

Contemplation in a world of violence: insights from René Girard and Thomas Merton

Talk prepared for a day retreat with Sebastian Moore on Contemplation in a world of violence: Girard, Merton, Tolle, organised by the Thomas Merton Society, held at Downside Abbey, Bath 3 November 2001. Appeared in the On Being Liked book.

I take it that contemplation is a certain sort of seeing.

I take it from Girard that we always learn to see through the eyes of another.

The desire of another directs our seeing and makes available to us what is to be seen.

In other words, there is no reality "out there" to be seen. What is "out there" is already, inescapably a construct made real by human desire. When, as in most of our cases, most of the time, the other through whose eyes we are learning to see is the rivalistic other, competitors, the crowd, what we see is what is given value by them, and the one seeing it is moved by that desire, and knows and loves with that desire: the "self" becomes the incarnation of that desire, jostling for security, reputation, goodness, success. Thomas Merton refers to this in a number of places as a sort of collective hypnosis. In this, as in many areas, he is onto the same thing as Girard.

I also take it that when we talk about contemplation in a Christian context we are talking about quite a specific sort of seeing. We are talking about learning how to be given our desire through the eyes of another. The other is Jesus, the Word of God. So, we are being taught to look at what is through the eyes of the One who reveals the mind of God. That is, to be possessed by the mind of God ourselves. By being taught to receive ourselves and all that is around us through the eye and desire of God our "self" becomes an incarnation of that desire and we start to speak words formed by the un-hypnosis, the awakening desire of the Creator. In other words: we are being taught to be loving lookers at what is by the One

who is calling into being and loving what is. We are being taught to see and delight in what is by the One whose delighting is what gives it, and us, to be.

Let me emphasize this point, taken from Girard, since it is much more important than my fragile ability to practice it, and thus than my fragile ability to be able to yield for you any fruit from it. We desire according to the desire of another. That is to say, the eyes of another teach us who we are by teaching us what we want. I take it that this is a simple anthropological fact of no great difficulty. The only question is: which other? The sometimes peaceful, sometimes rivalistic, always ambivalent desire known in John's Gospel as "the world", or the entirely gratuitous, peaceful non-rivalistic desire, given us as an entirely sentient, conscious human life history by the Word who reveals God's heart. Christian contemplation is, I take it, the learning of the second regard, the regard of the peaceful other.

Rather than give you a précis of Girard's thought - and there are many available - I would like to try and work through something with you in the light of that thought. There was no notion in my mind when I planned to write this, in August 2001, that there would be such examples of violence and the sacred around us that we would find ourselves living in their shadow by the time I actually came to do so, in October of the same year. But the shadow is now very much there, and this is both frightening and helpful: frightening since talk has to be much more responsible when we are being tested to look and speak well in the midst of something, a test it is easier to avoid under apparently more peaceful circumstances; and helpful since it makes much easier the fraternity between Girard's thought and Thomas Merton's when we are able to make parallels between the world of tension and crisis from within which Merton was speaking in the mid to late 1960's and our own situation. I am thinking particularly of Merton's paper "Events and Pseudo-Events: Letter to a Southern Churchman"¹.

So, I am going to risk opening a discussion with you in the light of the events of September 2001, aware that what I say is partial, liable to offend sensibilities of which I am ignorant and so on. I ask you to accept that this is a risky form of discourse, and that if it sparks off strong emotions I may not be able to defend what I say, and those disagreeing may well be right. Certainly, I am an authority neither on contemplation,

¹ This paper can be found in the collection *Faith and Violence*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

nor on violence, and these are tentative views, tentatively shared.

First of all, I would like to take us all back in our memories to the afternoon of September 11th - the afternoon, that is, for those of us who were on the eastern side of the Atlantic. What I want to suggest to you is that we were all summoned to participate in something satanic. Now, by "satanic" I don't mean an over-the-top figure of speech, but something very specific, with very specific anthropological content, something whose very ability to be decoded by us is a sign of its failing transcendence. This is what I mean: some brothers of ours committed simple acts of suicide with significant collateral murder, meaning nothing at all. There is no meaning to the act of destruction caused by hijacking planes full of people and crashing them into buildings. It is not an act creative of anything at all, any more than any other suicide is a creative act.

But immediately we began to respond, and our response is to create meaning. It is our response that I am seeking to examine. Our response was sparked by two particular forces: the locations chosen for the suicide with collateral murder - places symbolic of power, wealth and success (never mind that many of those killed were neither powerful, wealthy or successful); and the omnipresence in the cities in question, and particularly New York, of rolling cameras and a hugely powerful media network which enabled a significant proportion of the planet to be sucked in to spectating from a safe distance. An already mimetic centre, drawing more attention than ever towards itself, on that day became virtually inescapable.

As we were sucked in, so we were fascinated. The "tremendum et fascinatum", as Otto described the old sacred, took hold of us. Furthermore, we did not come to the spectacle with fresh eyes, as to something entirely new. We came with a script given us by a thousand movies and conspiracy novels of the Robert Ludlum / Tom Clancy genre. It is not original to have noticed that the second plane actually crashing into the tower looked less convincing than it would have done in a film. A film would certainly have made it look much better, produced tension, given it an air of deliberation, rather than that almost whimsical videogame appearance from off the side of our screens. It is not that what we saw was "like a film". We have been taught by films and books, themselves borrowing from and playing to ritualistic constructions of meaning, to see what we saw, and to react as we reacted. Like the novelists and the film directors, we know the ritual.

And immediately the old sacred worked its magic: we found ourselves being sucked in to a sacred centre, one where a meaningless act had created a vacuum of meaning, and we found ourselves giving meaning to it. All over London I found that friends had stopped work, offices were closing down, everyone was glued to the screen. In short, there had appeared, suddenly, a holy day. Not what we mean by a holiday, a day of rest, but an older form of holiday, a being sucked out of our ordinary lives in order to participate in a sacred and sacrificial centre so kindly set up for us by the meaningless suicides.

And immediately the sacrificial centre began to generate the sort of reactions that sacrificial centres are supposed to generate: a feeling of unanimity and grief. Let me make a parenthesis here. I am not referring to the immediate reactions of those actually involved - rescue services, relatives, friends, whose form of being drawn in was as a response to an emergency and a family tragedy. I am referring to the rest of us. There took hold of an enormous number of us a feeling of being pulled in, being somehow involved, as though it was part of our lives. Phrases began to appear to the effect that "We're all Americans now" - a purely fictitious feeling for most of us. It was staggering to watch the togetherness build up around the sacred centre, quickly consecrated as Ground Zero, a togetherness that would harden over the coming hours into flag waving, a huge upsurge in religious services and observance, religious leaders suddenly taken seriously, candles, shrines, prayers, all the accoutrements of the religion of death. The *de facto* President fumbling at first, a moment of genuinely humble, banal, humanity, then getting his High Priestly act together by preaching revenge at an Episcopal Eucharist. The Queen "getting right" what she "got wrong" last time there was a similar outbreak of sacred contagion around an iconic cadaver, by having the American National Anthem played at Buckingham Palace.

And there was the grief. How we enjoy grief. It makes us feel good, and innocent. This is what Aristotle meant by catharsis, and it has deeply sinister echoes of dramatic tragedy's roots in sacrifice. One of the effects of the violent sacred around the sacrificial centre is to make those present feel justified, feel morally good. A counterfactual goodness which suddenly takes us out of our little betrayals, acts of cowardice, uneasy consciences. And very quickly of course the unanimity and the grief harden into the militant goodness of those who have a transcendent object to their lives. And then there are those who are with us and those

who are against us, the beginnings of the suppression of dissent. Quickly people were saying things like "to think that we used to spend our lives engaged in gossip about celebrities' and politicians' sexual peccadillos. Now we have been summoned into thinking about the things that really matter". And beneath the militant goodness, suddenly permission to sack people, to leak out bad news and so on, things which could take advantage of the unanimity to avoid reasoned negotiation.

And there was fear. Fear of more to come. Fear that it could be me next time. Fear of flying, fear of anthrax, fear of certain public buildings and spaces. Fear that the world had changed, that nothing would ever be the same again. Fear and disorientation in a new world order. Not an entirely uncomfortable fear, the fear that goes with a satanic show. Part of the glue which binds us into it. A fear not unrelated to excitement.

What I want to suggest is that most of us fell for it, at some level. We were tempted to be secretly glad of a chance for a huge outbreak of meaning to transform our humdrum lives, to feel we belonged to something bigger, more important, with hints of nobility and solidarity. What I want to suggest is that this, this delight in being given meaning, is satanic. When we are baptised, we, or our Godparents on our behalf, renounce Satan and all his vain pomps and empty works. And here we were, sorely tempted at least to find ourselves being sucked up into believing in just such an empty work and pomp. A huge and splendid show giving the impression of something creative of meaning, but in fact, a snare and an illusion, meaning nothing at all, but leaving us prey to revenge and violence, our judgments clouded by satanic righteousness.

When I say satanic, I mean this in two senses, for we can only accurately describe the satanic in two senses. The first sense is the sense I have just described: the fantastic pomp and work of sacrificial violence leading to an impression of unanimity, the same lie from the one who was a murderer and liar from the beginning, the same lie behind all human sacrifices, all attempts to create social order and meaning out of a sacred space of victimization. But the second sense is more important: the satanic is a lie that has been undone. It has been undone by Jesus's going to death exploding from within the whole world of sacrifice, of religion and culture based on death, and showing it has no transcendence at all. Jesus says in Luke's Gospel (and it is the title of Girard's recent book²) "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven". This is the solemn declaration

² Girard, R. (2001) *I see Satan fall like lightning*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

of the definitive loss of transcendence of the satanic show: we no longer have to believe it, we no longer have to act driven by its compulsions. It has no power other than the power we give it. The pomp has nothing to do with heaven. It has nothing to do with God.

And this of course was apparent to us as well even, and perhaps especially, in our secularity. There was the sort of sacred grief I described, but there were also, mixed up with it, genuine outbursts of compassion: wonder at the two who jumped out of the building holding hands; a warmth of heart as news emerged of the messages of simple love bereft of any huge religious significance left on answering machines. At the same time as the sacred violence extended its lure, we also made little breakthroughs of our own into simply liking humans. I don't know how it was for you, and I may be particularly personally insensitive, but I was unable to see anything of the humanity involved while watching the moving images on film, because I am so used to the moving images telling a story in which the people killed are simply stage extras, whose thoughts and emotions and broken families we aren't expected to consider. It was only when reading about the incident in the next day's papers that the human dimension managed to start to break through for me.

And this is the vital thing to understand in any use of the language of the satanic. It is a failed transcendence. It fails to grip us completely. The unanimity does not last. Even in as strongly religious a society as the United States. Reasoned discussion starts to break out. Penitent questions start being asked. A group of Jews and Catholics went together on the Friday after the 11th to a mosque south of Chicago, and circled it, holding hands, to protect those within it throughout their Friday prayers from any potential violence or abuse. The lie does not command absolute respect. There are already in our midst outbreaks of truth, of non-possessed humanity.

It is this that I would like to look at with you, as we attempt to grapple with contemplation and violence. We were pulled in to a certain sort of contemplation through the eyes of others on 11th September. We were pulled in to a powerful show which taught us to look at the world, ourselves, and others, in a certain way, one leading to ersatz virtue, fake communion, violence and fear. But we have in our midst, and have had for nigh on two thousand years, One who is teaching us to look away, so I would like to try with you to see what it means to learn to look at these things through his eyes to see if we can't discover the deeper meaning

which those apparently fragmentary outbursts of being human can have.

I have chosen two passages which seem to be particularly appropriate. One a Gospel from the last few days, and another one for Advent. Here is the first:

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."³

There is something apparently callous about this. We react to bad news as to a form of emotional blackmail, obliging us to "feel" for the victims, and be outraged by someone who doesn't appear to feel. But not Jesus. His attention is entirely concentrated on his interlocutors. It is not the events themselves which concern him, but their reaction to the events, and what that reaction says about whose power they are in. We can imagine the excitement of those telling him, wanting a pronouncement of appropriately apocalyptic tenor: the Galileans were not sacrificing at Jerusalem, probably at Gerizim, the rival Samaritan sacrificial site. Maybe this was their punishment from God. But the interlocutors are disappointed. Jesus completely de-sacralizes the event, removing any link between God and what has happened. Any link between morality and what has happened. If we are caught up in thinking like that, then we too are likely to act in ways moved by the apocalyptic other, the god of blood and sacrifice and murder, of morality linked to worldly outcome, and we will perish like them. To ram home his point, he chooses an example where there was no obvious moral agency, no wicked Pilate, no sacrifices of dubious validity: the collapse of a tower - maybe an architectural flaw, maybe a small earth tremor, the shifting of an underground stream, who knows. Once again, Jesus completely desacralizes the incident. It has nothing to do with God. But if we are caught up in the world of giving sacred meanings, then we will be caught up in the world of reciprocal violence, of good and bad measured over against other people, and we will likewise perish. Once again I stress: Jesus will not be drawn into adding to meaning. He merely asks those who come to him themselves to move out of the world of sacred-seeming meaning. What does it mean for us to learn to look at the world through

³ Luke 13, 1-5.

those eyes?

The second passage I want to give you is even more explicit, for it is the passage called the Markan Apocalypse⁴. Wrongly, in my view, for it is specifically concerned with undoing the apocalyptic worldview.

Jesus starts by publicly desacralizing the Temple. He takes seriously neither its sacred splendour when standing, nor the apocalyptic meaning to be derived from its being razed to the ground.

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Peter, James and John come to him to ask him when these things will be, and what are the signs - they show, in other words, that they are caught up in the apocalyptic imagination. And, as in the passage from Luke which we have just seen, Jesus commands them to look with different eyes.

"Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.

The first instruction is not to allow themselves to be lured or seduced into the apparently sacred world of apocalyptic meaning, not to allow themselves to be pulled by their desire into the world which others will want to create. Any other messianism is false. Wars and rumours of wars have no sacred meaning at all, and the one who is looking at what happens through Jesus' eyes will not be frightened of these things, not driven by them in any way. For they are merely the signs of the collapsing world maintained and reinforced by sacralized violence, and that collapse is itself a sign that something very different is coming to birth. Then Jesus commands them to concentrate on what will happen to them:

"But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them. And the gospel

⁴ Mark 13.

must first be preached to all nations. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

I am still simply staggered by this passage. For in it Our Lord sets out the consequences of not believing in the sacred lie. Those who don't believe in the sacred lie, and say so, who believe in the good news that God has nothing to do with these ever-failing apocalypses, nothing to do with any order based on sacrifice, these people will break the unanimity which is demanded by the sacrificial order, and will therefore be subject to persecution and victimization by an order that only knows that way of reacting to people, especially people who don't believe in it. This message, divinely guaranteed disbelief in the violent sacred, breaking every unanimity, will be carried to every culture on earth which is founded on the same principles, unstoppable. For it is Gospel. What is even more staggering is what Jesus clearly understands about our paranoia. If we are anxious about what we are to say, if we are concerned to justify ourselves before this apocalyptic order, then we are still too much part of it, our imagination is still too shaded by the "they who are out to get me" which is part of the apocalyptic view. We are not able to look at those scandalized by us with the clean, limpid, non-accusing, non-persecuted eyes of those whose minds are formed by a different order, whose selves are formed through the regard of an entirely non-judging, non-persecuting Other. If our minds are the mind of Christ, then we will not need to defend ourselves, because the spirit of truth which undoes the sacred lie, the Holy Spirit which makes available to us a wholly benign secular createdness, will be speaking through us. The Holy Spirit is there to empower us to put up with the hatred which is how the collapsing sacred is held together, and it is by our standing up that the new creation will be brought into being through us.

In the next section of the Markan apocalypse, Jesus desacralizes the forthcoming sacking of Jerusalem, again removing from it anything to do with God. All these are things to which one must not pay attention. The final section of Mark 13 is concerned with the reverse of what went before: of what does give meaning. And what does give meaning is something very odd indeed. Jesus uses texts from the Hebrew Scriptures to give a taste of the whole established order of everything being shaken, that is to say: he is happy to use apocalyptic language to reverse the sense

of the apocalyptic. For the apocalyptic language, about the heavens being shaken and so forth, refers entirely to worldly happenings, bereft of divine significance. But it is in the midst of them that the Lord will come. And he will come, but in a way that will not be recognised except by those who are being trained to look for him where divine meaning is really given, and that divine meaning appears to be given in the parable at the end:

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Watch therefore -- for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning -- lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.

Famously, this parable appears to refer to the events which will follow on a few days later: it appears that the Lord comes in the acts of being handed over which follow. He hands himself over at the Last Supper in the evening; he is handed over by Judas at midnight, by Peter at cockcrow and to the Romans in the morning. The real coming is the very reverse of an apocalyptic appearance: it is the subversion from within of the apocalyptic, and will only be detected by those who have been disciplined to watch, those who have not been hypnotised, sent to sleep by meaning given by the spurious and fictitious sacrificial order of the world. The real meaning, the creative meaning, is the undoing of that from within by one who lets himself be sacrificed by it.

So much for the first part of our learning contemplation in the midst of violence. We are given a very specific and very commanding example of the divine regard: it teaches us to look away, not to be ensnared, to desacralize. It is the very reverse of apocalyptic. But I want to say more. After all, a critical regard is just another regard. I want to say that our contemplation means something more. For the regard I am bringing to your attention, one which we are asked to learn, is not simply an intellectual feat based on a correct theoretical analysis of a situation. My question is this: what on earth is the heart behind the eyes we are being taught to look through? What the deep desire and motivation? What was it that enabled the human being, Jesus of Nazareth, with his human heart, intellect, and eyes, to regard things in this way and so to teach us? The person who says "God" is describing the question, not answering it. Because the real question is what does this human regard of Jesus' reveal God to be.

I am going to stammer around here, and try to begin to put into words some of my sense of the heart behind the eyes. The heart which I take it we are being given in the degree in which we learn to desire according to those eyes. And I suppose that the word I want to discuss is power, and power desiring something. For what Jesus' words reveal, in Luke, and in the Markan Apocalypse, and what I take them to reveal now, is what real power looks like. We can only begin to learn to see that power in the collapse of ersatz power. We are tempted to imagine that suicide planes, collapsing buildings, increased security, the unanimity of the rich and powerful, and of course, bombs and more bombs and more bombs, are signs of power. Are creative of a new world order. Shift the tectonic plates of history, and so on. And I am not going to deny for one moment that we are living, and going to continue to live, going to have to learn courage and humility and service, in a world shaped by all those forces. But what Jesus suggests is that all that power is a dangerous illusion. His talk is of a quite different power coming, scarcely noticeably, in the midst of all those things, weaning us off our addiction to the sort of crowd desire which makes that power possible and apparently all englobing. The power of disbelief in the gods made available by the continuing giving and shaping of creation by one to whom all these apparently powerful things are merely an epiphenomenon, something like a firework display happening in the lea of an erupting volcano, a distraction, dangerous to us, but of no consequence to God, a distraction from the real coming into being of an entirely gratuitous, peaceful, creative meaning, and one in which we are invited to be involved.

Here is my point. Jesus not only taught us to look away, not to allow ourselves to be seduced by the satanic. He also acted out what the undoing of the satanic meant: he was so powerful that he was able to lose to its need to sacrifice so as to show that it was entirely unnecessary. We are so used to describing Jesus cross and resurrection as a victory - a description taken from the military hardware store of satanic meaning - that we easily forget that what that victory looked like was a failure. So great is the power behind Jesus teaching and self-giving that he was able to fail, thus showing once and for all that "having to win", the grasping on to meaning, success, reputation, life and so on is of no consequence at all. Death could not hold him in, because he was held in being by one for whom death does not exist, is not even the sort of rival who might be challenged to a duel which someone might win. But if death can only get meaning by having victory, if the order of sacred violence can only have meaning if it matters to us to survive, to be, to feel good, at the expense of someone, then someone for whom it doesn't matter to lose is someone

who is playing its game on totally different terms, and its potential for giving meaning collapses.

Here is where I am heading: We can imagine in the abstract something of the power which has nothing to do with death. What is much more difficult is imagining that power incarnated in a human heart and eyes looking at this world. Yet that is what we are talking about. A human heart and eyes so utterly held by the Creator that they speak the Creator's heart about this world. And not just in word, but by a creative acting out and living so-as-to-lose to the sacrificial game in order to undo it, thus enabling creation to be unsnarled from our truncation of it into a violent perversion and trap.

Now this is what I find difficult. The heart, the desire, that wants to do something like that. What does it want? Why should it do it? Why not leave us to get on with it, stuck in our charades, thinking the world of our meaning and our death? In other words, the very fact of distracting us, by word and deed from being involved in what Thomas Merton rightly called "pseudo events" suggests a desire for us to be something else. The eye that is teaching us to look away from the lure of the sacred is powered by a heart that wants us to be something else. And we learn our desire through the eye of another. Our learning to see through Jesus' eyes will eventually result in us desiring with Jesus' heart - which is to say, our receiving the mind of Christ, which is how we discover the mind of God.

Jesus not only teaches us to look away, but models what living from utterly non-rivalistic creative power for which death is not, looks like. There is a desire in this. A desire for us not to be trapped in death. And this is where I think I'm going - something apparently terribly banal, but I think, of earth shattering significance. The person who teaches us to look away and models for us another way of desiring *actually likes us*. It is only possible to imagine doing something like that for someone you actually like. And Jesus is doing it for all of us who are caught up in the sacred lie - which is to say, all of us.

The staggering thing that this means, for me, is that the most extraordinary fruit of contemplation in the shadow of the violence which we are experiencing is this: God likes us. All of us. God likes me and I like being liked. It has nothing to do with whether we are bad or good, indeed, he takes it for granted that we are all more or less strongly tied up in the sacred lie. In teaching after teaching he makes the same point: all are invited, bad and good. Those are our categories, part of the problem

not part of the solution, not God's category. God's "category" for us is "created" and "created" means "liked spaciously, delighted in, wanted to give extension, fulfilment, fruition to, to share in just being". We are missing out on something huge and powerful and serene and enjoyable and safe and meaningful by being caught up in something less than that, an ersatz perversion of each of those things. And because God likes us he wants us to get out of our addiction to the ersatz so as to become free and happy.

I want to say something more: behind the word "like" there is an astonishing gentleness. The word "love" which we have vastly overused can have for us the meaning of a forceful intervention to rescue us, and we can forget that behind a forceful intervention to rescue us, which may indeed be how love is shown in a particular circumstance, there is something much stronger, gentler and more continuous, not dependent at all on needing to rescue us. This is *liking* us. What I want to suggest is that the word *like* in all its gentleness is the word appropriate for the extraordinarily unbothered, non-emergency power we mean by creation. It is that gentle liking that is the sign of a power which could not be in greater contrast with the power of the satanic. A power so gentle and so huge that we are able not to be afraid. In the midst of the false manufacturing of meaning and frightening power displayed by the satanic, we are being taught that our being liked and held in being is at the hands of something infinitely more powerful, infinitely restful and we can live without fear. What is being revealed is the power of the Creator.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."⁵

Can I say this? It seems to me that the fruit of contemplation in the midst of the violence which is going on about us, and of which we received a splendid example of a failing attempt at satanic transcendence, is this: as we learn to desire through the eyes of another, so we are given the heart of another, and what we learn is the extraordinarily benign, peaceful power of one holding everything in being, liking and delighting in us, without distinction. So strong, so safe that I am not frightened of a clash of civilisations. Personally, the strongest feeling I have had over the last few months is the quite unexpected discovery that I am no longer frightened of Muslims, and that I like them, and that this is only the beginning of discovering what it will mean to rejoice in them and see them as part of an us. Is this not the deepest act of treachery against the

⁵ Luke 12,32.

satanic order which was turned on in a part of all our minds and hearts by the events of September 11th 2001. And where on earth will it end?

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