become. Remember our Eid is not an Eid of victory. It is the Eid of sacrifice (adha)'  
<http://www.guidedones.com/metapage/frq/eidadha10.htm>
82. There, however, is considerable dispute among Muslims as to whether Abraham actually willed Isaac's sacrifice or whether indeed Allah ordained it. <http://www.submission.org/Ismail.html>
83. That the hijackers of 9/11 planned to kill flight attendants in deliberately sacrificial ways marks another departure from Muslim tradition. (Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after Sept. 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2003) p.94.
84. <http://www.youngmuslims.ca/publications/sacrifice.asp>
85. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, (note 21) p.9.
86. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, W.D. Halls (trans) (New York City: W.W. Norton 1990) pp.1–2, 11–12.
87. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York City: E. P.Dutton 1961) pp.49–80.
88. Marcel Mauss, (note 78) p.41.
89. Amy Waldman, 'Masters of Suicide Bombing: Tamil Guerrillas of Sri Lanka', *New York Times*, 14 Jan. 2003, p.A8.
90. Atra, S., 'Who Wants to Be a Martyr?', *Los Angeles Times* Issue, 5 May 2003, p.A27.
91. Yael Tamir, 'Pro Patria Mori! Death and the State', in Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (eds), *The Morality of Nationalism* (New York City: Oxford University Press 1997), pp.235, 240–41.
92. E. Kasprzycka, 'Jewish Uprising's Heroes Honored in Warsaw', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 2003, p.A15.
93. See also an extended discussion of noble death in the Jewish and Christian traditions by Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death* (London: Routledge 2002).
94. Israeli (note 1) p.105.
95. Ibid. pp.105–6.
96. The transformation of the WTC and its site into a sacred site and holy ground is truly a remarkable feat, given that it was surely one of the least loved buildings in America until the moment of its demise. It went from saying everything that could possibly be said about America in terms of its arrogant, pushy projection of raw power onto the Manhattan skyline to being a tender embodiment of human hopes and dreams. See the WTC images from University of California, Riverside Spontaneous Shrines website [www.shrines.ucr.edu](http://www.shrines.ucr.edu)
97. <http://www.biega.com/www-3.html>
98. Jonathan Webber, *The Future of Auschwitz* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies 1992). See also a collection of photographs of a number of key Jewish sites bearing on the Holocaust <http://www.imagesforreflection.com/splash.gif>
99. Levenson's otherwise powerful book regrettably makes no significant reference to Islamic

traditions of commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. (Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press 1994].)

100. David C. Rapoport has made the identical point about Armenian terrorists performing their deeds of violence against the Turks, not primarily for the sake of the Turks, but to maintain the ideal of a definite Armenian nation for the audience of the Armenian diaspora. (Rapoport, [note 37] 'Some General Observations', p.128.) In the case of bin Laden, it is Islam that one wants to create in the world of global political and economic entities, but outside and above the nation-state – above the superimposition of that invention of godless *philosophes* and Jacobins upon the Muslim world.
101. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso 1991) p.7.
102. *Ibid.* p.53.

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