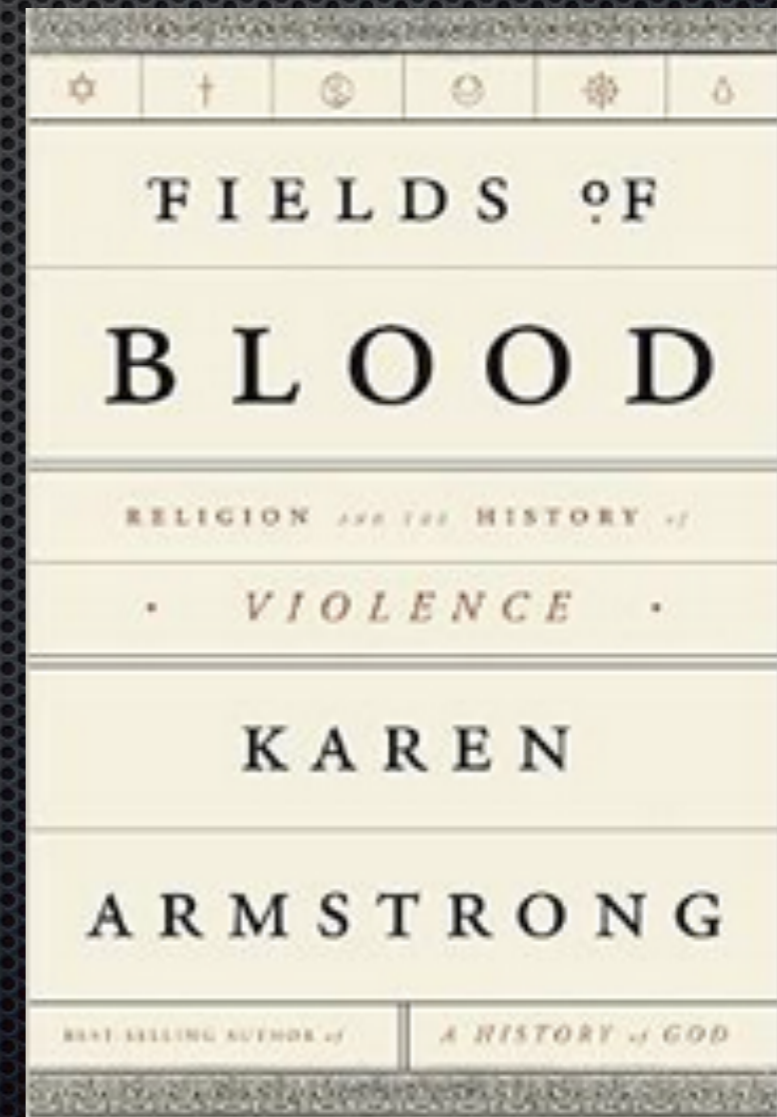


# Fields of Blood

## Religion & the History of Violence

ACTS  
Winter 2014

St David's United  
Church Calgary



# Session 02 - Agenda

1. Opening
2. Book Summary
3. Discussion Questions
4. Media Presentation A
5. Break
6. Media Presentation B
7. Discussion
8. Closing

# Opening - Joan Gray

World Becoming Less Violent:  
Despite Global Conflict, Statistics Show Violence In  
Steady Decline - Huffington Post.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/22/world-less-violent-stats\\_n\\_1026723.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/22/world-less-violent-stats_n_1026723.html)

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Introduction

“... human life changed forever in about 9000 BCE, when pioneering farmers in the Levant learned to grow and store wild grain.”

“... a small elite, comprising not more than 2 percent of the population, with the help of a small band of retainers, systematically robbed the masses ...” [and this] “... created a nobility with the leisure to develop the civilized arts and sciences that made progress possible.”

“If we are to meet the challenge of our time and create a global society where all peoples can live together in peace and mutual respect, we need to assess our situation accurately. We cannot afford oversimplified assumptions about the nature of religion or its role in the world.”

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 1 - Farmers and Herdsmen

“Sumer had devised the system of structural violence that would prevail in every single agrarian state until the modern period, when agriculture ceased to be the economic basis of civilization.”

“no society ever found an alternative. By the end of the fifteenth century CE, agrarian civilizations would be established in the Middle East, South and East Asia, North Africa, and Europe, and in every one—whether in India, Russia, Turkey, Mongolia, the Levant, China, Greece, or Scandinavia—aristocrats would exploit their peasants as the Sumerians did.”

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 1 - Farmers and Herdsmen

“They discovered that warfare was an invaluable source of revenue that brought them booty and prisoners who could be put to work in the fields. . . . Besides gaining plunder and loot, the chief goal of any imperial campaign was to conquer and tax more peasants.”

“We shall see again and again that the experience of an unusual level of violence would often shock its victims into a dualistic vision that splits the world into two irreconcilable camps. Zoroaster concluded that there must be a malevolent deity, Angra Mainyu, the “Hostile Spirit,” who was equal in power to the Wise Lord but was his polar opposite. Every single man, woman, and child, therefore, must choose between absolute Good and absolute Evil.”

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 2 -India: The Noble Path

“As for the pastoralists of the Near East, Indian Aryan ritual and mythology glorified organized theft and violence. For the Indo-Aryans too, cattle rustling needed no justification; like any aristocrats, they regarded forcible seizure as the only noble way to obtain goods, so raiding was per se a sacred activity.”

Aryan society developed into 4 castes: priests, warriors, commoners and servants. This division limited social violence by assigning each a place.

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 2 -India: The Noble Path

The next evolution in India was to strip violence of religion legitimacy thus internalizing religion.

This new discovery of an inner self would become a central insight in every religion.

“... the renouncers eschewed aggression, owned no property, and begged for their food. By about 500 BCE, they had become the chief agents of spiritual change and a direct challenge to the values of the agrarian kingdoms”



# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 2 -India: The Noble Path

“The Buddha’s enlightenment had been based on the principle that to live morally was to live for others. Unlike the other renouncers, who retreated from human society, Buddhist monks were commanded to return to the world to help others find release from pain.”

“Ashoka’s dilemma is the dilemma of civilization itself. As society developed and weaponry became more deadly, the empire, founded on and maintained by violence, would paradoxically become the most effective means of keeping the peace. Despite its violence and exploitation, people looked for an absolute imperial monarchy as eagerly as we search for signs of a flourishing democracy today.”

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 2 -India: The Noble Path

“Krishna introduces an entirely novel idea: a warrior must simply dissociate himself from the effects of his actions and perform his duty without any personal animus or agenda of his own.”

“Many politicians and generals have similarly argued that they are only instruments of destiny when they commit atrocities”

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 3 - China: Warriors and Gentlemen

The mythological “history” of China which defined the nation was a mixture of men and gods centered on “Five Great Kings”

Again agrarian civilization evolves in China, with its development of violence and arts.

“Confucianism was never a private pursuit for the individual; it always had a political orientation and sought nothing less than a major reformation of public life. Its goal, quite simply, was to bring peace to the world.”

The Golden Rule “Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire.” This was not personal but a political ideal.

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 3 - China: Warriors and Gentlemen

“The Book of Mozi included the first Chinese exercises in logic, all dedicated to proving that warfare was not in a ruler’s best interests. In words that still ring true today, Mozi insisted that the only way out of the destructive cycle of warfare was for rulers “not to be concerned for themselves alone.””

In the 6th C BCE also came 2 wisdom books still popular today:

The Art of War - Sun Tzu

The I Ching - Lao Tzu

# Fields of Blood - Session 02 - Key Ideas

## Ch 3 - China: Warriors and Gentlemen

“... the same ideas and imagery informed the thinking of political scientists, military strategists, and mystics. People could have the same beliefs yet act upon them very differently. Military strategists believed that their brutally pragmatic writings came to them by divine revelation, and contemplatives gave strategic advice to kings.”

“That was the Confucian dilemma—similar to the impasse that Ashoka had encountered on the Indian subcontinent. Empire depended on force and intimidation, because the aristocrats and the masses had to be held in check.”

“The Chinese Empire had been achieved by warfare”

# Discussion Questions

1. What is the value of studying cultures that pre-dated and paralleled our Judeo-Christian (biblical) tradition?
2. Politics and Religion - Why has religion served political purposes for so much of human history?
3. Glorification of War - Rationalization of Class Conflict. How has religion served political purposes to our own time?

# Presentation A

1. Celtic Thunder - "Christmas 1915"

2. Karen Armstrong, author of *Fields of Blood*, speaks about how human impulses and cultural tendencies toward violence during her Interfaith Lecture Tuesday, August 12, 2014 in the Hall of Philosophy at the Chautauqua Institution. This event was hosted by the Department of Religion. To learn more about Chautauqua Institution visit: <http://ciweb.org/>







BREAK

15 minutes





# Next Week

Book readings -

Ch 4. The Hebrew Dilemma p103 28p

Ch 5. Jesus: Not of This World? P131 24p

# Closing - Joan Gray

On 5 January 2015, the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope released the biggest image ever taken of the Andromeda Galaxy - "The Gigapixels of Andromeda"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udAL48P5NJU>



# Website & Course Materials

Website:

[fob.stdavidscalgary.net](http://fob.stdavidscalgary.net)

[sduc.ca](http://sduc.ca)

Summary Presentations,

Videos are linked,

Handouts

Links to additional information

Printouts for those without internet.