

Appendix

To End All Wars: Behind the Scenes

By Brian Godawa

In 1998, I met producer Jack Hafer and agreed to write the script from a book he had been interested in making into a movie for about thirty years. That's right, thirty years! Actually, not entirely uncommon in the film business for such quality stories. The book was written by Ernest Gordon, an ex-POW who had suffered under the hands of the Japanese in World War II while being forced, along with other Allied POWs, to build a railroad through the Burma-Siam jungle (Now, Thailand). It was called *Through the Valley of the Kwai* and was more of the true story that men had experienced in that event than the Big Budget 1957 Hollywood blockbuster epic *Bridge on the River Kwai*, starring Alec Guinness and William Holden.

The Hook

Through the Valley of the Kwai was not an action story. It was about the suffering that the Allies had to endure; the starvation, the torture and the survival mentality that had infected everyone in the camps. But the key that made it stand out was its message of hope through forgiveness and spirituality that had also invaded their hearts and ended up conquering their fears. Of all the POW stories that dealt with the suffering of these heroes, very few of them dealt with this kind of spiritual victory that transcended sheer will power and the pain of cruelty they suffered. It is a deeply moving narrative of forgiveness and love.

The typical American movie take on a POW story would be the daring bravado of "the great escape." Enduring physical suffering is not very desirable nor entertaining to us Americans. But it is a truth we need to embrace or we will suffer spiritual poverty. The backbone of the theme of *To End All Wars* is conveyed in the Bible verse that Dusty says over the Colonel's grave early on:

Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24, KJV)

He ends by adding, "There is suffering before glory. There is a cross before the crown." The Allied captives in this story were more enslaved by their own hatred and selfishness than any prison camp could achieve. They were spiritually enslaved to the same sin that enslaved their captors. But Dusty's life was also an example of the truth that suffering or giving one's life for the benefit of others brings about the very significance that everyone was seeking. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)." The pain and suffering that most men could not reconcile with a loving God is actually the channel through which loving redemption is accomplished on their behalf.

I took a couple months or so to research the story, reading other POW accounts of the same experience, doing some investigation of the Japanese culture and

watching any documentaries I could get my hands on. The difficulty of the story was that there really wasn't any story. It was more of a diary filled with anecdotes and a couple of loosely connected ideas. But one of the things that appealed to me was that Ernest's pilgrimage in the book centered around his organization of a school of learning for the prisoners in the camp. He had been inspired to do so by some of the "jocks" as they called themselves. They found out Ernest was a teacher and they thought they could find some answers to their dilemma of suffering if he would only teach them. The idea of a "jungle university" to inspire the men and give them hope appealed to me because of my own love of learning the ideas of great minds.

The Brutal Truth

In the course of my research I soon learned that many of the POWs who had lived through the real experience of building the railroad liked David Lean's version of it in *Bridge on the River Kwai*, but ultimately felt it did not tell the real story. They felt it was more of a Hollywood glory story than the real affliction they had to endure for over three years. One of the History Channel documentaries had an interview with an ex-POW who expressed his desire that someone would tell their story, the true story of what they endured. That is what we hoped to do with *To End All Wars*.

The beatings and torture depicted in *To End All Wars* are brutal and not for the squeamish. But I assure you, the movie does not even show a tenth of what these brave souls actually experienced. Nobody could handle the truth if it was on the screen. To this day I still cannot comprehend what they went through and how so many of them actually survived. Of course "so many" is an exaggeration because of the 61,000 or so Allied prisoners who built the railroad about 16,000 of them died.¹ That's a mortality rate over 26%. And because of the brevity of movies, I was deeply saddened that we could not include the stories of so many of the local Burmese whose death toll eclipsed the Allies' losses, ranging by some estimates as high as 70,000!² I regrettably had to relegate this statistic to the end scroll in the film.

In the movie there are beatings that last for a few seconds. The director had them cut back from about twice as long because they seemed over the top. The reality was that they were bashed over and over again, for minutes and sometimes hours. Bodies were permanently disfigured. Punishments included hanging by the thumbs, holding rocks over the head at gunpoint, hanging baskets of rocks from the neck and other unspeakable atrocities, like the "water treatment" shown in the film. But that few seconds of water in the mouth followed by punching the stomach was also abridged for "believability." The truth is they would stick the hose down the throat of the victim, fill his belly with water till it bulged, then stomp on his stomach to watch the water gush out.

There is a brief shot of the Japanese Guards receiving "Comfort Women" for their sexual pleasure. This is also a national crime that is finally being recognized in

¹ Peter Davies, *The Man Behind the Bridge: Colonel Toosey and the River Kwai* (London, England: Athlone Press Ltd., 1991), pp. xii, 195.

² Clifford Kinvig, *River Kwai Railway: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railroad* (London, England: Brassey's, 1992), p. 200.

recent years for its widespread organization by the Japanese military.³ The next time you think movies like this are exploitative of violence, think again. Man is actually far more inhuman to man than anything we could actually show in a movie.

Adaptation

Despite the lack of a strong story in the book, there were some anecdotes that captured the highlights and climaxes of their experiences. And I saw the skeleton of a structure in Ernest's explanation of the progression that occurred in the camp spirit. He wrote about how the men first entered the camp with a survival-of-the-fittest attitude. Every man for himself is the rule of the survival game in western thinking (evolution). Sometime during the middle of the imprisonment, they had learned through the teaching of ethics in the jungle university that they had to help each other to make it through, love their neighbor as themselves. By the end of the story, the POWs were faced with the highest challenge of all, to love their enemies, the Japanese. In that simple layout, I found the overall structure for the movie. Act One was about the POWs loving themselves, Act Two was about them learning to love their neighbor and work together. Act Three was about them learning to love their enemy. A perfect progression that fit the three act structure, beginning, middle and end.

But this overall structure was not enough. Survival as a goal was good, but still a bit too general. Good heroes need a specific goal that provides the audience with a dramatic question they can hold onto. *Will they survive?* is not quite interesting enough of a dramatic question by itself. So the earlier drafts were more of an ensemble piece that contained the germs of what is now the story without the strong revenge line of Major Campbell, which came later.

When the director, David Cunningham came on board, I did a couple more rewrites under his direction. But by this time, they had already started to enter into preproduction, hiring cast and crew, location scouting, etc. Through a connection we got the script to Bart Gavigan in England, who is famed for his script-doctoring help on Hollywood studio projects. Based on our consultation with Bart, I came up with the idea of a spine for the story. That spine was Major Campbell's revenge plot against the Japanese. His drive to take over the camp pulled together the disparate ensemble stories of the other men. But ironically, at first, it wasn't Campbell who was the driving force, it was the Colonel who we used as heroic leader that would draw the forces together like William Wallace in *Braveheart* in a heroic attempt to take over the camp. So I had the kernel of a strong story. The only problem was, *they were already casting the film*, so I had to work fast!

The Midnight Rewrite

Tidying up the script one day, it hit me. We need to kill off the Colonel in the first act. Our decision to add his story was good for the strong drive, but it changed the original heart of the story from an ensemble community victory to more of a typical bigger than life Shakespeare hero. Now this isn't bad in itself. Shakespeare heroes

³ George L. Hicks, *The Comfort Women : Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995). Yoshiaki Yoshimi and Suzanne O'Brien, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II (Asia Perspectives)* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001).

are great. But for our story, it just didn't fit. Once we added the strong leadership of a heroic Colonel, the original heart of the ensemble had dissolved: the inspiring growth of a group of men changing from "every man for himself" to a more community mindset was lost. So killing the Colonel off and leaving the men to fend for themselves without a leader would be truer to the "everyman" feel of the story. What do men do without a strong leader? How will they cope when they lose the one who can rally them? Will they pull together or will they tear apart?⁴

This dramatic setup was much more interesting and posed the opportunity to make Campbell rise up from within the ranks and assume the leadership of the missing Colonel – but with darker motives. A sort of anti-hero. Campbell's passion becomes revenge against the Japanese for killing his beloved Colonel as he steps up to fill the gap of leadership. I called David and told him the troubling news. He agreed. We must kill the Colonel. Only we must do the rewrite in a week because casting is finalizing and Robert Carlyle and Kiefer Sutherland are almost on board! Well, I burned the midnight oil and we crafted a new version that kept the heart and soul of the book, but with a strong storyline that could carry it to the end. We would kill off the Colonel and have Major Campbell rise up to fill his place with devastating results.

Fictional Nonfiction

Many people are often disappointed with movies of "true stories" because they seem to change so much of the story and fabricate details that didn't happen. Usually the ones most angered by this fictionalization of history are the original participants in the stories! This is understandable. After all, movies are notorious for using personal agendas to deconstruct true events and rewrite history according to the author's prejudice. Witness *Dances With Wolves*, *JFK*, *Nixon*, *Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid* and *Elisabeth* among many others – heck, *most* others. All of them, entertaining movies that ignore certain inconvenient facts, cast heroes as villains or villains as heroes, inflame prejudices through skewed focus or just outright fabricate for a good plot twist.

But we must remember, before attacking such propaganda, that *all* history is written through the bias of its authors. *All* reporting is biased. *Every* journalist, biographer or chronicler of events must choose to include certain "facts" and exclude others, not merely from prejudice, but from time and space constraints. Very naturally, every author's worldview will dictate what facts are important and what facts are not, even what is a *fact* to begin with! When it comes to history, there are no such things as "brute facts" or objective reporting. Every "true story" is interpretation, and the same facts can be presented through different interpretations. Watch the movies, *Joan of Arc* (1948), *Joan of Arc* (1999), and *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999) as an example of this interpretational variance. The only question then is *not* whether someone is spinning a story or not, because *every author* spins a story through his worldview. The real question is rather *which spin is fair* to what we think we know about the characters and events. Sometimes, it is very appropriate to rewrite history because it was written wrong in the first place!

⁴ We also didn't think it right that a Colonel would be so blind as to pursue the foolhardy revenge that Major Campbell would ultimately contrive.

But even more important than the recognition that all history is interpretation is the Prime Directive of watching movies: *Movies are not reality*. Despite the truth they want to convey *about* reality, they are not reality in and of themselves. They are more accurately about the way reality *ought* to be, or *ought not* to be. Couple this with the responsibility upon the writer to keep the audience entertained, and it's no wonder that most movies use "*based on a true story*," not "a true story."

My goal in writing *To End All Wars* was to be as true to the *spirit* of what really happened, not to be a chronicler of raw events or so-called "brute facts." So for instance, some of the things that are in the movie, or at least in the script, may not have been mentioned by Ernest in his book, but many were mentioned by other POWs in other stories. Some of the tortures, the clever medical devices, even some characters were based on tidbits of information I found elsewhere.⁵ Randall Wallace, writer of *Braveheart* and *Pearl Harbor* put it well:

"Braveheart" got a lot of criticism from English historians who said historical details were inaccurate... My answer has always been that I'm a dramatist and I'm trying to get at the essence of the truth and being impressionistic in trying to capture the courage of people.⁶

For instance, the camp translator, Takashi Nagase, was a real Japanese translator who ended up reconciling with many Allied veterans after the war, but he was actually a translator for the Kempetai, (the Japanese Secret Police), not for Ernest's camp. David and Jack wanted me to base him on the real guy because they had recent documentary footage of Takashi and Ernest reconciling that they wanted to use for the end of the movie. This would bring a powerful expression to the nature of reconciliation and forgiveness at the end.

Some may contend that this is dishonest because it is a false reconciliation. Takashi never knew Ernest so a reconciliation scene is a lie. I don't think so because the truth is Takashi has been traveling around the world in reconciliation meetings with many POWs he never met in order to encourage his own country to do so as well. He is an ambassador of reconciliation, a representative. He is not being dishonest. He is truly sorry for what the Japanese Imperial Army did to the Allies and sorry for how he did not take a stand on their behalf. He had learned of Ernest and his story and honestly thanked him for helping the wounded Japanese (as in the book and movie) because he knew that his own culture wrongly rejected them. So the reconciliation footage is not false or "acted," it is true. Adding Takashi to the story merely gives it a more meaningful context so we understand the implications of reconciliation on a personal level.

Also, the Major was an entirely fictional character. So his plotline of seeking revenge on the Japanese by planning to take over the camp is fictional as well. However, I had read stories where that kind of thing did take place or was

⁵ The producer tells a story that Ernest Gordon, upon watching the movie at a special screening for Ernest and his friends, came to him with tears in his eyes and told him appreciatively, "Jack, you caught the heart of it."

⁶ *Randall Wallace: The Man Behind "Pearl Harbor"* Interviewed by John Chadwell, (www.wga.com, 2001), <http://www.wga.org/craft/interviews/wallace.html>.

considered, so it is true to the experience of the POWs that some men were bitter and sought revenge against the Japanese. Even though Reardon (Kiefer Sutherland) was based on a real RAF pilot, I made him American to bring in the American side of the story. There were not many Americans there, most of them being in the Philippines and surrounding area, but making him a merchant marine was also true to what did happen to some men without the character himself being factual.

Of course we tried to be as true to Ernest's character arc as possible. That is, he *was* nursed back from the dead, he *was* inspired to start the school which *did* have a graduation and he *did* defy the codes of conduct by tending to the wounded Japanese, but the details of how it came together as well as the relationships were manufactured in order to establish continuity. Interestingly, Dusty *was* crucified in mockery by a guard who was punishing him, but this was something Ernest had heard took place in another camp, not actually experienced by himself. The shovel scene where Reardon was beaten as punishment for the lost shovel simply had to be in the film. It is the one scene that everyone who reads the book remembers and mentions. But in reality it was not Reardon who did it, but someone else, who actually died from the wounds. Even Dusty's sharing of his food rations with Ernest, while performed by someone else toward another soldier, was nevertheless true to Dusty's spirit and telescoped into his character for continuity.

The most important truth that we wanted to capture was the spirit of what these men went through; the pain, the suffering and the change from self-survival to self-sacrifice, and loving one's enemies. And that is what *really* happened—the meaning of it all. So if you want the real take on things, read the book. Of course, remember that the book is itself Ernest's personal take on his experiences filtered through his memory as well.

The Characters

Since we saw the heart of the story as this transformation from survival to sacrifice, from selfish individualism to selfless community, we wanted to examine how different men might experience this character arc. So the three principle characters, Ernest, Campbell, and Reardon each react to their despairing situation differently. When the Allies first reach the camp, their Colonel begins plotting for escape. Very natural, very predictable – and very impossible. Learning that a thousand miles of hostile man-eating jungle and more thousands of miles of untamed ocean separate them from freedom doesn't slow them down. Besides, Ernest had already tried to escape earlier in the book and failed.

But when the Colonel is killed for intervening in a dispute with the Japanese leadership, the men are truly at a loss. The Colonel was the hero they all believed in and followed faithfully. He provided the men with the kind of hero leadership that men follow to accomplish truly heroic feats. With the hero gone, they became like sheep without a shepherd. Each of the men react differently to their despair. Ernest turns within and tries to use his observational skills to his own benefit. Reardon, uses American ingenuity to barter his way to security, accumulating material goods and benefits like alcohol and cigarettes; self-seeking entrepreneurship. He finds a way to trade with the locals and even the Japanese in a two-faced lack of loyalty to anyone but himself. Campbell decides to get "justice" against his captors by

planning a coup d'etat. If the prisoners, who outnumber the guards by 20 to 1, can take over the camp, then they can get revenge on their captors.

But it is not enough to have these men with their own psycho-spiritual struggles. And it's not enough to have the villains being the Japanese. This was too predictable. We wanted to explore the idea of the enemy within, the opposition between the Allies themselves in their struggle for survival. So the character of Dusty became a catalyst, a foil to Campbell's vengeance. In effect, Dusty is the truly authentic man who embodies selfless living. He is a Christ figure. And because of his influence on the men in the camp to live the golden rule, he becomes the official internal nemesis of Campbell. You can't very well inspire the rage necessary to accomplish a violent take-over when men are trying to love their neighbors and enemies.

Pacifism and Just Wars

Writing *To End All Wars* placed me in the uncomfortable position of having to wrestle with the idea of how the golden rule applies to war and prisoners of war. Because of this, the movie has sometimes been misconstrued as a pacifist statement. This misunderstanding comes from the failure to see the distinction in the Bible between the ethics of war and the ethics of captivity. In a just war, it is necessary to kill the enemy, especially if they are tyrants attempting to enslave other nations (like the Axis Powers). God's rules of engagement for proper warfare are appropriate models here (Deut. 20). But when in captivity, even if unjustly enslaved, submission to authority is expected by God (Rom. 13).⁷ The exemplary lives of Daniel and Joseph are appropriate models here. Both extremes of pacifism and revolution are unbiblical. The only civil disobedience acknowledged as legitimate in the New Testament is when the state commands you to sin (Acts 5:27-29).

The premise behind *To End All Wars* is not that war is antithetical to Christianity. It is that true justice and the end of all wars can only come with the invasion of the kingdom of God into the kingdoms of man. Like a mustard seed growing to become the largest plant in the garden (Mark 4:31-32), or a mountain growing to fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:35, 44-45), the process of God's Kingdom transforming the earth began with the inauguration of the New Covenant, and increases through today and into the future when it triumphs over all the kingdoms of man and brings true peace and an end to all wars.

According to Scripture, world peace is never achievable based upon human unity because human nature remains basically evil without God. The "end of all wars" will never occur through human agency or politics but only through all nations submitting to the Lordship of Messiah.

Now it will come about that In the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.

⁷ If escape is reasonably possible to save lives, then some consider this to be biblical. But a violent overthrow, or coup, is not.

And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, *and never again will they learn war* (emphasis mine). (Is 2:2-4)

Eye for An Eye

Lex talionis, "eye for an eye," is also a commonly confused axiom. Most people think that this is part of a cruel moral code where people just get back at one another in the name of God. But a proper understanding of *lex talionis* is actually the opposite conclusion. "Eye for an eye" was not a law of vengeance instituted by God, but rather a restriction on the civil sanctions of retribution for crime. Man's tendency when he loses an eye is to respond by taking out both his opponent's eyes and maybe a leg or arm as well. Eye for an eye *curbed* vengeance, it did not justify it. "Eye for an eye" is the most compassionate loving law principle to ever grace man's society because it is ultimately the philosophical foundation for what we in the West refer to as "the punishment fitting the crime." Without *eye for an eye*, there would be no standard for punishment of crime, which would end in the arbitrary cruelty of those in power determining "justice" according to their own evil natures.

And to top it off, the Bible never gave *lex talionis* as a *personal* directive to individuals, but as a *judicial* civil sanction to be applied through the courts (Ex 21:22-25). This is the biblical foundation of what we call *due process*. "Eye for an eye" demanded justice to be proven in court, not played out through vigilanteism, and the New Testament reinforces this concept. "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord," is not a command to let crime go unpaid, it is a command to seek just retribution through due process in the courts of law as opposed to personal vigilanteism (Rom 12:17-13:4). God achieves His vengeance on criminals through due process in the courts with judicial civil sanctions.⁸ That is why the state is called God's minister (Rom 13:4).

Campbell's appeal to "justice" in *To End All Wars* is not true justice at all, but rather a twisted rationalization for revenge, so his appeal to "eye for an eye" is uncovered as a twisted misunderstanding of just retribution. It is not that the Japanese should have been let off the hook for their atrocities, but rather that they required fair examination in a court of justice, as they did in fact receive at the Tokyo trials. This is why at the end of the movie, when Campbell is about to kill the Head Guard Ito in revenge, Ernest tells him that this is not true justice. True justice is to be obtained through the courts, not through personal vengeance.

This affirmation of justice *and* mercy with substitutionary atonement is what makes the Judeo-Christian worldview so powerful and unique among worldviews. When

⁸ Bahnsen, *By This Standard*, pp. 258-264.

the innocent Dusty decides at the end to take the place of Campbell, the man who betrayed him, Dusty is incarnating the Christian theme of atonement. True atonement for sins is not achieved by God saying to people, "Oh, you're sorry for your sins? Okay, then I forgive you and I'll just drop the charges and no punishment will be given." This is the humanistic *misunderstanding* of Christianity, and it is the incarnation of cruelty. Cruelty because in the name of love, justice is never met. Love in this sense destroys justice and allows evil to go unpunished. Imagine a judge in a court of law saying to a murderer, "Well, as long as you're sorry for murdering this young child then I'll forgive you and let you go." This would not be a just judge, but a barbaric cruel one, because by allowing evil to go unpunished, he would be affirming the murderer's freedom to kill without consequence over the innocent's right to life. *Mercy to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent.*

Contrarily, the heart of true Christianity is not that evil goes unpunished, but that an innocent man *takes on the punishment of the guilty* so that they might receive the love and forgiveness of God. Punishment for sin is not ignored, but is diverted to another, therefore expressing the love of God without negating His justice. This is the only true balance of justice and mercy and this is what Dusty does for Campbell. He freely takes on Campbell's punishment. Campbell's crime is punished, but forgiveness is also achieved by the innocent man's free gift of substitution. And this substitutionary propitiation is also what happens when Reardon accepts blame for the lost shovel in order to save the whole camp from punishment.

The Imperial Japanese Worldview

One of our concerns in developing the screenplay of *To End All Wars* was to transcend the black and white cardboard villains that past movies have portrayed the Japanese Imperial soldiers of World War II. Of course, they really were villains, which is not politically correct to say these days. But we nevertheless sought to be true to their human dimension of being created in the image of God.

When one is confronted with incredible evil and atrocities like those engaged in by the Japanese in World War II, it is far too easy to relegate it to a pure love for evil. In reality, a villain does not believe he is evil. He always has a rationale, no matter how twisted, to try to justify his evil as good. And the closer to truth that his perverse rationale is, the more believable is his distortion. It is far too easy to demonize our enemies in order to rationalize our own sense of self-righteousness. The truth be told, the same sinful nature abides in *all* people, even alleged heroes. And we will better understand our enemy if we understand that he is not that different from us as we would like him to be. As the old adage goes, there's truth in every lie, so the best villains in movies should have some virtue in them that is twisted or gone bad. They should be fallen images of God, not pure evil. Their depravity should make some sense within their own framework of thinking, within their own worldview.

So we embarked on an attempt to "humanize" the Japanese guards as much as possible. And in order to understand the Japanese soldier, one must understand the Bushido code. This Japanese system of chivalry, developed from the way of the

Samurai from centuries earlier,⁹ carried the secret to the motives of the Japanese brutal treatment of the Allied POWs. To understand their behavior, one must first understand that they are deeply entrenched in the Eastern mindset of “monism.” This is the belief that all of reality is ultimately “one” and that therefore individuality is an illusion. The individual properly understands his position in the scheme of things, as noted in the film, when he realizes that he is like a drop of water in the ocean. The individual dissolves into the whole. So the corporate community is elevated at the expense of the individual. The individual effectively does not exist.

The Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors first established in 1882 during the Meiji regime, became Holy Writ to that era. It was taught and treated like the Torah in Jewish religion.¹⁰ In it lay some basic principles such as Emperor worship, and the several ideals revealed in the prayer that the captors forced the prisoners to recite in the movie: Loyalty, politeness, courage, principles, frugality.¹¹ Of course what each of these meant is not what the western mind would think.

Loyalty meant loyalty to the Emperor – above one’s own life – at any cost. As Takashi tells Ernest in the film, according to the Rescript, “One life weighs less than a feather.¹²” It is an honor to die for the Emperor, whatever his whim, because the Emperor embodied the essence of Japan, the “One” of which each individual was only a small part.

Politeness did not mean behaving with good manners, but rather fitting into one’s position in life, taking one’s proper station.¹³ To defy one’s rank or hierarchy by acting out of line is more than impolite, it is near treasonous. And absolute obedience without question to one’s superior was what proper hierarchy demanded. This is the basis to their beatings that the Japanese were so fond of employing. It was not a beating based upon mere sadistic pleasure (although I’m sure some of it became that), but rather it was disciplining of the individual who defied the structure of the universe by stepping out of line, jeopardizing total harmony with all things by his rebellious individualism. This rebel needed not so much punishment as proper correction and realignment of his spirit. This is why the Japanese often beat their own disobedient soldiers as hard as their prisoners.

In the film, the doctor tells the newly arrived POWs that this kind of bashing was not a “personal thing.” And he goes on to tell them that one must always bow to the guards, Japanese or Korean, because it is their form of respect from the lesser to the greater, their form of respecting hierarchy. In fact, this is why the Colonel is beaten when he intervenes on behalf of his Major’s “rights,” and why he is ultimately shot. This is why Ito tells the Colonel, “You will respect hierarchy.” Because the Colonel defied the ultimate order, his example as a leader would model such disrespect to

⁹ Inazo Nitobé, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905), pp. 1-10.

¹⁰ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), pp. 213.

¹¹ Ronald Searle, *To the Kwai and Back: War Drawings, 1939-1945* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), p. 10

¹² Nagase Takashi, *The Double-Edged Dagger: The Cowra Incident of 1944* (England: Sarsen Press, 1994), p. 13.

¹³ Benedict, *Chrysanthemum*, pp. 43-75.

all those under him and bring total disruption of the order of things. The higher the authority, the more serious the impact, the more strict the discipline.

One of the problems I had with the filmed version of the script was the climactic substitution that Dusty made of himself in place of Major Campbell. The original script called for Dusty to walk up and hold Ito's arm to keep him from beheading the Major. This physical intercession is based upon actual incidents and is a strict violation of hierarchy within the Bushido code. The Colonel does it in the camp arrival scene on behalf of Campbell and receives the Major's beating because of it.

So when Dusty physically intervenes, it is supposed to be a visual cue that emphasizes what he whispers to Ito. Finally, Ernest engages in this same physical intercession when he stops Campbell from beheading Ito in the final scene. Ernest grabs Campbell's arm to stop him. Evidently, this visual link did not come through in the director's interpretation of the script, so Dusty's substitution scene resulted in a mere whisper into Ito's ear, which I think weakens the impact of this most serious cultural taboo.

Sincerity to the Eastern mind was not as we in the west would think of as honesty or genuineness, but rather being fully devoted with one's whole being – with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength.¹⁴ This is why prisoners may even obey but still be beaten, because they would obey half-heartedly. And this is also why Ito beats the guard who miscounted the shovels after he beat Reardon. Because the shovel counter's irresponsibility resulted in unjust "discipline" of an Allied prisoner.

But this is also why the Japanese respond with rewards when the men work wholeheartedly. In the movie, when the POWs decide to work hard because of the inspirational sacrifice of Dusty and the wounded men from the hospital, the Japanese respond with train rides back to camp and a load of detained Red Cross supplies. Sincerity is rewarded, insincerity punished with matter-of-fact severity.

In the film we learn that being a guard in a prison camp was a dishonor to the Japanese mind. It turns out that the brutal head guard Ito was actually a devoted soldier who properly took the blame for his superior's military mistake. This is why Ito, who exemplified the true Samurai/Bushido warrior, would eat the same gruel that the prisoners did and lived a simple frugal life, because he considered himself unworthy of luxury or honor. So in a very real sense, Ito was himself a prisoner at the camp, both physically and psychologically self-imposed by his dedication to the Bushido code.

This sincerity and hierarchy is also the reason for the bizarre upside down Bushido rule of refusing to feed prisoners who were sick in the hospital. As evidenced in the movie, it was just common sense to them that if someone did not do their share of work, they should not receive the same food rations as those who did perform their duty. No work, no eat.

¹⁴ Benedict, *Chrysanthemum*, p. 215.

Courage in terms of the Rescript meant the valor of a Samurai. They did not elevate foolhardy acts of heroism, but rather duty and honor to the death.¹⁵ This is why Bushido reinforced the seppuku code of honor (ritual suicide). If a Japanese soldier was caught or wounded, he was obligated to kill himself. Of course, the hypocrisy of this value was made clear when the Japanese would surrender or lose. Most of them would in fact, fail to kill themselves. But true to this code of honor, Ito refuses to allow the wounded Japanese into the camp because of their dishonor. And at the end, even though the rest of the guards fall short of their duty of self-immolation, Ito remains the consummate Samurai warrior and kills himself with his own sword. This is a very powerful moment because in a very real sense he has been more true to his principles than many of the Allies were to theirs. When Ito commits seppuku, he is not avoiding justice, but rather embracing it. He is engaging in the expiation of his crimes, a ceremonial and legal atonement.¹⁶ And it was this moment in the film that made a large Japanese distributor interested in the movie. It's honest and faithful portrayal of the Japanese ethical obligation.

Japanese Racism

One of the inequitable results of history is the tragic lack of attention given to the atrocities of Japan because of the overshadowing emphasis given to the Nazi crime machine of World War II. Most people are familiar with the Nuremberg Trials where Nazi leaders like Hess, Goering and Speer were convicted for their war crimes, but few are even aware that there was a Tokyo War Crimes Trial that also convicted Imperial Japanese leaders like Tojo and Nagatomo. Military Tribunals convicted 3,000 Japanese of War crimes. Only 920 of them were executed.¹⁷

What many people do not realize is that the Japanese were as deeply nationalistic and maintained as thoroughly worked-out racist theories as the Nazis. They performed military and medical experiments on prisoners just like the Nazi doctors. Like Hitler's Aryan theories, they believed they were the true epitome of the evolved man and all other races were inferior – especially the white man. Other races were simply subhuman servants at the behest of the ultimate Nipponese übermensch, the Emperor. This is why the prison doctor Coates tells the newly arriving POWs that to the Japanese, beating a prisoner is like beating a disobedient dog. The fiercer the beating, the fiercer their dedication to the Emperor.

One of the reasons that we decided to avoid subtitles was not only to create a sense of reality – what it was really like for the Allies to be there in the midst of a confusing alien circumstance – but also to retain the alienation of their cultures and racial divide – their perceived separation and hatred of the “other.”

In the movie, Lieutenant Colonel Nagatomo, the head of the Thailand POW Administration, arrives at the camp and gives a speech to the POWs, explaining that they will build the railroad for the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, to the glory of his Imperial Majesty the Emperor, who is considered the savior of Japan

¹⁵ Nitobé, *Bushido*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁶ Nitobé, *Bushido*, pp. 111-124.

¹⁷ John L. Ginn, *Sugamo Prison, Tokyo: An Account of the Trial and Sentencing of Japanese War Criminals in 1948* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & CO., 1992). Also see: Arnold C. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg: The Untold Story of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1987).

and Asia. This speech was based on the actual one given by Nagatomo and reflects the Imperial Japanese absolute neglect of human rights.¹⁸ He tells them that it is his pleasure and he will not feel bad for them, human rubble that they are, because it is for their spiritual purification. Slave labor would redeem the pitiful spiritual state that these men were in because of their sub-humanity and their cowardly refusal to commit seppuku in the first place! Nagatomo, speaking for the Emperor and therefore all of Japan, has no qualms about “building the railroad over the white man’s body.”

Even though this revelation of Japanese racism is important, *To End All Wars* would not be true to the human nature if it did not also show the racism of the Allies as well. And this reverse discrimination is something many one-sided Hollywood propaganda movies fail to show when they deal with the issue of prejudice and intolerance. They often show all black people as good and all white people as bad (*Rosewood, Posse*), all women as kindred spirits in oppression and all men as kindred oppressors (*Thelma and Louise, The Color Purple*), or American Indians as innocent lovers of mother nature and all white men as crazy destroyers following their ill-conceived “manifest destiny” (*Geronimo, Dances With Wolves, Ravenous, Black Robe*). To be sure, these movies show some truth about the nature of oppression, but they fail as genuine expressions of the human condition because they fail to comprehend both sides of a complex issue.

In order to maintain some balance in *To End All Wars* I tried to bring out the racism and hatred in the Allies that would be their own worst internal enemy. They use the word, “Nip” in reference to the Japanese. “Nip” is a shortened version of the word *Nippon*, a Chinese linguistic derivative of the “land of the rising sun.” Even so, *nip* for the Allies was a way of dehumanizing their enemy into caricature. Which is also something they did when drawing prison camp sketches of slanty-eyed, buck-toothed racist cartoons of their captors. When Reardon is tied down, he screams at “the nips” for being “slope-headed, frog-faced rejects of evolution.” Another reduction of their enemies to subhuman animals without value, along with references like “yellow mongoloids” and others.

But the most powerful expression of unity between the two cultures of racism is the identity that Major Campbell discovers when he has tied up Ito at the end for torture. In the script, Campbell mockingly describes Ito as a fair man, because he never beat up anyone who “didn’t deserve it,” and that he was only, after all, trying to “purify spirits” when he was brutalizing them. But then Campbell mockingly tells Ito he “wants to be just like him,” which infers Campbell’s right to give him the death blow.

But when Campbell almost kills Ernest and sees himself in his enemy, he drops the sword. After Ito kills himself, Campbell is angry at having his justice taken away from him, but then ends up embracing his adversary in tears because he realizes *he is* the same as his enemy. The same hatred that ignited the Bushido abuse of human rights, is the same hatred that fueled Campbell’s revenge. The same barbarism that drove the Japanese kamikaze spirit to sure death drove Campbell’s

¹⁸ Robert S. La Forte & Ronald E. Marcello, eds., *Building the Death Railway: The Ordeal of American POWs in Burma, 1942-1945* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), pp. 287-289.

suicide mission to try to take over the camp against impossible odds. And the same merciless foundation of the Bushido rejection of their own wounded is the same merciless code of Campbell denying “aid and comfort” to the wounded who had ceased to be the enemy.

East Meets West

To End All Wars is very much an East meets West story. By giving explanations why the Japanese did what they did, balance was given to the clash of cultures, without negating the atrocities done by the Japanese. Of course, the western mindset wasn't the best worldview either. The Allies arrive at the camp with an individualistic mindset. It is the overemphasis on the individual and his rights at the expense of the collective that is one of the faults of western thought. And it is this value that breeds the “every man for himself” and “looking out for number one” philosophies, as well as the evolutionary “survival of the fittest.”

The reality of both extremes leading to destruction is found in the final confrontation scene between Campbell and Ito. When Campbell is about to kill Ito, he mocks the Bushido code and tells Ito he's going to give him a taste of his own “honor” and kill him. But Campbell's revelation comes when he almost kills Ernest and realizes that he is no different than his enemy. His code and his enemy's are the same. So these two men, bitter enemies, are actually equal in their essence. And that essence is evil.

This is where the ultimate redemption in the story lies. Both East and West are extremes on opposite sides of a spectrum, and those extremes are both wrong. Only Christianity has the perfect balance of the equally ultimate value of the individual *and* the collective. Only Christianity maintains both justice *and* mercy. Whereas the western idea elevates the individual to the detriment of the group, so the eastern mind worships the group at the expense of the individual.

This is called the philosophical problem of the one and the many, or unity and diversity. In Christianity, the church of Jesus Christ maintains a perfect balance of the one and the many, the individual and the community, because its worldview is founded on the ontological trinity, the triune God, who is Himself both one (unity) and three (diversity). And this ultimate foundation is the only one that can avoid contradiction and make such balance intelligible. The Eastern worldview negates and destroys the individual in the name of “oneness,” resulting in the oppression of the individual, and the Western worldview degenerates into anarchy and chaos in the name of “the many” or individual rights. So in a very real sense, *To End All Wars* is ultimately a truly global film, because it criticizes both East and West with the standard of the God who created and transcends both East and West.

Ironically, the notion of substitutionary atonement, or the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty is an idea that finds resonance in the Bushido war code. The Eastern elevation of the collective over the individual coupled with this sense of the individual suffering on behalf of his superior, has some affinity to the Christian notion of atonement. This is why Ito willingly allows Dusty to take Campbell's place at the end, resulting in Dusty's crucifixion. Because Ito, having born his superior's guilt himself, is all too familiar with the notion and therefore allows it in a way that

the Western mind might not understand. This is not to say that Bushido and Christianity are similar redemptions, but rather that every worldview, no matter how false, has some point of contact with the Christian gospel.

Most Hollywood movies that contain an “East meets West” theme tend to conclude that the West is inadequate and requires that we look to the wisdom of the East (The *Star Wars* saga, *The Joy Luck Club*, 1993; *Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997; *Snow Falling on Cedars*, 1999; *Shanghai Noon*, 2000; *Rush Hour*, 1998-2007; *The Last Samurai*, 2003, *Batman Begins*, 2005). But in *To End All Wars*, both Kingdoms of East and West are found to be wanting and only a higher kingdom, the Kingdom of God, provides the perfect balance of the value of the individual (the one) with the value of the community (the many).

To End All Wars was a formidable task as a challenge to incarnate the Christian idea of redemption in the theme of a story without proselytizing or propagandizing through platitudes and preachiness. Hopefully, people will be able to withstand the brutality portrayed in the movie in order to gain a more potent grasp of the grace that redeems it. As I've often stated, the believability of the redemption portrayed is only as powerful as the accuracy of the portrayal of the depravity from which one is redeemed. And after all, redemption is what storytelling is all about.

