I

Justification, Religion, and Violence

September 11 (1857)

At dawn on September 7, 1857, a wagon train of emigrants camped at Mountain Meadows in southern Utah unexpectedly found themselves under attack. The emigrants – the Fancher–Baker party – were making their way from Arkansas to California. They numbered approximately 120, including men, women, and children of various ages, and they had perhaps 700 head of cattle with them. The attackers aimed coordinated barrages of gunfire at the party from different directions and their initial assault is reported to have resulted in seven deaths (Walker, Turley, and Leonard 2008, p. 158). However, that initial attack was soon repelled by the emigrant group who corralled their wagons and proceeded to fight off their assailants over the next five days. The attacking party was dressed as American Indians, and indeed some of them were Southern Paiute Indians. But the majority were white and were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). There were reports of fractious interactions between members of the Fancher–Baker party and Mormons whom they had encountered when passing through Utah (Bagley 2002, p. 98; Walker et al. 2008, p. 87).[1] However, the party posed no threat to the Utahn Mormon community and were about to leave Utah for good.

In the late morning of September 11, a sub-group of the assailants removed their disguises and approached the corral, pretending to be representatives of a sympathetic local militia who could broker a deal

between the emigrants and their Indian assailants. In exchange for livestock and supplies the representatives of the militia claimed that they would be able to persuade the assailants to cease hostilities and they would provide the emigrants with safe passage to nearby Cedar City. The emigrants were suspicious of the negotiating party, having seen through the disguises of their mainly white assailants; but as they were running low on water and ammunition, they felt that they had little choice but to accept the offer (Walker et al. 2008, p. 196), which was, as they feared, a "decoy." The remaining members of the Fancher–Baker party, who had managed to survive five days of besiegement, left their corral and were ambushed soon after by other members of the Mormon-led assailant group. Every adult and every child over the age of six was massacred and their bodies hastily buried. The only survivors were seventeen small children and infants, who were adopted into nearby Mormon families, under the erroneous assumption that they would all be too young to remember the shocking events that had transpired.

Historians who have examined the events surrounding the Mountain Meadows massacre disagree about whether or not Brigham Young, the then President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, had a hand in orchestrating the massacre, but all seem to agree that at least some senior figures in the church were involved in planning the massacre and in the attempted cover-up that followed.[2] Although there were many participants in the massacre, only one man was ever convicted for his actions and this conviction occurred almost twenty years after the event. The convicted man was John D. Lee, one of the ringleaders of the attacking party. Lee considered himself to be a scapegoat for the consequences of decisions made by church leaders; and although he admitted that he had killed some of the members of the Fancher–Baker party, he did not consider that he had done anything wrong. He believed that he was following just orders given to him by legitimate religious authorities. In his words: "I was guided in all that I did which is called criminal, by the orders of the leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints."[3] All of this information may come as a huge surprise to the many people who are unfamiliar with the events of September 11, 1857. The Mountain Meadows massacre has been largely forgotten and Mormons are not particularly associated with violence these days.

The massacre may have had a political motive.[4] In 1857, Utah was a semi-independent territory of the USA and was majority Mormon and

politically dominated by the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. As well as being President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Brigham Young was Governor of Utah Territory at the time. The church leaders were enmeshed in a complicated struggle to retain as much of their independence as they could from the distant, but ever-encroaching, "gentile" United States government in Washington. Some of them believed that the US government did not appreciate the role that Mormons played as protectors of the many white emigrants traveling westwards to California through partially colonized territory inhabited by potentially hostile Indian tribes. Furthermore, they believed that it would be politically advantageous to the Mormons if the government came to value this role and that an Indian massacre of white emigrants might help make their point. After Brigham Young announced that the Indians would no longer be "held back" by the Utahn Mormon community, attempts were made by some of the Mormons to encourage local Indians to conduct an attack on emigrants traversing Utah (Walker et al. 2008, p. 137); and when these were unsuccessful a plan to fake an Indian massacre was hatched (Walker et al. 2008, pp. 140). Unfortunately for the conspirators, the attempt to present the massacre that did take place as the work of local Indians was considered extremely unconvincing by the mainstream American media, who laid the blame for it squarely on the Mormon community of Utah. Some newspapers called for military reprisals against that community (Bagley 2002, pp. 190–1).[5]

Upon reading the above political explanation of the motives for the massacre, the average person is unlikely to be any less appalled than they were when first told that the massacre took place. The slaughter of over one hundred people for political advantage is appalling, not because it might fail to serve a political end, but because it seems highly immoral to most of us to kill people who pose no threat, regardless of whether this is for political gain or not. For many, the immorality of the massacre will seem all the more appalling and astonishing given that its perpetrators were deeply religious people. However, many Utahn Mormons of the period did not consider the massacre to be either immoral, or unjustified; and Lee was able to appeal to nineteenth-century Mormon theology to justify his actions. Lee and other Mormons believed that the adults of the Fancher–Baker party had committed serious sins and that they needed others to "shed their blood for the remission of their sins" (Bagley 2002, p. 321). According to the doctrine of "blood atonement," there are some sinful acts that are so serious that

one cannot properly atone for them without being killed. In the words of Brigham Young:

> There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they would stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.[6]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints does not appear to have maintained an official list of sins that might require blood atonement. The threat of blood atonement was made against those who kill the innocent or commit acts of heresy (Coates 1991, p. 64), as well as those who commit adultery (Walker et al. 2008, p. 25), aide apostates, or marry apostates (Coates 1991, pp. 65 – 6). It is not entirely clear what the adult members of the Fancher – Baker party did to warrant blood atonement.[7] One suggestion is that they may have been harboring apostates who were trying to escape Mormon Utah (Bagley 2002, p. 147). Another suggestion is that members of the party had boasted that they had been involved in the 1844 murder of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism (Bagley 2002, p. 117). A third suggestion is that members of the party had murdered local Indians by poisoning them (Bagley 2002, pp. 106 – 8). Lee and the other perpetrators of the massacre understood that non-Mormons would not accept the doctrine of blood atonement and the doctrine was a religious one, not written into Utahn law, so there was no prospect of applying it through legal channels. By blaming local Indians for the massacre, Lee are his collaborators would have hoped to be able to "blood atone" the adult members of the Fancher – Baker party without incurring the wrath and retribution of non-Mormon American "gentiles."

The doctrine of blood atonement justifies the killing of particular people by appeal to improvements in the quality of the afterlife that those people can be expected to experience. Just like mainstream Christians, Mormons believe in an eternal afterlife. Unlike many mainstream Christians, they do not believe that only followers of the true religion will experience a good afterlife. However, only those who receive the atonement of Jesus Christ are eligible for the most desirable form of afterlife, which is to live in a state of "exaltation" with God. According to the doctrine of blood atonement, the

atonement of Jesus Christ is not available to certain categories of sinners, unless they have died by having their blood spilled on the ground. If this doctrine is correct, then to kill such people is to do them a favor. It is perhaps the greatest possible favor that one could do for them. The benefits of being eligible for the atonement of Jesus Christ are extremely significant and last for ever, so these easily outweigh the harms involved in having a life violently shortened. The doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have continued to develop over the years as the church has carved out a place in mainstream America. The church formally renounced polygamy in the late nineteenth century and it repudiated the doctrine of blood atonement at much the same time.[8]

Religion and Violence

The Mountain Meadows massacre was an extremely violent, mass killing of civilians, instigated by religious believers. It is far from unique in these respects; and the resulting death toll is not particularly remarkable. The 1572 St. Bartholomew's day massacre of Huguenots in Paris by Catholic mobs led to at least 5,000 deaths. The Wadda Ghalughara – a massacre of Sikhs by Muslims – which took place in 1764, led to the death of 25,000 – 30,000 Sikhs. And violent killing motivated by religious conviction continues to this day. The attacks by al-Qaeda on the United States of America on September 11, 2001, resulted in the deaths of almost 3,000 people. Potentially even more deadly were the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system, which were carried out by members of the syncretist religious group Aum Shinrikyo on March 20, 1995. These coordinated attacks on commuters, during morning rush hour, were intended to kill tens of thousands of people, but due to flaws in the plan of attack they only resulted in twelve deaths, along with injuries to approximately 6,000 (Kaplan and Marshall 1996, p. 251). Most of the perpetrators of both of these recent sets of events appear to have considered them to be justified by the lights of their respective religions.

Massacres of civilians that are motivated by religion capture our attention, in part because they seem particularly hard to understand, especially if we start off with the widely accepted view that religion is generally a force for peace. But, in attempting to understand religious violence, we should not lose sight of the many forms of violent action, apart from the massacre of civilians, which have sometimes come to be seen as justified by religion.

Religion is often invoked as a justification for war. Sometimes religious leaders advise their followers that they are justified in participating in wars that have already commenced, and sometimes religious leaders agitate for military campaigns to take place, on the grounds that these are justified by the lights of their religion. The nine Christian Crusades to the Near East, between 1095 and 1291, are examples of this latter form of religiously sanctioned military campaign. Religious justifications are presented for the killing of many different species of animals as sacrifices to supernatural beings. In some cases humans have been among the species sacrificed. Religious motives are invoked to try to justify the killing of individuals because they have attempted to leave a religion (apostasy), because they have tried to revise a religion (heresy), and because they have spoken or written disrespectfully about a religion (blasphemy). Religion has been invoked, and continues to be invoked, in the Hindu tradition, to warrant the killing of brides whose husbands happen to have died before them. It has been used to justify suicide and in some instances, such as the case of the 1978 Jonestown massacre, in Guyana, where over 900 people died, to justify mass suicide. Religion has also been used to justify a variety of other forms of self harm, voluntarily accepted harm, and harm imposed against people's wishes.[9]

There have been many recent books written about the relationship between religion and violence and a debate ensues between those who argue that religion is a significant cause of violence (e.g., Avalos 2005; Juergensmeyer 2003) and those who consider that, while religion is prone to being used as a pretext for violence, it is not itself a significant cause of violence (e.g., Cavanaugh 2009; Ward 2006). This debate ranges over the appropriate interpretation of a series of historical events. Was the Spanish conquest of the Aztec and Inca empires and forcible conversion of their inhabitants to Christianity driven by religion, or by a desire for empire, or was it driven by some combination of the two? Were the Crusades primarily motivated by religious concerns, or were there broader political goals that really explain why they took place? Were the early twentieth-century European fascist movements secular movements, or were they indirectly fueled by religion? The recent upsurge in interest in the relationship between religion and violence has, of course, been provoked by the events of September 11, 2001, and a specific debate about the role that religion plays in motivating Islamic terrorism is also taking place. Some commentators, such as Pape (2005) and Goodin (2006), explain the behavior of modern Islamic terrorists in purely political terms. Other

commentators, such as Lincoln (2003) and Ignatieff (2004), insist that contemporary Islamic terrorism cannot be properly understood without understanding its distinctively religious dimension.

The argument presented in this book is not directed at understanding the overall relationship between religion and violence. The target is much more specific. I seek to understand and explain the ways in which religion can be used to justify violent activities. I will not address the issue of whether particular instances of violence that are justified by religion are actually caused by religion, actually caused by political factors, or actually caused by some combination of religion and political factors. Religion can be used to justify violent actions that have various different causes and it is the justifications offered in the name of religion that are the subject of investigation here. Insofar as the argument in this book is directed against anyone, it is directed against scholars such as Charles Selengut, who expresses the common view that " … ordinary judgment, canons of logic, and evaluation of behavior simply do not apply to religious activity" (2003, p. 6). As I will show, the religious generally justify their activities in much the same way as the secular and these justifications generally follow the same canons of logic as secular justifications. Religious arguments justifying violence are structurally similar to secular ones, but the religious are able to feed many more premises into those structures than the non-religious. The religious are able to appeal, among other things, to God's wishes, God's commands, the benefits of going to heaven, the benefits of avoiding hell, the benefits of being reincarnated as a superior being, and the benefits of escaping from the cycle of reincarnation, as well as all of the justificatory sources that are appealed to by the secular.

It may be tempting to try to deploy my conclusion within the debate about whether or not religion causes violence and argue that, because the religious have more conceptual resources to draw on, when attempting to justify violence, than the non-religious, they can be expected to justify more violent acts than the non-religious; and consequently, they can be expected to cause more violence than the non-religious. But this line of reasoning is highly speculative. Being able to draw on more conceptual resources to justify violence does not ensure that the religious will attempt to justify more violent acts than the non-religious, and nor does it ensure that the religious will cause more violence than the non-religious. A further reason to resist the conclusion that the religious cause more violence than the non-religious is that religion also provides conceptual resources to opponents of violence. These include pacifist religious doctrines – which we will have more to say

about in Chapter 4 – as well as doctrines that might be taken to obviate the need for violent action, such as the doctrine that God providentially guides human history to ensure that everything ultimately turns out for the best.

Are religious justifications of violence more effective than secular justifications of violence? If I am right that religious justifications of violence are structurally similar to secular justifications of violence, the answer to this question depends on one's assessment of the credibility of the premises that are fed into religious and secular arguments justifying violence. Those who accept the relevant religion are liable to find arguments that appeal to premises supported by their own religious tradition to be very credible, whereas followers of other religions, as well as atheists and agnostics, are liable to find these same arguments to be quite implausible, because they do not accept the relevant premises. When and where particular religions hold sway, arguments that appeal to premises deemed acceptable by followers of the dominant religion may well be more effective than secular arguments at justifying violence; however, at other times and in other places, secular arguments for the justification of violence can be expected to be more effective.

For convenience, I am following a common, abbreviated way of writing (and speaking) – as was mentioned in the Preface – and will refer to attempted justifications simply as justifications. I do not mean to imply that I regard all or any of these as successful justifications. Nor do I mean to imply that the justifications offered, under consideration here, are necessarily motivating of the actions that are justified, or necessarily play a role in causing actual behavior. In the remainder of this first chapter I will consider a number of conceptual and background issues that need to be clarified in order to analyze religious justifications of violence. I begin with analysis of the key terms "violence" and "justification." Neither of these is especially hard to understand, but given the centrality of both terms to this book, it is important that I am clear about how they are used here.

Violence

The exact meaning of the term "violence" is disputed. For the purposes of this discussion I will understand violence narrowly as *action which is intended to cause physical harm*. There are various ways in which this definition might be extended. Robert Audi argues that we should include mention of psychological harm in any definition of violence, alongside physical harm

(1971, p. 52). There may be good reasons for doing so, especially if we are trying to capture the general significance of harms in our definition. Some instances of psychological harm will have a deeper, more profound effect on people's lives than many instances of physical harm. If I punch you in the face, you will be physically harmed to a certain extent and perhaps you will experience indirectly caused psychological harm, alongside the black eye that I give you. If I use psychological "brainwashing" techniques to manipulate you into joining an extremist religious group and indirectly cause you to quit your job, give away all your money, and cut off all contact with your family then, all things being equal, you will suffer more deeply felt, longer lasting harm than in the punch scenario. Similarly, symbolic harms may have more of an impact on peoples' lives than some physical ones. You might be more hurt when you see me burn your national flag than you would be if I'd punched you. So, perhaps symbolic harms should be included in a definition of violence too. Selengut defines violence in a way that includes threats of harm as well as actual harms (2003, p. 9) and again there may be reasons to define violence this way. Some threats may have more of an impact on people's lives than some actual physical harms.[10] I don't have any particular objection to these extensions of the core conception of violence. However, as I want my analysis of religious violence to be acceptable to the widest possible audience, I will restrict my use of the term "violence" to refer to the class of cases that are most uncontroversially described as violent – actions intended to cause physical harm.

There are two further approaches to defining violence that I will also avoid. These are both stipulative, and are not directed at capturing the ordinary meaning of the term "violence." Neither would be helpful for my analysis. One of these broadens the concept of violence in an unhelpful way and the other restricts it, again in an unhelpful way. Johan Galtung (1969) broadens the concept violence to include "structural violence." The structures in question are institutional arrangements that operate to restrict peoples' choices, so as to lead to an absence of "social justice," which Galtung equates with an "egalitarian distribution of power and resources" (1969, p. 183). On this view all, or nearly all, contemporary societies count as intrinsically violent because they are not specifically structured so as to promote egalitarian ideals and because they allow unequal distributions of power and resources to be reproduced. Furthermore, all religious organizations that are hierarchical and distribute power and resources unequally will count as intrinsically violent – that is, nearly all religious organizations. The problem with this way of defining violence is that it posits several interlaid levels of violence,

which are not distinguished from one another; and so it constantly threatens to confuse our thinking about violence. There is intrinsic institutional violence, violent law, more general violent social arrangements, and violent acts. I am interested in understanding specific relations between religion, justification, and a narrowly understood class of intended harms. Because I want to understand this specific set of relations, I need to reject this overly broad definition of one of my key terms, which can only lead to confusion.

Sidney Hook restricts the range of the meaning of the concept of violence by advocating a stipulative "legitimist" definition of violence (Coady 2008, p. 23). He defines violence as " … the illegal employment of methods of physical coercion for personal or group ends".[11] This definition is so constructed as to prevent the word violence from being used to refer to (or criticize) current institutional arrangements, even if these result in physical harms to individuals. On Hook's view, a state that employed its army or police force to hurt or kill members of religious minorities, who were in violation of laws suppressing the practice of their religion, would not be acting violently. This restriction on meaning is too limiting for my analysis. Because I am concerned to examine the relationship between religion, justification, and intended acts that physically harm people it would be very unhelpful for me to employ a definition of violence that had built into it the denial of the very possibility that some religiously motivated intentional acts which physically harm people could count as violent.

Justification

If you ask someone why they have acted in a particular way you could either be asking them for an explanation or a justification of their behavior. Usually it is clear enough, in context, whether an explanation or a justification is expected. The career bank robber Willie Sutton (1901 – 1980) is famous for a joke that plays on this ambiguity. When Sutton was asked by a journalist why he robbed banks he is said to have replied "because that's where the money is!" The joke works because we are expecting that he will try to justify his behavior – try to convince us, despite our strong feelings to the contrary, that it is acceptable for him to rob banks, or at least identify some mitigating factors, making him seem less culpable for his crimes – and instead he provides a very straightforward explanation of that behavior in terms of means – end rationality. In general, a justification is the proper grounds one has for an action or belief. When I provide a justification I am doing

more than simply describing a series of thought processes that lead to a conclusion. Rather, I am selecting a reason, or set of reasons, that motivates my action, and which I believe to have sufficient normative force to warrant that action. Not all of my motives will have such normative force.[12]

Justifications need to be distinguished from excuses. When I provide a justification for a course of action, I am implying that it was an appropriate course of action to take, under the circumstances. In making this implication I also reveal that I take responsibility for the course of action in question. When I offer an excuse I do not attempt to imply that my course of action was appropriate. I concede that it was inappropriate, even though I also concede that I undertook that course of action. But in offering an excuse, I attempt to convince my audience that there are mitigating circumstances that either absolve me of responsibility for the course of action in question, or at least diminish that responsibility. If Willie Sutton had replied to the journalist by saying that a mafia boss was threatening to kill his relatives if he did not keep robbing banks, or told the journalist that he was suffering from a rare form of psychological compulsion and couldn't help robbing banks, try as he might to resist this unusual compulsion, he would be offering excuses rather than justifications for his actions.[13]

Suppose I am sunbathing at a beach and I see a man in the sea who is in danger of drowning and in obvious need of assistance; I also notice a sign put up by the local council warning of a strong undertow and forbidding swimming in the area. Suppose further that I decide, despite the risk to my own safety, to break the law and swim over to him and offer assistance. If I am asked to justify my illegal action I might say something like the following: I am under a moral obligation to attempt to save the lives of those who need immediate assistance, and I consider that the importance of this moral obligation outweighs my responsibility to obey the local law. This justifying consideration might not be my only motive. I might also think to myself that being seen taking a significant risk to save a life will help me to impress a woman who I am romantically interested in and who happens to be at the beach. While this desire motivates me, I do not consider it to be a justification for my action. I do not consider that my desire to impress a romantic interest ought to be grounds to violate the local law. An overall explanation of my behavior would include mention of this additional motive, but as I consider that it lacks normative force, I do not mention it when I am asked to justify my behavior.

Participation in the process of presenting justifications for our behavior places constraints on behavior and if we are to understand human behavior

properly it is important that we understand this process. An extremely important constraint that the justificatory process imposes is a consistency constraint. If I consider it justifiable to break a local council's law and risk my own safety in order to save a life, and I swim over to offer assistance to a drowning person on one occasion, then I am logically committed to doing so on all other such occasions which involve an equivalent risk, including those that might occur when the attractive woman, whom I am trying to impress, is not present. People will tend to judge my behavior according to whether or not it conforms to this consistency constraint. When I risk my life to save another person from drowning I enhance my reputation by convincing people that I am the sort of person who will take risks to protect the lives of others. If, however, I fail to act consistently and fail to take equivalent risks to protect the lives of others on other similar occasions, then people will start to question whether I was actually motivated by the consideration that I claimed had justificatory force. If they can find another motive that explains the inconsistency in my actions, such as the desire to impress the woman I am attracted to, then they will be liable to conclude that my stated justification for action is insincere and my reputation can be expected to suffer accordingly.

Statements that people make justifying their actions and beliefs often include a rhetorical component as well as a logical one; and this rhetorical component can make their justification seem more compelling. If I claim that legal sanctions against homosexual activity are justified, and go on to explain that this is because God determines what is right and wrong, the Bible contains God's determinations and it tells us in the Bible that God considers homosexual acts to be morally wrong, then I am providing an unadorned justification of a normative claim. If I exclaim "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!" I am effectively making much the same claim, but am doing so with a rhetorical flourish that makes the assertion much more memorable and more convincing to many.

Here I will be concerned with the logical structure of justifications of acts of religious violence, rather than the efficacy of rhetoric.[14] There is much more that could be said about the psychological effects of dressing up justificatory claims in this or that rhetorical form, as well as about the difficulties that people have distinguishing logically well-formed arguments from appeals to rhetoric. Much of this is important to appreciate if we aim at a comprehensive understanding of how religion can cause violence. For example, demonizing members of out-groups and describing them as "rats," "vermin," "parasites," "cockroaches," and so on seems to be an effective way

of activating someone's sense of disgust, and encourages a propensity to think of those out-group members as a threat to the health of one's own community that needs to be removed (Navarrete and Fessler 2006; Faulkner et al. 2004). Psychological research teaches us much about these techniques; and it is important that these are well understood. But work on this important task will not be advanced here.

Another important lesson to be learned from the psychological literature – which I mention here in order to head off a common sort of misunderstanding – is that the vast majority of people who act violently do not appear to view inflicting harm on others as an end in itself and do not appear to gain particular enjoyment from harming others. Comic book villains may enjoy inflicting harm on others, but the overwhelming majority of people who act violently are psychologically unlike comic book villains. They do not laugh maniacally or otherwise express delight when harming others. Most people who commit violent acts do so reluctantly and only after they have overcome internal constraints that would ordinarily make them feel guilty about harming others. When they do act violently, they do so in the belief that what they are doing is justifiable, all things considered (Baumeister 2001, pp. 60–96). Or at least this is how most perpetrators of violent acts see things at the time that they commit those acts. There are, of course, exceptions to this generalization, especially amongst psychopaths who lack internal constraints against harming others (Hare 1999) and some sadists, whose enjoyment of hurting others leads them to overcome feelings of guilt much more easily than ordinary people (Baumeister and Campbell 1999, pp. 214–15). It is important that the psychology of these exceptional cases be well understood, but this is not the subject under consideration here.

What I am interested in identifying here is what religion adds to the process by which humans justify violence. One possible answer to this question is "anything and everything." Justification is a normative process, and whatever norms there are that can be legitimately appealed to exist because God (or some other supernatural agent or agents) created them. Morality is entirely derivative of religion, or so says the "divine command theorist." This view may seem somewhat hard to accept, because it involves accepting that if God had stipulated that it is morally obligatory to torture kittens and morally impermissible to give money to charity, then it would be morally obligatory to torture kittens and morally impermissible to give money to charity. The rightness and wrongness of particular acts do not seem to be the sort of qualities that could be dependent on the simple stipulation of God or any other supernatural agent.[15]

One does not have to be a divine command theorist, though, to hold that our moral beliefs and practices are largely the product of our religion. A convincing rebuttal of this more general view will require a deeper understanding of religion and a deeper understanding of the relationship between morality and religion. In the next chapter I will attempt to provide a deeper understanding of religion and in the following chapter I will turn my attention to morality. I will go on to argue that the tendency to hold religious beliefs and engage in religious behavior (henceforth just "religion") is something that evolved in human populations over time and that morality, or at least a certain basic sort of morality, was a necessary precursor to the evolution of religion. In order to continue to function, human communities require a certain minimal form of moral structure. The human communities in which religion evolved were moral communities in this bare sense and if, at any point, a religion which undermined that minimal moral structure became dominant in a particular community, the community in question would have collapsed, taking the support base for that religion with it. Religion might be invoked to try to justify anything and everything, but religions that do not succeed in making the justifications that they offer consistent with this minimal moral structure do not survive the test of time.

Nothing Bad

Another answer to the question of what religion adds to the justificatory process is "nothing bad." Charles Kimball assures us that authentic religion is always a force for good and only "corrupted religion" leads to violence (2008, pp. 199–200). He also tells us that:

> Whatever religious people may say about their love of God or the mandates of their religion, when their behavior towards others is violent and destructive, when it causes suffering among their neighbors, you can be sure the religion has been corrupted and reform is desperately needed. (Kimball 2008, p. 47)

Similarly, Keith Ward understands religious justifications for violent action as being based on misinterpretations of scripture which,

> ignore the weightier matters of scriptures – the love of God and neighbour, and the search for compassion and mercy – and choose texts taken out of context and applied without any sense of history or concern for general traditions of interpretation. (Ward 2006, p. 37)

Ward is more circumspect than Kimball, who seems to believe that there are no "authentic" religions in the world that justify violence. Ward restricts his claims about proper scriptural interpretation to the "major world religions" (2006, p. 40).

One problem with this answer is that it equates violence with badness, but it is not obvious that just because some action is violent that it must necessarily be bad. Many, if not most, acts of violence committed in the name of religion seem to be committed by those who believe that such action furthers the greater good; and we cannot dismiss the view that violent action is at least sometimes good without first examining the relevant evidence. Ward "reluctantly" concedes that the violent actions undertaken by al-Qaeda are directed at good outcomes (2006, pp. 30–1), although he also describes the beliefs of al-Qaeda as "unequivocally evil" (2006, p. 35). He attempts to resolve the tension between these two statements by arguing that al-Qaeda members really know that "it is wrong to kill the innocent," but that "the power of self-deception is strong" (2006, p. 31). It seems intuitively hard to accept that one would have to be self-deceived to believe that it is always morally impermissible to kill the innocent, in all possible circumstances, however. Consider the following variant of an influential philosophical thought experiment – "the ticking time bomb" scenario.[16] Suppose that a madman has strapped a radioactive dirty bomb to an innocent person in a densely populated city. The bomb is on a timer and is also hooked up to the innocent person's pulse and is due to detonate in 30 seconds, unless the innocent person dies before then. If the bomb does go off it will kill hundreds of thousands of people. You happen to be near the innocent person and you have a gun. What should you do? Consequentialist philosophers often argue that it is morally justifiable to kill the one to save the many in such scenarios. There may be room for differences of opinion about what you should do, but it is hard to take seriously the assertion that those who think that killing one innocent person to save hundreds of thousands of other innocent people are simply in the grip of self-deception.

The religious beliefs of the Aztecs of the fifteenth century put devout believers in something like the ticking time bomb scenario on a daily basis. Devout Aztecs believed that the sun god Huitzilopochtli required regular human sacrifices to prevent the sun being destroyed by the forces of darkness. It was the duty of Aztec priests to ensure that these regular human sacrifices to Huitzilopochtli took place. If the sun was destroyed then life would cease.[17] These human sacrifices were often conducted in an extremely violent ritualized manner with a small incision being made

in the chest of sacrificial victims before their still-beating hearts were removed from their bodies. Their bodies were then torn to pieces, roasted and eaten (Wade 2009, pp. 242–5).[18] No doubt Ward and Kimball would see the Aztec priesthood, which conducted such human sacrifices on a mass scale,[19] as theologically corrupt and perhaps evil. However, there is a straightforward way to understand the Aztec priesthood as aiming to serve the greater good: they sincerely believed that they were sacrificing the lives of some humans to save humanity (and other species) from destruction. Reports suggest that at least some of their sacrificial victims were willing ones: true believers who were prepared to forfeit their lives for the greater good (Berdan 2005, p. 122).[20]

A second problem with this answer is that it is very hard to interpret some religious scripture as instructing us to do anything other than kill innocent people. Instructions to kill the innocent are found in the holy texts of various religions. The Koran instructs devout Muslims to kill polytheists who fail to renounce their religion:

> And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah,[21] let them [go] on their way. (9:5)

The Hindu Puranas instruct widows to either kill themselves, or submit to being killed by others, for no other reason than that their husband has died:

> Tell the faithful wife of the greatest duty of woman: she is loyal and pure who burns herself with her husband's corpse. Should the husband die on a journey, holding his sandals to her breast let her pass into the flames.[22]

And consider the following passage from the Old Testament in which God orders the Israelites to commit genocide:

> But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite; just as the LORD your God has commanded you. (Deuteronomy 20:16–17)

The instruction to "utterly destroy" these various peoples turns out to be part of a broader imperialistic program. God commands genocidal treatment of

the peoples mentioned above because they happen to reside in areas near to the Israelites. God also commands that peoples living further away are to be given an opportunity to pay tribute to the Israelites and to generally serve them (Deuteronomy 20:11). If they refuse then the Israelites are instructed to kill every adult male among them "with the edge of a sword" (Deuteronomy 20:13).

These are very explicit instructions. While it was not as urgent for the Israelites to obey them as for the Aztecs to conduct human sacrifices – the sun would not cease to shine if the Israelites failed to carry out their instructions immediately – obedience to God could not be deferred indefinitely. The Old Testament makes it clear that it is a very bad idea to fail to obey God. The Old Testament God explicitly describes himself as a "jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5) and there are many examples of God punishing those who disobey orders. One such example is that of Achan. According to the Old Testament, Achan dutifully participated in the divinely ordained destruction of the city of Jericho, along with other Israelites.[23] However, he also decided to take a few "spoils of war" for himself, in defiance of God's explicit instructions. He took " … a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels" (Joshua 7:21). This made God extremely angry and caused Him to threaten to abandon Israel unless Achan was put to death (Joshua 7:12). Despite a confession, forgiveness was not forthcoming, and Achan was stoned, then burned and then, for good measure, his body was covered in a large heap of stones (Joshua 7:25).

Defenders of the view that Christianity is a religion of peace face a difficult problem when it comes to explaining away Old Testament passages such as the above. One influential response to this problem is to deny that scripture should be understood as a straightforward depiction of God's engagement with the world. On a "progressive" Christian view it is stressed that the divine is very hard for humans to comprehend. God makes disclosures to us at various times, and we interpret these as best we can, and collect our best interpretations in scripture. However, we also acknowledge that scripture may be a poor representation of the actual will of God. Another response is to make a sharp distinction between the vindictive God of the Old Testament and the loving God of the New Testament (Avalos 2005, p. 176; Teehan 2010, p. 161). It is not clear that Christians ought simply to disavow the God of the Old Testament in favor of the God of the New Testament.

After all, these are supposed to be the same God. Perhaps the most plausible way to understand Christianity as a religion of peace is to combine the two responses described above and hold, as Ward does, that extremely violent Old Testament passages are very inaccurate representations of the will of God and are superseded by the New Testament, which more accurately depicts God's will (2006, p. 114). But this is far from the only way in which Christians understand the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

It is undeniable that the New Testament is much less violent than the Old Testament, as "new atheists" Richard Dawkins (2006, p. 250) and Daniel Dennett (2006, p. 206) both concede. In the New Testament we encounter Jesus expressing pacifist sentiments, telling us not to resist violence, but to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) and to "Love your enemies" (Luke 6:27). Unfortunately there is a propensity among those who portray Christianity as a religion of peace to cherry-pick passages from the New Testament, such as the ones cited above, and skate over more awkward material. In one notorious passage, Jesus encourages his disciples to hate[24] their (presumably non-Christian) parents, children, spouse, and siblings (Luke 14:26). In another passage Jesus specifically denies having come to earth to create peace and claims to be here to create divisions between people (Luke 12:49–53). In another passage Jesus instructs his disciples to sell some of their garments and to use the money raised to buy swords (Luke 22:36–8). In still another passage Jesus threatens those who fail to serve him sufficiently well with eternal damnation (Matthew 25:41–6). Such threatening behavior seems particularly hard to reconcile with the unequivocal advocacy of peace. I don't want to make the strong claim that Ward's (2006) or Kimball's (2008) interpretations of the New Testament God as a God of peace are implausible. I have no doubt that both of these authors would be capable of offering interpretations of the New Testament that reconcile these passages with the view that the New Testament God is a God of peace.[25] What I do want to argue is that it is not obvious that these interpretations of the New Testament are superior to alternatives, such as Avalos's (2005) and Desjardins' (1997) interpretations of the New Testament as promoting a complicated mix of peace and violence.

We cannot plausibly argue that, properly interpreted, Christianity *must* be understood as a religion of peace (or of violence), because there is no definitive interpretation of Christian scripture to be had. This should not be surprising. Christian scripture is a large complicated body of writings

that are not obviously consistent with one another. The same can be said for canonical texts in other religious traditions. The Koran and other Islamic holy texts are variously interpreted because they are open to a variety of interpretations,[26] as are the Vedas and other holy texts in the Hindu tradition, and the Sutras and other core texts in the Buddhist tradition. The major religions of the world have all developed expansive, complicated bodies of scripture which lack definitive interpretations. There is no proper basis for insisting that any of these religions must be understood as "religions of peace," rather than religions of both peace and violence.[27]

Between "Anything and Everything" and "Nothing Bad"

The answer I will give to the question of what religion adds to justification falls somewhere between "anything and everything" and "nothing bad." Religion does provide additional conceptual resources for the justification of acts and procedures – including violent ones – that the non-religious do not have access to, but not everything can be justified by (established) religion. While short-lasting, obscure religions might indeed succeed in inculcating doctrines that could be used as the basis for the justification of pretty much anything and everything, religious doctrines that do not accord with ordinary morality will not survive the test of time because the religions that promulgate such doctrines will undermine the communities that practice these religions and accept such doctrines (this line of argument will be developed further in Chapters 2 and 3).

Jack David Eller has recently considered the issue of what religion contributes to the justificatory process and, like me, he takes a middle view. The gist of his view is that: "The religious contribution to legitimation is neither natural or social but, characteristically, supernatural and agentive" (Eller 2010, p. 73). This answer seems promising. What religion offers the justificatory process, which it would otherwise lack, is appeal to narratives about the intentions, needs, desires, and other mental states of supernatural agents. Religion also enables us to appeal to the existence of a deeper reality than is apparent to us, which can involve an interplay between the natural and the supernatural, and which can help us to make sense of the intentions, needs, desires, and so on of supernatural agents. The Aztecs understood this deeper reality to involve an ever-present threat of our world ending as a result of the actions of supernatural forces of darkness. Huitzilopochtli wants to fight off these forces, but can only do so if natural

agents provide him with regular human sacrifices. Somewhat similarly, many fundamentalist Christians believe that there is a supernatural power struggle going on between God and Satan, which spills over into the natural world. Many also believe that their actions here in the natural world can help to shape the precise outcome of this supernatural conflict (Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 148–66).

Eller analyzes the religious contribution to justification, or legitimation, under three headings, "models," "mandates," and "metaphysics" (2010, pp. 74–6). The metaphysically rich accounts of a deeper reality than the one that is apparent to us do appear to be distinctive of religion and do appear to be useful in justifying behavior. However, although models and mandates can play a role in justifying behavior, they do not pick out anything that is distinctive to religion, and what they do pick out are social phenomena – but Eller had earlier rejected the view that what is distinctive about the religious contribution to legitimation is characteristically social (2010, p. 73). By models, Eller means role models and indeed most major religious traditions seem to be generously endowed with role models. Christians have many role models to choose from, including saints, martyrs, the Apostles, Mary, and of course Jesus Christ. Other religions appeal to their own role models, who are to be found in both their history and their legends. Many Christians ask themselves "What would Jesus do?" before acting, taking Christ's example to be a guide to proper behavior. The devout Christian former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje wore a wristband with the initials WWJD on it to prompt him to ask himself "What would Jesus do?" before acting. But the social practice of looking to role models for guidance is hardly distinctive of religion. Many Christian South Africans considered Hansie Cronje to be a role model because he appeared to live an exemplary Christian lifestyle; however, many secular South Africans also considered him to be something of a role model, simply because of his work ethic and success as a leader and a player on the cricket field.[28] Athletes, musicians, actors, and other celebrities are often considered to be role models by many because of their worldly successes and the ways in which they lead their – sometimes very irreligious – secular lives. Leading soldiers, scientists, and politicians are considered role models by some, and a recent Google search suggests that many atheists consider Richard Dawkins to be a role model.

Mandates are explicit orders or instructions that a particular religion may provide. These may be general rules governing behavior, such as the "ten commandments" and other instructions to be found in the Bible, or

more specific rules governing standards of dress, diet, hygiene, and so on. Undoubtedly these have a very significant effect on behavior. Devout Jews and Muslims do not eat pork because Jewish and Muslim dietary laws forbid the consumption of pork. But, like models, mandates are social phenomena that are not distinctively religious. Religion offers us a variety of mandates, but so does the secular world. Bernard Gert (2004) has developed a secular equivalent of the ten commandments, arguing that there are exactly ten rules of morality which are justified by consideration of rationality.[29] He has recently been outdone by A.C. Grayling who offers us a secular equivalent of the Bible – his *The Good Book* (2011), which contains a large number of instructions for leading a good secular life. Societies mandate a variety of restrictions on dress and on cuisine, often for secular reasons. In his drive to modernize Turkey and turn it into a secular state President Atatürk banned the wearing of the Fez and the Veil in 1925. Very recently France and Belgium have banned the wearing of any clothing that covers the face in public places, for ostensibly secular reasons. Restrictions on the consumption of food are also often driven by secular concerns. These include European bans on genetically modified food, as well as various bans on "junk food" sales, which have been imposed recently in a number of local districts in both the USA and Europe.

Nature and Supernature

These days, when we think of the natural world we typically think of it as a discrete continuous spatio-temporal realm, which is ordinarily closed to external influence. If we think of supernatural beings at all, we think of them as not being part of the natural world. Either they inhabit a realm that is clearly distinct from the natural one or they lack any definite location. This way of thinking of the supernatural is a consequence of the rise of the mechanistic worldview in the seventeenth century, under which nature came to be understood as a well-ordered realm governed by universal laws of nature. We think of ourselves as living within this mechanistic system and we think that we are unable to escape from the control of its governing laws. Our understanding of the natural allows us to attach a reasonably clear meaning to the term "supernatural." If there are supernatural beings or entities, then they have origins in powers that are not part of nature. We suppose that the behavior of supernatural beings is not governed by the laws of nature, and if such beings are sufficiently powerful, as we ordinarily suppose God

is, then they may be able to intervene in the natural world. Before the rise of the mechanistic worldview in the seventeenth century, however, people did not think of nature as being a discrete orderly realm. Insofar as the term "supernatural" had a clear meaning, it was used to refer to beings, entities, events, and processes that seemed particularly mysterious and powerful. The supernatural, in this older, looser, more relativistic sense, is not clearly discrete from the natural world although it is distinct from the familiar natural world.[30] But although it was harder to distinguish nature from supernature before the rise of the mechanistic worldview, it does not seem to have been particularly hard for people to distinguish gods and other supernatural beings from ordinary natural beings. Gods and other supernatural beings were said to be able to travel to postulated places that natural beings could not ordinarily go to, such as heaven and hell, and were said to possess abilities that natural beings could not ordinarily possess, such as perfect knowledge, infinite strength, and so on.

It is sometimes supposed that belief in the supernatural can only ever be grounded in religious faith and that reason could never warrant acceptance of any hypotheses that go beyond the scope of the natural. If so, then there is no place for the supernatural in a naturalistic worldview.[31] However, the primary commitment of naturalistic philosophers is to the authority of the scientific method and to the formation of beliefs on the basis of reason and evidence, and this is not obviously incompatible with belief in the supernatural. As Michael Rea points out, "naturalism, whatever it is, must be compatible with anything science might tell us about nature or supernature" (Rea 2002, p. 55). Can science warrant belief in supernatural beings and entities in the modern sense of the term "supernatural"? Not only can it do so, it has done so on several occasions. Before Darwin developed the theory of natural selection it was rational to believe that living organisms were supernaturally designed. Appeal to supernatural design provided the best available explanation of the functional organization of living organisms (Clarke 2009, p. 133; Ruse 2001, p. 113), which is why it was the dominant view of biology before the development of the theory of natural selection. Other scientific explanations that appealed to the supernatural, and were the best available explanations in their day, include Newton's argument that the stability of the planets that form our solar system is best explained by God's careful initial placement of the planets, in combination with the law of gravity (Meyer 2000, pp. 133–4); and the nineteenth-century vitalist argument that the sharp divide between the living and the non-living is best explained by supposing that living beings are imbued with a non-material

élan vital (MacDonald and Tro 2009).[32] Science has repeatedly appealed to non-natural entities and forces in the past, so we have inductive grounds to suppose that it may do so again in the future. We have no proper basis, therefore, to rule the supernatural out of science on conceptual grounds and to insist that belief in the supernatural must be irrational, or based on faith alone.[33]

It is tempting to try to draw a sharp distinction and insist that while the religious can appeal to the justificatory resources that belief in the supernatural provides it is not possible for the secular to do the same. We should resist this temptation. There have been good secular reasons to believe in supernatural entities and processes in the past and we cannot rule out the possibility that other such reasons will become apparent in the future. Nevertheless, we can settle on something close to this sharp distinction. Science seems only ever to have warranted acceptance of conceptually austere supernatural beings and entities and, by themselves, these postulates do not seem sufficiently rich to justify violent action or, indeed, any sort of action. Seventeenth-century science seemed to warrant the inference that there was a supernatural creator who placed the planets in the solar system in orbit around the sun and who designed living beings, but it was otherwise silent about the character of this creator and also about the moral status of designed life forms. Nineteenth-century vitalist biology seemed to warrant the inference that life was imbued with a non-material *élan vital*. But even if we are warranted in holding that life is imbued with a non-material *élan vital*, we have not established that life has any kind of moral value, or that we are justified or unjustified in treating living beings in particular ways. In contrast, the rich metaphysical narratives of particular religions readily lend themselves to justificatory roles.

In the next chapter, I will look much more closely at religion. The subject of Chapter 3 is morality. In Chapter 4, I look at secular justifications for violence and I start to investigate religious justifications for violence. I continue the investigation of religious justifications for violence in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 7 a series of case studies of violent actions carried out in the name of religion in recent times is examined. I show that, in each case, specific religious justifications have been offered for such action and, in each case, the justifications offered are consistent with the analyses of forms of religious justifications for violence provided in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In Chapter 8 I attend to the topic of religious tolerance, and consider our prospects for persuading those who believe that they are justified in conducting violent acts in the name of religion to behave tolerantly. In the final chapter of the book

I consider our prospects for preventing or ameliorating violent actions that particular religious individuals and groups hold to be justified by appeal to their religion.

Notes

1. Bagley cautions us to regard stories of misconduct by the emigrants in Utah with "profound skepticism," as almost all of these stories came from Utahn Mormons who were involved either in the massacre or in covering it up (2002, p. 99).
2. Mormon scholars, including Walker et al. (2008) and Brooks (1950), concede that officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints were involved in orchestrating the massacre, but deny that there is compelling evidence that Brigham Young was involved. Bagley argues that Brigham Young was heavily involved and shared moral responsibility for the massacre (2002, p. 380).
3. Cited in Bagley (2002, p. 311).
4. However, some commentators argue that the massacre was the consequence of a series of mistakes and miscalculations, as attempts by local Mormons to conduct lower-level violent actions against the Fancher–Baker party got out of hand. See, for example, Bowman (2012, pp. 121–3).
5. The *San Francisco Bulletin* went as far as to call for volunteers to help exterminate the Utahn Mormons (Bagley 2002, p. 191).
6. Cited in Coates (1991, pp. 64–5).
7. Children under the age of eight are not considered to be responsible for their actions by Mormons and hence it was not usually supposed that the doctrine of blood atonement could be applied to them (Bagley 2002, p. 51). This consideration may help explain why children under the age of seven were spared in the massacre, although there remains a slight discrepancy to be accounted for between the maximum age of the children spared in the massacre and the Mormon age of accountability.
8. The doctrine of blood atonement was formally repudiated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1889.
9. Forms of harm particularly associated with religion include cicatrization, circumcision, crucifixion, flagellation, infibulation, and subincision.
10. There are also metaphorical uses of the term "violence" that go beyond the narrow range of cases that we will consider here. For example, an actor might be said to do violence to Hamlet, meaning not that he has attempted to kill the mythical Danish prince, but that he has played the role of Hamlet in a film or a play in an extremely unconvincing way.
11. Quoted in Grundy and Weinstein (1974, p. 12).
12. In the analysis that follows I will avoid the technicalities involved in formal treatments of the logic of justification. Examination of these is not necessary

for my purposes. Readers interested in investigating formal treatments of the logic of justification could start by looking at Artemov and Fitting (2011).

13. The classic philosophical discussion of the justification/excuse distinction is to be found in Austin (1956–7). Here I am following Austin's way of distinguishing between these two terms.

14. For a detailed examination of the psychological appeal of the rhetoric of violence, as well as an evolutionary account of why humans are particularly susceptible to the influence of this rhetoric, see Smith (2007).

15. This is the much discussed "Euthyphro problem" in philosophy. Here I am following Hoffman and Rosencrantz (2002, pp. 143–6).

16. For recent discussion of this thought experiment, see Breecher (2007).

17. See Carrasco (1998, pp. 57–8, 82).

18. There were various Aztec human sacrificial practices and not all were intended to ensure the continuing existence of the sun. However, many of these were held by the Aztecs to have effects on the natural world. For example, crying children were sacrificed on an annual basis to ensure rains (Berdan 2005, p. 121). For an extended discussion of Aztec sacrificial practices, see Carrasco (1998, pp. 183–207).

19. According to Wade, a reasonable estimate is that approximately 15,000 people were sacrificed per year in Central America in the late fifteenth century (2009, p. 243). Berdan offers a somewhat higher estimate: approximately 20,000 per year (2005, p. 123).

20. An important additional incentive for them was provided by the widespread Aztec belief that sacrificial victims would become gods in the afterlife (Berdan 2005, p. 121).

21. An annual tax collected for the poor.

22. Cited by Eller (2010, p. 130). The burning of widows has been a persistent practice in Indian Hindu communities, despite having been outlawed in India in the early nineteenth century.

23. "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword" (Joshua 6:21).

24. However, the Ancient Greek word usually translated as "hate" is sometimes translated as "love less."

25. Ward considers some examples of Jesus apparently acting in a somewhat violent and intolerant fashion, which he explains away in a plausible enough manner (2006, pp. 121–4).

26. For a discussion of disputes between interpreters of Islam as a religion of peace and as a religion of both peace and violence, see Avalos (2005, pp. 283–99).

27. Teehan argues similarly (2010, p. 146).

28. Or at least they viewed him this way until April 2000 when it became clear that he had been involved in match fixing.

29. Some of these are modern versions of biblical commandments and some are new.
30. For more on the natural/supernatural distinction, see Clarke (2007).
31. Some naturalistically inclined philosophers have lent support to this view, stipulating that a naturalistic philosophical outlook is incompatible with belief in supernatural entities (e.g., Pettit 1992, p. 245; Stroud 2004, p. 23).
32. Vitalism was the dominant view in chemistry and biology throughout much of the nineteenth century. While some vitalists seemed to think that the *élan vital* was an emergent natural property, many vitalists, including Van Helmont and Stahl, took the view that it was a non-natural substance (MacDonald and Tro, 2009).
33. For further defence of this claim see Clarke (2009).