

MESSIANIC VICTIMS OR VICTIMIZED MESSIAH? BIBLICAL ALLUSION AND VIOLENCE IN *THE MATRIX*

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1. *Introduction: New Generation Science Fiction*

The appearance of biblical allusion in different media forms, and in Hollywood movies in particular, has for a long time been tacitly accepted if not always consciously acknowledged and studied, and the analysis of biblical allusion and religious signification in modern art and literature has not stayed out.¹ In fact, it has for many biblical scholars become important to assume, besides their traditional roles of historical scholars and students of ancient history, also the role of cultural critic.² Cultural studies can provide an analytical grid and hermeneutical parameters for investigating the reconfigured yet continued presence of the Bible in large parts of the modern world.³ And the global influence of 'Western' culture is set to continue given the information age, the mechanisms and reach of various media formats, increasing globalization at both economic and geo-political (as far as these can still be differentiated!) levels, accompanied by spurts and splinters of cultured Christianity and its set of foundation documents. The negotiated intersection of

1. Cf., recently, e.g., G. Aichele (ed.), *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (JSNTSup, 309; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); R. Jewett, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph Over Shame* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); L.J. Kreitzer, *Pauline Images in Fiction and Film: On Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow* (The Biblical Seminar, 86; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

2. Cf. Segovia's claim that besides being a biblical critic and even a constructive theologian, he is also a cultural critic, a task which includes a focus on issues of construction, representation and power, through an investment in contextual and ideological analysis as found in the accumulation of studies referred to as cultural studies. The task includes the investigation of various dimensions of one's social context apart from their socio-religious aspect (F.F. Segovia, 'Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Towards a Postcolonial Optic', in R.S. Sugirtharajah [ed.], *The Postcolonial Bible* [Bible and Postcolonialism, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], pp. 56-63 [51 n. 2], 'Reading-Across: Intercultural Criticism and Textual Posture', in *idem* [ed.], *Interpreting Beyond Borders* [The Bible and Postcolonialism, 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], pp. 59-83 [59]).

3. This vantage point of the essay is not intended either to claim special privileges for Christianity, its Bible and their legacies in the (post)modern world, or to exclude the influence of other religious systems, symbols and worldviews from having similar significance in history and today, or either to deny the varied forms of border-crossings between different religious frames of reference, or disclaim them as an ongoing phenomena.

(post)modern culture and Christianity is once again present in a recent motion picture which does not make an overt pitch for recognition as a movie with religious intent.

The Matrix,⁴ written and directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski, was produced in 1999 by Warner Brothers. It is a science fiction thriller and the storyline is determined by the quest of a few people to subvert and hopefully overturn the world in which people (think that they) live but which is really a computer generated illusion called the Matrix and thus nothing else but virtual reality,⁵ based on artificial intelligence. *The Matrix* portrays the human quest for the true self, attempting to break free from those mechanisms and processes that inhibit such freedom. To sustain their power and to derive the necessary energy for their exploits, the villains, in the guise of 'machines' or computers who have taken over the world, keep human beings in an artificially induced and perpetual sleep-like state.⁶ While the machines derive their energy from human bodies,⁷ people are kept content with the delusion, created through technology, that they are living real lives in the real world. The film's plot centers on a small group of dissidents who have, with the help of the original programmer, through the right knowledge or belief and by sheer will-power, managed to liberate themselves from both the illusion and their attraction to it. They live in a different and unavoidably threatening, treacherous and violent world. More particularly, this small group of liberated people is in search of a leader with specific qualities who will ultimately set all people free from their enslavement to the Matrix and its power—freeing their minds—through its destruction,

4. My references are to the DVD-release. The beginning of a particular scene is indicated by chapter:hour:minute:second. The DVD creates an interactive environment for the viewer who is offered a choice between either a blue or red pill, similar to the choice put to Neo. To take the blue pill means to continue to live the illusion, to consider the unreal real; however, taking the red pill offers the opportunity to 'stay in Wonderland and see how deep the rabbit hole is'. This is important, because people cannot be told what the Matrix is, they have to see it for themselves (scene 9:0:27:37). The significance of the colours cannot be explored here.

5. Virtual reality not depicted 'as a video game designed by geeks on LSD' (Anon, 'Maximizing the Matrix', *Newsweek* [19 April 1999]), but it is the ultimate dream of computer games aficionados come true: the perceived, real world is no more than computer simulation or virtual reality. This emphasis is highlighted if not sustained by the 'flo-mo' technique, comprising short scenes where the camera moves at normal speed while action is frozen (an actor suspended in mid-action, in the air) or happens in slow motion (showing the trajectory and movement of bullets slowly passing through the air).

6. Really a kind of subconscious existence artificially created and manipulated through information technology. It is a counterfeit and feigned world of virtual reality, to which Morpheus refers as a 'neural, interactive simulation' (12:0:39:10). The Wachowski's introduced the muted human voices in the power plant and in scenes on the Neb to simulate the plight of humanity (Interview [with the Wachowski brothers] <http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com/cmp/chat_index.html> [consulted on 21 January 2002], 1999).

7. The machines initially lived off solar power, but after its destruction, they use the bio-electricity of human bodies, growing humans to supply what they need. Humans have become little more than an excuse for a battery, as Morpheus points out holding a (Duracell) battery (12:0:41:52).

since for as long as the Matrix exists, the human race will never be free. The result is a blend of the real and the fantastical, reality and illusion, as a matter of course.⁸

My intention is to show how *The Matrix* can be seen to explore biblical themes through allusion and intertextual play, and in particular how the film poses and interrogates the link between the messianic figure and violence.

2. The Matrix and the Spiritual Connection

Science fiction motion pictures have always concerned itself with the nature of life and reality, portraying scientists of technology as either going amok or playing God, with the difference not always easily discernible. But it was when science fiction itself started exploring political, social and moral issues, as exemplified in the mid-1960s *Star Trek* genre, and taken further in George Lucas's epic *Star Wars* movies, that the film industry started changing. This has resulted in over half of the top grossing films to date being from the science fiction genre, dealing with global technological fears, alternative futures and the nature of reality itself. All three of these themes are present in *The Matrix*, but with a spiritual undertone running through these themes. The spiritual undertone of the film is not difficult to identify, and is underlined by Larry Wachowski's comment that 'People would say, "They didn't blow up the Matrix?" But you can't beat the Matrix with fists... [Reeve's character, i.e. Neo] needs to basically transcend the Matrix.'⁹

The notion of people in search for the meaning of life, for self-actualization and in effect for an alternative life is a dominant theme throughout the film.¹⁰ In a Web-interview with the Wachowski brothers, they claim that *The Matrix* 'examines the idea of an individual searching for their true self while attempting to escape the box, that we often make of our lives'. And, '*The Matrix* was an idea that I believe philosophy and religion and mathematics all try to answer, which is, a reconciling between a natural world and another world that is perceived by our intellect'. Neo is, or becomes, therefore, Thomas Anderson's potential self.¹¹

While this may sound properly philosophical, even existentialist, the broader setting of the film exudes more than a passing concern for such matters, exploring

8. It would prove interesting to investigate the film from Baudrillard's position on the unreality of reality, that contemporary culture dominated by information technology and electronic media has created a world through simulation, replacing reference to the real with an emphasis on creating the real, or making the real coincide with the simulation. Not only are people trapped in a system impossible to contest, but they opt for a radical anti-metaphysics, 'a radical lack of will by which they choose not to will'. With reference to Raymond Williams' notion of culture becoming a hegemony without people living in the culture even being aware of it, Baum argues that the marginalized (referring to the movement Jesus has started, in particular) can create alternative visions of reality which will transcend, and thus relativize, the dominant culture (M. Warren, *Seeing through the Media: A Religious View of Communications and Cultural Analysis* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997], pp. 171-90).

9. Anon, 'Maximizing the Matrix'.

10. Cf., e.g., Trinity's challenge to Neo that he has been down the road (of normality) before, and 'that's not what you wanna be' (7:0:22:54)

11. Cf. n. 6, above.

them amid subtle and more robust religious overtones.¹² In the first place, and now probably a Marxist cliché, the virtual-reality existence of people serves as the 'opium' to keep them content in order to maximize their usefulness for the powerful of the world, who, of course has neither any other purpose nor regard for human existence otherwise. But secondly, as in many religious traditions, the notion of the presence of two worlds, or (the narrow and broad) paths¹³ are dominant, borne out by the prominent use of reflections in the film, and with the imperative for the initiated to choose between them: the red pill or the blue pill. The one is ostensibly beautiful, promising of life to its fullest, but is in essence leading to unfulfillment, continued enslavement and eventually oblivious death, the unreal as reality.¹⁴ The other world is unappealing, dangerous and difficult to inhabit, the real world is an apocalyptic desert of sewers and wasteland, and as such without good promise for the future but the *real* reality, warts and all. Indeed, Cypher's eventual betrayal is more about his remorse for taking the red pill (19:0:59:53; 25:1:24:30) than about betraying Morpheus (19:1:01:00), attacking Tank (25:1:22:50), or killing Apoc and Switch (25:1:25:30-55). The emphasis on two worlds raises a number of questions: How are these alternative realities recognized, and how should they be handled? Is the alternative reality *per se* a 'better' reality, another Kingdom or Reign, where life itself is defined differently, putting human existence on a different plane, and so on?

In the third place, the central theme of *The Matrix* is intensely concerned with what in religious terms is generally called 'faith' or 'faith convictions'.¹⁵ Belief is the only way to transcend the here and now, the make-believe. Initially, and connecting with Marxist criticism, belief serves the purpose of allowing one to escape

12. From a faith perspective, the religious and/or spiritual dimension in human lives can be seen as a particular attempt to understand the world and what it is all about; to *real-ly* experience reality, as though the latter is fundamentally or in part metaphysical; where the plus-factor will be that there is more to the world and to human beings than what humans perceive, think or postulate. My discussion here, however, focuses on the construals and portrayals of the film itself.

13. In New Testament terms (Mt. 7.13-14//Lk. 13.24), a choice is to be made, 'taking the difficult, "narrow path" [which] symbolizes hearing and carrying out Jesus' demands, while taking the "wide path" entails the easier but unfruitful option of only hearing them' (M. Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament* [The Biblical Seminar, 46; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], p. 38). Cf. the difference between knowing the path and walking the path (32:1:47:25-34; cf. Mt. 7.21-23//Lk. 13.25-27).

14. Ironically, the real becomes the make-believe, and given the context of the film, the question is raised whether religious and biblical reference to the transcendent or transcendental, a notion which today is often postponed or denied, is reintroduced? Various other instances of irony will be identified below, but the most glaring example is the reliance of Morpheus and his group upon technology and computers, the very evil against which they are fighting (cf. n. 6, above).

15. Espousing fatalism the imperative is to take control of one's own life (8:0:25:38; 22:1:13:55) of being 'a believer' (here: in the One, cf. 16:54:01), which implies the need to free people's minds (13:0:43:05; cf. Rom. 12.1-3), at a young age (cf. Mt. 19.13-15//Mk. 10.13-16//Lk. 17.15-17). *The Matrix* is about the birth and evolution of consciousness. It starts off crazy, then things start to make sense' (Larry Wachowski, in R. Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics', *Time* [April 1999]). And, 'belief in oneself' is seen by the Wachowskis as a prominent emphasis in the movie (cf. n. 6, above).

one's precarious position in the all too real world, but in the longer run, also of achieving the fullness of life which presupposes at least a different order in this world.¹⁶ It is with a fourth religious undertone, in particular, that the present study wants to connect. The movement from one world to another, from choosing to walk one path rather than the other, from one consciousness to another, from enslavement to liberation, is mediated by the messianic or saviour figure. The messiah plays a facilitating role in both calling upon people to break with living the lie as well as showing, and in this way, inaugurating, a different world and a different life—two elements typical of Messianism in at least the history of Christianity.¹⁷ The expected leader will be the saviour of all, and is presumed to be among those 'asleep', that is, a saviour from among the people. The presence of a saviour in *The Matrix* does not eliminate the need for people to participate in a 'conversion' experience, with accompanying ritual (liturgy?), a 'rebirth' to leave enslavement to the unreal reality behind (ch. 12). But unwillingness and resistance of humans towards change sharpens the focus on the role of the messiah.

Before exploring the messianic element in more detail, it should be noted that names used for characters in the film are suggestive of biblical or at least Christian religious elements,¹⁸ presenting them in twenty-first-century format. It is a short step from Cypher¹⁹ to Lucifer, the one who eventually betrays Neo and his group's mission, and who identifies himself as 'messenger' (26:1:26:03) reminiscent of the portrayal of Satan in the Hebrew Bible's book of Job. Trinity falls in love with Neo and *her* kiss and pronouncement of love brings him back to live, urging him to get up. Nebuchadnezzar is the name of the hovercraft that hacks into the Matrix computer, and Zion is the name of the last human city, which is in relation to the city of biblical significance spatially inverted, situated underground, near the earth's core. Of crucial importance in a world determined by computer technology, Zion is where the mainframe computer of the resistance movement is situated, and it thus holds the key to the real world, whereas the other computers' task is to simulate the real while, in fact, merely portraying a virtual world. Zion is in the film, as in the Bible, more than a city, and holds as metaphor the promise of life, real life

16. Faith's importance is not, however, presented in monolithic way. Early on, Neo ironically, and amid the fervent convictions of his followers-to-be, claims that he disapproves of faith since *he* wants to control his life (8:0:26:8).

17. S. Freyne, 'Editorial: The Messiah in History', *Concilium* 1993/1 (1993), p. xii.

18. This is not to suggest the exclusion of allusions to, or intertextual echoes from, other religions or divergent religious experiences. As suggested by the Wachowski brothers (Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics'), Buddhism recognizes messianic traces in reincarnation, Greek mythological allusion surfaces in the name Morpheus (Odyssey), the Sophist and later Gnostic exhortation to 'Know thyself', and Alice in Wonderland's White Rabbit make their rounds. The wordplay, hidden meanings and multiple meanings are all intentional; for example, the use of 'matrix' as a mathematical definition but also a reference to the womb. Names were chosen carefully and have multiple meanings (cf. n. 6, above).

19. Cypher is remorseful about taking the blue pill (19:0:59:50) and recognizes the task of Neo as being the One: to save the world (19:1:00:29). He claims to want no riches, just to return to no-fuss existence, and to be an important person (19:1:00:02). And he is clearly jealous of Trinity's growing feelings for Neo.

(27:1:30:08), and the location of the eschatological banquet ('party', 13:45:24) and approximates the apocalyptic value of Zion in the New Testament, and in Revelation, specifically.

Other biblical references in *The Matrix* are more subtle, in a 'the Bible meets Batman'-setting.²⁰ Some of these references overlap with other elements of biblical allusion referred to above. Without claiming the Bible as their exclusive frame of reference, allusions to biblical terminology and worldview include terms such as prophecy (21:1:06:52); belief and faith (see above and below); the Path (21:1:07:15); sacrifice (22:1:13:12); miracle (26:1:26:18); and revelation (28:1:33:29). In a more explicit way, Larry Wachowski is quoted by Corliss²¹ in telling biblical—if somewhat New Agey—terms as saying that in both mathematics and theology, people start with a supposition from which they can derive a vast array of laws or rules. 'And when you take them to the infinity point, you wind up at the same place: these unanswerable mysteries really become about personal perception. Neo's journey is affected by all these rules, all these people trying to tell him what the truth is. He doesn't accept anything until he gets to his own end point, his own rebirth.'

The nuanced intertextual play on biblical themes in *The Matrix* is particularly rich in what can be described as its rethinking of the connection between Messiah and violence.²²

2. A Messianic Optic for Biblical Allusion in The Matrix

a. Allusions to a Messianic Person

The messianic element emerges early on in the movie, even if ironically, when one of Neo's customers receives hacked goods on a diskette and calls out to Neo: 'Hallelujah, you're my saviour, man, my own personal Jesus Christ' (3:0:8:20).²³ More traditional notions of what is popularly considered appropriate for a messianic figure soon emerge in the film, with Neo presented as a dutiful and selfless servant, the lone crusader for a lost cause. Allusions to *biblical* messianism abound. The strong messianic expectation, regarding both his arrival and his actions is a

20. Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics'.

21. Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics'.

22. Violence includes all actions and everything that restricts, damages or destroys the integrity of things, living beings or people, or of cultural and social entities through superior power (H. Häring, 'Ploegscharen Omgesmeed tot Zwaarden [Joël 4,10]. De Wortels van het Geweld in de Religie', *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 37.3 [1997], pp. 265-97 [266])—the 'violation of personhood' (Brown, quoted in Desjardins, *Peace*, pp. 12, 99). Beyond this more abstract formulation, violence in practical terms means to damage, humiliate, torture, kill and destroy with intent as apparent in programmes of torture and death, of terror and war, of exile and marginalization (cf. Häring, 'Ploegscharen Omgesmeed', p. 267) as well as non-physical violence such as insult, exclusion, prejudice, slighting, etc.

23. Remarks which reinforce the ironical element, also emerges from another side, for example, when Thomas A. Anderson's boss admonishes Neo, 'You think you're special, rules don't apply to you...you're obviously mistaken' (5:0:11:50). Not only *will* Neo break out of the 'rules' of the virtual world, but his followers certainly consider him *very* special.

dominant theme in *The Matrix*, awaiting a saviour of the world and all people, accompanied by the destruction of the forces of evil. Morpheus believes the cyber-messiah is Thomas Anderson, or rather Neo (played by Keanu Reeves), his computer hacker name (5:0:12:35; 6:0:17:25; esp. 6:0:17:43). Only the true messiah can save humanity, but initially an unwilling messiah or messianic candidate, he has to deal with his own doubts and disbelief about himself, his identity and his role in the bigger scheme of things.²⁴ The small group around the messiah (to be) is led by a 'big bad John the Baptist'²⁵ in the person of Morpheus (played by Laurence Fishburne), who claims to have spent his whole life searching for Neo (7:0:21:20). The unresponsive and recalcitrant people of the world fail to see the real world, in fact, refuse to be confronted with reality; and at the wider level a *metamorphosis* is required. A follower becomes a traitor seeking the death of the One, fearing he will destroy the comforts of the virtual world. The betrayal of the messiah and his messianic project by Cypher is not totally different from the New Testament, in contrast with the other disciples' willingness to defend the One and the messianic project, to the point of death.

The character of Neo is increasingly unfolded as messianic figure in the movie, from the initial flippant yet ironical identification (3:0:8:20), to Neo's own unpreparedness to understand (5:0:13:25), to Morpheus's statement to Neo, 'You are the One' (7:0:21:23), and his claim that the search is over: the returned or reincarnated messiah has been found (13:0:44:19). Neo starts what resembles messianic training (14:0:44:0) in preparation of the task ahead, training that is reminiscent of the temptation of Jesus-scenes in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 4.1-11; Mk. 1.12-13; Lk. 4.1-13), and is in the process identified as the genuine 'child of Zion' (14:0:45:16).

The chapter where the domesticated, cookie-baking and smoking Oracle is consulted about Neo is rich with messianic self-awareness couched in classical Greek sophism. Knowing that you are the One (22:1:11:23) is important since this knowledge is not dependent upon information gained from others but rather upon self-awareness. Even when the Oracle disclaims Neo's messianic status (22:1:12:10), the doubt induced by the Oracle is not only typical of the classical Greek oracles known for their ambiguous pronouncements.²⁶ It also compels the messianic incumbent towards introspection, to discover himself amid the Delphic oracle's central concern to 'Know yourself', even if this does not include making his own reality come true!²⁷

24. He is very much the messiah *in cognito* (the inverse of Wrede's notion of Mark's 'messianic secret'): his followers (or some of them, at least) perceive Neo as the messiah, but he is hard to convince, and is confused more than anything else by the Oracle, rendering a messiah-in-denial.

25. Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics'.

26. Trinity, firm in her belief in Neo's messianic credentials, proclaims (33:1:49:05) that thus far everything the Oracle proclaimed came true except her prophecy about Neo. The ambiguity is evident both in the Oracle's identification of the One being the person Trinity falls in love with, holding the messiah's destiny in her hands, and in spurring Neo on, who does not believe in this 'fate-crap', to discover himself even if it means denying his own (dis)beliefs (22:1:13:13).

27. On the other hand and unsurprisingly, it is the traitor Cypher who reckons ignorance as bliss (19:1:01:40).

Neo's declaration, 'I'm not the One' (e.g. 27:1:31:50; 32:1:47:15) is challenged by Morpheus's insistence that he is, indeed, the One (32:1:46:51; 37:2:00:17), and Neo's messianic self-recognition and assumption of task (37:2:02:40) leads him to address the Matrix at the end of the film: 'You're out there, afraid of us, afraid of change. You do not know the future and this is only the beginning' (37:2:02:48). Neo will show people that the Matrix does not want them to see a different world, without the Matrix, without rules or controls, borders or boundaries, a world where anything is possible (37:2:02:56). And, indeed, in a final ascension-like scene a confident Neo *flies* off, up and away from computer-induced reality (38:2:03:57) surpassing all remaining restrictions and impositions of the Matrix.²⁸

b. *Messianic Violence*

Certainly one of the strongest shared elements with the biblical context is the link between the messianic figure and violence, even if violent elements are portrayed and used differently in the two contexts. The messianic accounts of the New Testament and that of *The Matrix* both relate to the violent setting of these narratives into which the messiah enters, ostensibly to bring it to a head and, ultimately, to bring an end to violence. It is, ironically, not the Oracle but the highlighting of violence which confirms the messianic character of Neo's person. Messianism has certainly never been a theme exclusive to religious notions since it necessarily promotes a counter-political position,²⁹ and in *The Matrix* the political dimension of Neo's actions is clear.

It is the imperial designs and hegemonic control of the Matrix in the film (27:1:27:47–28:07; for Empire-talk, cf. 1:28:50–29:31), as much as it was the impact of the Roman Empire in first-century Palestine, which instill the desire for a different, alternative reality and provide the setting for the resultant violence. And so from its opponents' side, employing insider-outsider rhetoric, the Matrix is the system which as the enemy (17:1:54:24) polarizes all. The people inside the system are as real as the dissidents trying to save them, but until that happens, they are all part of the system and thus the enemy (17:1:54:52), leading to a situation where, 'If it is not one of us, then it is one of them' (17:55:15). If people are not unplugged, they are potential agents and thus threatening the liberation of humankind; since inside the Matrix a person is everyone *and* no one (17:1:55:29). The messianic figures of Neo and Jesus become instrumental in both inaugurating a new world and the self-conscious choice of people for a new way of life, which are of course two sides of the same coin. In *The Matrix*, the ultimate or 'mother' of all 'big brothers' is watching

28. Although this happens in virtual reality, it certainly surpasses the Matrix's designs. According to John Gacta, visual effects supervisor, the scene shows that Neo is 'self-actualized', and Zach Staenberg, editor, claims that Neo experiments with his new found abilities regarding what used to be the laws of physics for him (interview with J. Gacta, Z. Staenberg and D.A. Davis <http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com/cmp/chat-johnzachdane_index.html> consulted on 21 January 2002).

29. Sometimes identifying a messianic figure outside the realm of the religious, for example, former President Nelson Mandela in South African politics, and, more recently, the slain Dutch politician, Pim Fortuyn (L. Dros, 'Pim Fortuyn / De dood van een Messias', *Trouw* [8 May 2002]).

and controlling, literally and down to the last and smallest detail. In the words of an agent, 'This [Matrix] is our civilization, this is what this is all about' (27:1:29:10). But control is now not only about regulating behaviour but also subsuming all actions and the very life of human beings for a singular purpose, that is, to serve the Empire through their provision of bio-energy. The violent setting is brought about and kept intact by the computer regime, requiring deadly force against those who would either want to expose and especially those who would attempt to oppose their control and power—usually these two groups are the same. The ideology is clear; the maintenance of the Matrix's power and control is paramount and any threat to it is to be met with extreme violence.³⁰

And so enters also the dialectical relationship, underwritten by violence, between the One and his followers, accompanied by the dialectical relationship of insiders and outsiders. The strength of Morpheus's conviction that Neo is the One (22:1:13:01) means that he is willing to sacrifice his own life to save Neo's (22:1:13:12; confirmed by Trinity, cf. 27:1:31:40), and when one of them is to die, Neo gets to choose who should live (22:1:13:23). And when it gets down to survival, attempts are made to rescue Neo first (24:1:19:35), Neo is all that matters (24:19:38). And while the messiah–violence connection may be subliminal in these attitudes and action, it becomes pronounced when Cypher is hastened on in his killing of Tank, Dozer and others, fearing that with Neo appearing on scene there is a real danger that the world to which he wants to return might not be around for much longer (25:1:22:50). The messiah is clearly instrumental in effecting violence, whether the causality is direct or indirect, and messianic victims pay the highest price.³¹

The profile of the victimized changes only slightly when the popular notion of martyrdom³² is introduced, to be ready to give your life for what you belief in (Morpheus, 27:1:32:26), but now, strikingly, the messianic figure himself is included on the receiving end of violence (Neo, 27:1:32:32). The messiah becomes the sufferer of violence, especially when he intervenes to rescue Morpheus from the

30. In the words of an agent (gatekeeper) of the Matrix, human beings as a species define their reality through misery and suffering (27:1:28:20); their 'primitive cerebrum' necessitated the creation of a second Matrix replacing the first which was a perfect world without suffering. Humankind is a virus, disease, cancer, or plague, and not mammals since they are ecologically unfriendly (28:1:33:23). And for all this, the Matrix is the cure (28:1:34:33).

31. Christ-like figures' 'absolute and universal authority and dominion' (cf. M.W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* [St Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000], p. 148) have implications for both the immediate group and other people.

32. Is martyrdom a notion inspired by the Messiah? (cf. Mk. 8.34-36; Rev. 12.11; 20.4-6; Desjardins, *Peace*, pp. 35-36). The classic Jewish version of martyrdom, however, would be in function contrary to messianic activity, since martyrs were not violent actors themselves but in fact believed their passivity would lead to God's activity (W.J. Heard, 'Revolutionary Movements', in J.B. Green, S. McKnight and I.H. Marshall [eds.], *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992], pp. 688-98 [697]). In purpose, though, both martyrdom and messiah had the same goal of establishing God's rule on earth: 'John and Jesus died as martyrs, Peter and Paul were willing to die, and all Christians ought to imitate this model' (Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 35). Cf. elsewhere in this volume the article by J.W. van Henten on martyrs and the use of violence.

agents (30:1:40:36), saves Morpheus from a fall to his death (31:1:44:57), and moments later also Trinity from a helicopter crash (31:1:46:19)—confirming for them his messianic status (31:1:47:00). Again, the messiah–violence link is instrumental, since it is through the violence surrounding him, that Neo starts to believe (33:1:49:51), and it becomes clear that the violence serves an enabling role. The significance of (bloody) violence for the messianic role is epitomized in two other incidents. During the Matrix’s attack, Neo is not only bleeding more than others including Morpheus, Dozer and Tank (33:1:51:32), but after shedding blood, Neo assumes a new stance (33:1:51:50), refusing the name ‘Mr Anderson’ for ‘Neo’ when staring death in the face (34:1:53:19). However, it is when Neo later gets shot, and is proclaimed dead by the ship’s monitor (36:1:57:30) confirmed by the agent’s pronouncement, ‘He’s gone’ (36:1:58:27), and repeated in Trinity’s astonished remark, ‘You can’t be dead’ (36:1:59:01), and when he rises again, that the *need* for violence exerted on the messiah is established. By means of his messianic resurrection, Neo not only lives again (36:1:59:32), but now also possesses new powers (36:1:59:47) through which he stops bullets, confirming his ultimate power over life and death. Now Neo is capable of seeing through computer code, ‘the curtain of the Matrix’ (36:2:00:23), and with his superior strength he penetrates an agent only to explode out of him, fully destroying evil in conquering it while remaining untouched by it himself (36:2:00:18; 36:2:00:56).

The Matrix is characterized by copious amounts of violence, whether in the form of hand-to-hand or martial arts fighting, Neo and Trinity shooting the foyer of a building and the guards literally to pieces, or the spectacular crashes of a refuse truck into a phone booth and a helicopter gunship into a building. This violence happens in the virtual world, of course, but in reality the battle between the Matrix and the dissidents is equally fierce, leading to an almost totally devastating attack on the dissidents’ craft by the Matrix’s sentinels. On both levels, however, the always-present violence seems to peak with the entrance of the messianic figure, Neo.

3. The New Testament and Violence

*It is not the presence of violence that is remarkable, however, but its promotion. The acceptable New Testament model allows for both physical and non-physical violence to be inflicted upon others... The God of the New Testament is violent. So is Jesus, although to a lesser extent.*³³

In Second Temple Judaism (approximately 587 BCE to 135 CE), which provides the socio-historical context for much of the New Testament, the destruction of the temple and the loss of the Davidic monarchy saw the development of forms of messianism, ‘the history of speculations about a royal or priestly leader chosen by God’, although versions of the expectation of a Messiah were neither uniform nor common to all Jewish groups.³⁴ Kingship as a nationalistic symbol of Jewish

33. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 109.

34. L.L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 143, 552;

political and spiritual sovereignty in their own land gradually transformed into a 'more pure, spiritual and holy symbol'.³⁵ In the social and political turmoil of first-century Palestine, and with much fluidity and change in religious thought and practice, messianic expectations and eschatology were nevertheless important influences among certain popular movements and groups of revolutionaries, such as the Sicarii and groups of bandits as for example described by Josephus.

The Zealots, Sicarii and other disaffected groups held to the notion of a charismatic, military leader³⁶ who could, with the help of God and with or as a messiah-figure, overcome the occupying forces and inaugurate a theocratic nation, faithful to the Law.³⁷ They believed that God alone should be king of Israel, therefore no obedience should be given to any temporal authority, and frustration mounted when the whole of Palestine came under direct Roman rule in 44 CE and it became clear the Romans had no intention of changing the new political dispensation.³⁸ Usurping power had to be destroyed by any means, including extreme violence. God's followers were to join an earthly army to get rid of the oppressors of Israel and restore its purity before God, since he was viewed as a warrior who would assist his followers to destroy his (their) enemies.³⁹ Strife and fighting among Jewish revolutionary groups themselves were common,⁴⁰ and can apart from other considerations be related to the conflicting aspirations of groups which, while oppressed by a superior military power, were aimed at strengthening their own positions.

The claim is not that such notions of divine and especially messianic violence are fully representative of the first-century Jewish world, or that there was necessarily

cf. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 1993), p. 517. Expectation of an anointed royal Jewish leader is scarce in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Jer. 23.5-6; Isa. 11.2-9; Mic. 5.2); only a few instances of a future Davidic king are found in the period of Persian and Hellenistic domination (e.g. Sir. 47.11, 22; 1 Macc. 2.57), with only a mild increase of hope for a anointed royal leader during the Hasmonean period and some messianic movements arising in reaction to Archelaus' brutality (Heard 'Revolutionary Movements', pp. 589-691; however, cf. W. Beuken, 'Did Israel Need the Messiah?', *Concilium* 1993/1 [1993], pp. 3-13). After the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE, the notion of a heavenly Jerusalem and Temple increases in importance and the role of a Messiah become more pronounced (cf. *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*) to the extent that some rabbi's interpreted Simeon Bar Kokhba, leader of the revolt of 132-135 CE, as the king-messiah (D. Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* [Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 371-78, 389). Gradually also the importance of faith and piety among the Jewish people replaced the notion of national suffering as the condition for the coming of the messiah (J. Limburg [transl. and ed.], *Judaism: An introduction for Christians* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987], p. 149). In the period of 63 BCE to 70 CE, two differently shaped patterns for messianic figures are found: the political figure of Messiah the son of David, and the transcendental Messiah (Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, pp. 225-30).

35. Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, pp. 231-33.

36. The Jerusalem leader Menahem was killed by Zealots presumably for his messianic aspirations (Grabbe, *Judaism*, pp. 501, 549).

37. Cf. J. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1980), p. 172.

38. Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, p. 252.

39. Riches, *Transformation of Judaism*, pp. 93-94.

40. Grabbe, *Judaism*, pp. 449-500; Heard, 'Revolutionary Movements', pp. 696-97.

direct influence of such notions on the authors of the New Testament texts. Nevertheless, the presence of Jewish perceptions regarding the time of the messiah as a period of the sword, linking the days of the messiah with violence formed part of the socio-historical setting and thought-world from which the New Testament emerged, and was therefore likely to have left traces or echoes of influence in the latter: the issue of the Messiah was in the air.⁴¹ However, while first-century Jewish groups nurtured belief about the 'days of the messiah' rather than making a person or his functions central, the notion of a messiah became a central category in early Christianity through Jesus Christ.⁴²

It is then not surprising that Jesus was typecast in the role of liberator as attested by scenes from the Gospel accounts, although, almost contradictorily, the Gospel authors are united in their tendency to traverse these *explicit* claims about Jesus.⁴³ Nevertheless, Jesus is consistently presented as the messiah, the Christ, in word and deed, and whether then as political figure or as spiritual messiah, violence forms part of the equation. In Luke's Gospel, for example, Jesus' birth is announced with reference to violence which will come to characterize his life and death (καὶ σοῦ δὲ αὐτῆς τὴν ψυχὴν διελεύσεται ῥομφαία, 2.35).⁴⁴ Jesus becomes a divine warrior, leading his followers into battle against Satan's kingdom (10.17-19). Even more explicitly, Jesus spells out the implications of his ministry: 'Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division' (δοκεῖτε ὅτι εἰρήνην παρεγενόμην δοῦναι ἐν τῇ γῇ; οὐχί, λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἡ διαμερισμὸν, 12.51),⁴⁵ leaving households and families divided (12.52-53). Practically it means leaving behind your life as you have known it, denying parents and family and taking on the cross, and therefore the following advice from Jesus: 'And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one' (καὶ ὁ μὴ ἔχων πωλησάτω τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀγορασάτω μάχαιραν, 22.36b).⁴⁶

41. Cf. C.E. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), pp. 239-52; S. Freyne, 'The Early Christians and Jewish Messianic Ideas', *Concilium* 1993/1 (1993), pp. 30-41.

42. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, p. 519.

43. The spiritual nature of Jesus' messiahship is often inferred from passages such as Mt. 20.25-28; 22.41-46; 25.31-34; Mk. 14.3-9; Lk. 22.24-30, and various instances in John's Gospel, especially 18.33-40 (cf. Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, pp. 228-29).

44. Appearing six times in Revelation, this is the only other occurrence of ῥομφαία in the rest of the New Testament. The statement is often taken as a prophetic or eschatological reference to the eventual fate of Jesus, and the anguish that Mary will endure as Jesus' mother (e.g. W. Michaelis, 'ῥομφαία', in *TDNT*, VI, pp. 993-98 [1995]). Possible intertexts are *Sib.* 3.316; Ezek. 14.17 (the sword as symbol for God's punishment of land) and Ps. 36.15 (the wicked destroyed by having their swords turned on themselves).

45. In Mt. 10.34, διαμερισμὸν ('division') is replaced by μάχαιραν ('sword').

46. The reluctance to view this statement as a call to take up arms against the evil forces is borne out in descriptions of this verse as ironic, symbolic or unhistorical, at most referring to the impending hostility which the disciples of Jesus will experience (so T.J. Gedder, 'Peace', in J.B. Green, S. McKnight, and I.H. Marshall [eds.], *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997], pp. 604-605). And ambiguity remains, illustrated by Jesus' claim that those who take up the sword, will perish by it (cf. Lk. 21.53 but Mt. 26.52b; cf. Rev.

Violence was part of everyday life in the first-century Mediterranean world, the extent of which emerges clearly even from a brief analysis of the New Testament vocabulary. While the violence vocabulary is used for different purposes, referring to physical human violence, to the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and metaphorically to the Christian's life of service to God (a spiritual battle), it is evident that military terms dominate, indicative of the military environment of the day.⁴⁷ Going beyond the military setting, the 'naturalization of violence' in first-century Mediterranean context has often been commented upon.⁴⁸ Violence in different forms is common in an agonistic society, since the exercising of power amount to exerting control over the behaviour of others, and so becomes an important social and means value, as well.⁴⁹

In the New Testament Desjardins has pointed to four aspects which reinforce the violent perspective of this set of documents, maintaining that non-physical violence dominates: an unquestioning acceptance of soldiers and war; extreme violence expected to occur at the end of this age; male domination in society as reflected in these texts; and the insider-outsider mentality which divides humanity into opposing groups. Although admitting that, 'Viewed as God's agent on earth (or his ambassador to humanity), Jesus himself occasionally accepts, condones or incites violence', Desjardins fails to note how strongly the messianic position of Jesus⁵⁰ as portrayed in the New Testament contributes to violence.

In presenting a meek and mild Jesus, the ambiguity of Scripture on the person of the Messiah is collapsed. Is his preaching not in fact subversive, and is he not perhaps critical of social and political structures to the point of initiating their change, not excluding the possibility of physical force? Even if stopping short of claiming Jesus as a political revolutionary, one has to admit that the establishment of the day—social, political as well as religious—did not escape his attention and intrusion. Abandoning the family model, making ambiguous statements about paying taxes (Mt. 22.15-22//Mk. 12.13-17//Lk. 20.20-26), questioning the Torah (e.g. Mk. 2.23-27), and entering Jerusalem the way he did and at the time he did (during the Passover festival of liberation from Egypt, Mt. 21.1-11//Mk. 11.1-11//Lk. 19.28-44) and his actions in the Temple, the religious center but also a political stronghold with the treasury (Mt. 21.12-17//Mk. 11.15-19//Lk. 19.45-48), are elements which already suggest a not-so-meek-and-mild Jesus. Jesus was proclaimed

13.10), when taken as referring to acts of violence, rather than penal power of the state (Rev. 13.4) or military service (W. Michaelis, 'μάχαιραν', in *TDNT*, IV, pp. 524-27 [525 n. 11]).

47. Desjardins, *Peace*, pp. 63-64.

48. Cf. P.J.J. Botha, 'Submission and Violence: Exploring Gender Relations in the First-Century World', *Neotestamentica* 34.1 (2000), pp. 1-38 (8-18).

49. J.J. Pilch, 'Power', in J.J. Pilch and B.J. Malina (eds.), *Biblical Social Values and their Meaning: A Handbook* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), pp. 139-42.

50. Desjardins, *Peace*, pp. 62, 72, 78-108. Postponing the question whether Jesus' messianic role was perceived as earthly, political or transcendental, spiritual (cf. Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, pp. 227-29, 262), and the corresponding positions about the Land (Mendels, *Jewish Nationalism*, p. 252), the oppositional nature of the messianic role remains, posing a threat to the (variety of) authorities and their demands for obedience.

King of the Jews, spurring Herod on to infanticide according to a Gospel account (Mt. 2.16), and resulting in a plaque sarcastically referring to him as *king* at his crucifixion, and he is frequently in the New Testament proclaimed as 'saviour', a title which the Roman emperors eagerly claimed.⁵¹

From the New Testament and traditional theological appropriations Jesus is perhaps best known as a victim of violence, non-physical as well as physical, including attempts to stone him and, of course, his death on the cross, which would become the ultimate symbol of violence.⁵² But because of overt and more sublime religious reasons and purposes, the focus has traditionally been placed on the violence inflicted upon Jesus often to the exclusion of his contribution to it. Jesus as messiah also contributed to violence, at different levels and in many ways, inflicting violence in the interrelated socio-cultural, political and religious spheres of life in first-century Palestine. The followers of Jesus also acted as perpetrators of violence, not only in defense of Jesus' person at his arrest but also in shunning him at the onset of danger. In the New Testament, the Messiah and his followers are therefore not only portrayed as allowing violence, but also as being involved in legitimating and promoting violence: 'Violence is forbidden...but it is acceptable if God or Jesus inflicts it'.⁵³ A messianic claim seems to support the right to inflict violence.

4. Conclusion: The Matrix, the Messiah and Violence

As in the New Testament where non-physical violence predominates among the many forms of violence revealing itself,⁵⁴ it is similarly overwhelmingly in *The Matrix*. The captured state of human bodies as well as the physical force used on the dissidents are violent and destructive to say the least, but even then does not come close to the non-physical aspect of being alive but unable to live, enslaved for the purposes of those in power. *The Matrix's* interpretation of the relationship

51. Accusations leveled at Jesus at his trial as depicted in the Gospels underline his political agenda: obstructing the payment of taxes, threats about the destruction of the Temple, and proclaiming himself king (cf. W.R. Herzog, II, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000], pp. 219-32). On another level, Jesus and his followers disrupted the easy alliance of Hellenistic-Roman religious patterns with the wellbeing of the Empire, challenging the concept of *religio*. In Roman law, *pietas* was the first and supreme national duty of citizens, and elevated a specific morality to a divine principle or will. And, of course, when Christianity became state religion in the fourth century, the Church took over this concept of *religio* (cf. E. Schillebeeckx, 'Documentation: Religion and Violence', *Concilium* 1997/4 [1997], pp. 129-42 [129-31]).

52. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 23. But the cross is often spiritualized and depoliticized through dogma and/or pietist convention. Here the ambiguity of the New Testament texts also emerges, with Paul's claim that the crucifixion is contrary to the accepted wisdom of the world, which assumes violence gives power (1 Cor 1-2). Such ambiguity shows 'the Scriptures as a textbook on the pathology of religion' (G. Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* [New York: Paulist, 1975], pp. 62-84).

53. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 82.

54. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 62.

between the messiah and violence suggests a stronger link between the two than traditionally perceived of Jesus in the New Testament, indeed, a reciprocal relationship, where the messiah's actions contribute to violence and not least of all to violence to his followers. On the other hand, the messiah is simultaneously also a victim, which was brought about by the expectations of his followers and their actions in this regard, leading to violence directed at the messiah.⁵⁵

In *The Matrix* there are two settings, clearly recognizable also in the New Testament, which lead to and continuously stimulate violence—namely, the insider-outsider context and the eschatologically-apocalyptic⁵⁶ charged situation. The messianic theme, which is present in both these two settings although often applied differently, contributes directly to the overt and covert manifestations of violence, bringing it to maximum levels. The two features which can be said to highlight the acceptance, condoning and incitement of violence by Jesus and his followers are the angry, self-righteous tone⁵⁷ heard in the New Testament, and the assumption that violence is required to bring about positive change.⁵⁸ These two features also characterize the group around Neo in *The Matrix*.

As much as Jesus' followers believed his presence to have dealt a crippling blow to the forces of evil and with the final victory in sight, so too are Morpheus and his compatriots convinced that with Neo's assumption of his messianic role, the days of the Matrix are numbered. Such an eschatological and apocalyptic worldview requires violence as requirement to inaugurate the new 'kingdom', with the expectation of horrific violence inflicted by the forces of evil only matched by the resolve of their opponents to counteract these actions through violence too. 'Simply put: since God is our model and he solves his problems through violence, so can we'.⁵⁹ The apocalyptic worldview has little room for acknowledging the equal worth of everyone, friend or foe, and has 'no intention to build a better world with

55. The Matrix, which has to be destroyed by the One and his followers, becomes the condition and therefore ultimate theological metaphor for a new life in all its facets and features. Liberating humans from the Matrix cannot happen sectionally or by category, is not limited to certain areas of the human experience and life but is all encompassing and totalizing—all or nothing!

56. In the apocalyptic tradition the battle to introduce the Kingdom was a more pronounced dualism between the forces of Satan and those of God. In the Qumran tradition, for example, the 'children of the light' considered themselves the only 'saved' remnant, thus consigning everyone else, Jew or Gentile, who was not of the Community, to the 'children of darkness'. The chosen would finally be vindicated when, with the appearance of two messiahs, of Aaron (priestly) and Israel (kingly) and a prophet, and the intervention of God's heavenly hosts, true worship would be restored to Israel, inaugurating the perfect Kingdom (Riches, *Transformation of Judaism*, pp. 173-74). In *The Matrix* the aim is to liberate Zion (the resistance's mainframe computer), to establish it as the New Kingdom for all humans, implying the full and final destruction of the anti-forces of the Matrix.

57. According to Desjardins, this was the result of the early Christians' lack of success, despite their own Jewish roots, in proselytizing among Jews, and the increasing failure of Christian missionary activity elsewhere too (*Peace*, pp. 66-70).

58. Desjardins, *Peace*, pp. 66-78.

59. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 91.

opportunities for everyone'.⁶⁰ Whereas in the New Testament, 'In dying Jesus refused to repay violence with violence. He forgives those who kill him violently',⁶¹ Neo in *The Matrix* destroys his enemies.

My intention in the foregoing discussion was not to collapse the ambiguity of the New Testament texts on violence, and its relation to the person and activity of Jesus Christ, in particular, but rather to show how such violent elements, often ignored and mostly spiritualized or relativized in traditional interpretation, are explored by default and design when the One appears on the scene in *The Matrix*. As much as peace is not an abstract idea but one rooted firmly in cultural, political, social and economic contexts,⁶² so too are people's conceptions of violence contextually defined and situated. Looking at biblical allusion in *The Matrix* and recognizing the cultural setting largely defined by glamorous Hollywood, powerful America and the influential media house Warner, enables us to realize the persistent influence of biblical and Christian-religious themes and scenes on the Western mind. Not suggesting an equal or reciprocal relationship, *The Matrix* is an important example of how biblical image and themes are reinterpreted in the twenty-first century.

To suggest that producers and directors of popular-style, Hollywood movies create this interplay intentionally only to achieve their own short-term purposes—a larger dollar—is probably too cynical. On the other hand, to presuppose some lofty quasi-religious or moral-ethical purpose as the *raison d'être* for popular movies is most likely also asking too much in a cutthroat business where box office numbers have the last word.⁶³ However, where latent and sublime religious notions and sentiments can contribute to the appreciation and appropriation of films, they will certainly be incorporated into films. The Wachowski brothers' corroboration of their interest in matters religious⁶⁴ and the inclusion of latent and even discernable biblical allusion in a popular Hollywood movie suggest the expectation that audiences will be in a position to understand the plot better, to relate to it more easily when their own popular religious sentiments allow them to connect and identify with the movie's setting and plot.

In the public media of a violence-soaked world, where sexual and religious taboos ironically often carry more censure than viewing violence as suggested by the coding and ratings imposed on audiovisual media, the Bible is evidently found useful in its ambiguity to condone and sustain expressive violence.⁶⁵ The reception

60. Desjardins, *Peace*, p. 91; cf. p. 84.

61. Schillebeeckx, 'Documentation', p. 140.

62. F. Mayor, 'The Human Right to Peace', *Bulletin* 4.4 (1997), pp. 1-2 (2).

63. Even if the Wachowski brothers are quoted as being interested in 'mythology, theology and, to a certain extent, higher level mathematics', that is, 'all the ways human beings try to answer bigger questions, and The Big Question'. They therefore claim to have written and directed *The Matrix* with more in mind than providing mere entertainment, but with the purpose of engaging the minds of people, to make them think (Corliss, 'Popular Metaphysics').

64. Claiming that the religious symbolism in the film is intentional, but that their own religious beliefs are 'non-denominational' (cf. n. 6, above).

65. J. Punt, 'Peace, Conflict and Religion in South Africa: Biblical Problems, Possibilities and Prospects', *Missionalia* 27.3 (1999), pp. 263-98.

history of the biblical messiah accentuates this in harsh terms, with the biblical life and Passion of Christ characterized as much by violence as the lives of his contemporary (and subsequent) followers suffered *and* exerted violence. As *The Matrix* points out so well!

Sanctified Aggression

Legacies of Biblical and Post Biblical
Vocabularies of Violence

edited by

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