Black is an essential color in any painter’s palette, but in contemporary religious thought, it sometimes seems that black has become a banished color. God’s love is cherished, but God’s anger is elided in tacit embarrassment. The antinomy mercy/justice is readily acknowledged, but the latter half of the parallel pair pardon/punishment is avoided. Is the moment at hand for a reconsideration of the place of anger and punishment in past or present language and thought about God?

Classic and current moral theories of war and peace in all three of the great monotheisms—bellum justum, milhemet mitzvah, jihad—are all rooted in core apprehensions of the identity of God as merciful or just, pardoning or punishing, indulgent or vindictive, warlike or peacemaking. Clearly, there are timeless scriptural warrants on either side of these antinomies, but there have also been, over the centuries, recurrent and timely elaborations of those warrants. In this conference, speakers from several disciplines will reflect on those elaborations, addressing a question rewarding even when it is disturbing.