In Face of Conflict: Religion as a Force of Peace

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In Face of Conflict: Religion as a Force of Peace

21 December 2010

Dear Readers:

The contemporary Estonian composer, <u>Arvo Pärt</u>, has developed a compositional system that—reduced to its sparest minimum—consists of the dynamic interplay of two musical lines in a field of silence.

> The melody, which proceeds mainly in steps up and down the scale, might be compared to a child tentatively walking. The second line underpins each note of the melody with a note from a harmonizing triad (the fundamental chord of western music) that is positioned as close as possible to the note of the melody, but always below. You could imagine this accompaniment to be a mother with her hands outstretched to ensure her toddler doesn't fall.[1]

This simple, but elegant musical metaphor can be helpful when we struggle to think of how religion can be a force for peace. It invites us to ponder two fundamental contributions. One, referring to the way we find ourselves concretely in the present, invites us to think of how religious actors can contribute their assets, skills, and comparative advantages to the emerging field of conflict transformation. Viewed from a modern secular paradigm of peacemaking, these religious assets are seen as "instrumental" to resolving conflicts, even if the religious actors themselves retain their intrinsic religious motivations. The other contribution is more foundational in religious terms, and refers quite directly to visions of peace, rooted in religious experience, which go beyond contemporary secular models of reality. For many religious people, these two modes are complementary even if at times in tension.

Let me focus first on the second musical line noted above, the one that is "holding and taking care of us," and let me call it the "Gift of Peace." As a religious believer and in my capacity as the Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, I have grown ever more convinced that it is precisely religious communities' respective experiences of Transcendent Mystery— the Holy; the Supremely True, Good, and Beautiful; the Supremely Merciful—that is at the heart of their capacities to build peace. To speak of these respective religious experiences requires sensitivity, solid principles, and care in our use of words, as I—like the religious leaders with whom I work—am firmly committed to respecting the genuine differences of belief that are present among our respective traditions.

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[1] Arthur Lubow, <u>The Sound of Spirit</u>, *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2010, p. 38. The composition under discussion with the composer, Arvo Pärt, is *Für Alina*.

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Nevertheless, in place after place, I have seen people turn to their faith and find strength when everything seems at an impasse. Ordinary people in the midst of conflicts and gross injustices often show us that—despite their sufferings, despite injustices that cry out to be addressed—they are not separated from what might be termed by each of our religious traditions in its own way as the Gift of Peace. Often, it is a dark night of affliction, gross injustices, or withering losses that—like an x-ray—disclose the hidden strengths of spiritualities. This is worth pondering deeply by each believer in the terms of his or her respective religious tradition.

And what a mysterious Gift: in Sierra Leone, I worked with Muslim and Christian amputees, victims whose limbs had been chopped off, but who also said they were willing to forgive. During the formal peace talks in Lomé, Togo, I spoke with a man who lost his beloved wife and daughter, his house, his job. His loved ones could not be returned to him. Yet, he ended his story with the words: "Thank God for peace. I forgive them all."

To acknowledge that the living link with Transcendent Mystery remains in the midst of social brokenness is not a license to exonerate us from our moral responsibilities. It does, however, help center our attention on what is uniquely religious. It can invite each to open to his or her tradition's most original religious experience of the Gift of Peace. A Gift that is—however mysteriously—positive, holistic, harmonious, compassionate, and a summons for justice. The Gift of Peace is alluded to in various religious traditions by fecund words such as Shanti, the Pure Land, Shalom, the Kingdom of God, Dar el-Salam and others. Today, in my own organization, _Religions for Peace_, religious leaders are working together from over 100 countries to transpose their basic symbols of peace into a public notion of "Shared Security" that tries to give modest public expression to what is shared among diverse religious communities' visions of peace. This notion of Shared Security recognizes the profound reciprocity of all of existence, its fundamental vulnerability, and the moral imperative to care for the other. Perhaps it can be understood as an invitation for collective creativity to forge a new public political paradigm resonant with the deepest shared wisdom of religious traditions. Such religious creativity can extend contemporary secular discussions of peace by focusing on its positive, inter-related, and normative characteristics. It is work for the long haul.

But we live in the rapidly changing present, so let me return to the musical metaphor, shifting attention away from "the one who is holding us," the Gift of Peace, to the toddler, to us as a fragile and collectively "battered" child trying to go forward. This pole of the musical metaphor calls us to face squarely the extremely difficult concrete situations that confront us and the challenge of taking next steps. It calls us to clarify for ourselves how religious people can contribute concretely to the emerging field of conflict transformation.

The fact that religious intolerance and extremism are real factors in some conflicts, including those in fragile states, makes it all the more important to identify genuine

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religious potentials for helping to transform conflict. How, then, can religious people, contribute to the emerging field of conflict transformation?

While no two conflicts progress in the same way, there is an emerging method of multi-religious conflict transformation. At its simplest, this method involves assisting religious communities to join in a multi-stakeholder dynamic analysis of a given conflict to identify the needed roles (education, advocacy, mediation, reconciliation) essential to the resolution of that conflict. In a second step, religious communities inventory themselves to discover if they have assets—at least potential assets—to serve the roles identified as essential to resolving the conflict or a dynamic aspect of it. In a third step, the potential religious assets are mobilized, equipped, and engaged in the needed conflict transformation roles.

The engagement of the method often takes place in a multi-religious context, which can align different communities around similar goals, capture the complementary strengths of such communities, provide efficiencies in training, and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships between the religious communities and other essential actors. This is difficult, hard work, and it is typically chronically underfunded. It can often work best when it is carefully aligned, and sometimes softly linked, with governmental and or United Nations peacemaking processes.

But what, then, are the assets that religious communities can bring to resolving conflicts? The first class of religious assets might be called "spiritualities." People do find hope when there appear to be no grounds for ordinary hopes. People do sacrifice themselves out of care for others. And people do forgive the unforgivable. Spiritual strengths, such as these are cultivated in each religious tradition in its own way. These spiritualities can provide the strength to engage in roles essential to conflict transformation such as countering messages of hate and calls for violence, and advancing reconciliation and healing among and between conflicted persons and communities.

Building on the power of spiritualities, there are the related moral heritages of each tradition that can provide to their believers a compass for navigating the extremely complex situations encountered in conflicts. Our moral heritages are not simply catalogs of "dos" and "don'ts," although these are important. They are shapers of character and conscience and cultivators of virtue.

Think for example of the great Emir Abd el-Kader, who won the praise of fellow 19th-century luminaries as diverse as President Lincoln, Queen Victoria and Pope Pius IX. Abd el-Kader, you may recall, mounted military resistance against the bungled French occupation of Algeria in 1830. During the time that he led the resistance, he was known for his courage and tenacity, but equally for his exacting moral standards. He demanded, for example, that prisoners receive humane care—indeed, exactly the same rations as his own soldiers. He surrendered to French generals in 1847, lived under house arrest in France, and was exiled to Damascus in 1852. There he saved thousands of imperiled Christians. He had a moral compass, and struggled to use it consistently, most tellingly in his comportment

with those with whom he differed. When he died in 1883, the New York Times hailed him as "one of the few great men of the century."2

Finally, religious communities have unique social assets. Hundreds of thousands of mosques, churches, synagogues, and temples dot the four corners of the earth. These local congregations are linked by districts, and organized on national and often regional and global levels. They constitute a tissue of connection that unites each congregation with the others associated within the same tradition. Every local congregation in the vast webs of religious networks is potentially a local center for advancing peace.

In short, we have spiritual, moral, and social assets that can be engaged in today's emerging field of conflict transformation. It is these assets that can concretely be harnessed for the needed roles of education, advocacy, mediation, and reconciliation essential to transforming conflicts.

In pragmatic terms, we can see the added value of multi-religious cooperation in situations that are extremely difficult for nation states or the United Nations to manage. Increasingly, we are forced to recognize the link among religion, conflict, and failed or fragile states. One in four countries is defined as a "fragile state," according to a _Foreign Policy_ focus issue (August 2010). Fragile states often cannot provide even the most basic of services for their citizens, including minimum security for their inhabitants. These fragile states can too easily become breeding grounds for radicalization and a refuge for extremist groups, compounding the miseries of innocent civilians and multiplying instability. The international community faces difficulties in addressing violent conflict in these places not least because it does not know with whom to engage to set things on the right track. Religious communities provide an important entry point. For example, even an extremely difficult situation such as Somalia makes clear that religious channels can remain open when diplomatic ones are blocked.

In this special edition of the _Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue_, you are invited to ponder how religious assets need to be engaged to create an environment of trust in the Middle East and Sri Lanka, to be deployed in efforts to protect women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to support youth with a healthy alternative to the callings of radical groups. These, and the other fine examples in this edition, point to an ever fuller engagement of religious people in peace-building.

As more and more religious people around the world work together for peace—cooperating with one another as they work to marshal their spiritualities, moralities, and the living networks of their faith communities in concrete peacemaking roles—we can also take heart in the chord that arises out of silence and supports every tentative step forward. People hear it and interpret it in different ways. Yet, they find in their hearings comfort in the hardest of times, hope when nothing seems clear, and acceptance of one another as part of the Gift of Peace.

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2 See John W. Kiser, _Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader_ (Monkfish Book Pub. Co, Rhinebeck, NY, 2008).

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Bury the Bloody Hatchet: Secularism, Islam, and Reconciliation in Afghanistan

By Eric Patterson

Abstract

When the US negotiated peace with American Indians just a few years after the American Revolution, they used religiously-inspired, culturally relevant symbols to "bury the hatchet." However, the secularist approach to contemporary Western foreign and security policies has largely overlooked, or contemptuously disregarded, the highly religious context of war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, it is time to consider a religious approach to peacemaking in Afghanistan based on Islamic concepts of arbitration and mediation (*sulh*). This paper argues that the larger secularist bias in Western foreign policies have made the West blind to the religious aspects of contemporary global affairs and reports on the one-size-fits-all Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs instituted in Afghanistan following the Tokyo Donor conference of 2003. Finally, this paper articulates Islamic religious concepts that could be the basis for establishing reconciliation between warring parties in Afghanistan.

Buried was the bloody hatchet;
Buried was the dreadful war-club;
Buried were all warlike weapons,
And the war-cry was forgotten;
Then was peace among the nations.
--- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha*

In 1759 Shawnee leader Missiweakiwa argued that it was time to "bury the bloody hatchet" with the English, following defeats of Franco-Indian alliance. The practice of "burying the hatchet" was more than a cliché or a novel symbol of peace. Rather, it was rooted in American Indian religious and cultural history, the belief that a divine peacemaker had taught mankind to end violence by burying their weapons and planting a sacred tree of peace. According to Mohawk Chief Jake Swamp, "the Peacemaker gave The Tree of Peace as a symbol of the Great Law of Peace. This is a great white pine tree whose branches spread out to shelter all nations who commit themselves to Peace. Beneath the tree the Five Nations buried their weapons of war; atop the tree is the Eagle-that-sees-far; and four long roots stretch out in the four sacred directions -- the 'white roots of peace.'" Following U.S. independence, American diplomats employed this culturally relevant approach in the first US peace treaty with American

Indians, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784: a hatchet was buried beneath a formal Tree of Peace and a peace pipe was smoked (Yarrow 1987).

In contrast, the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has lacked thoughtful, culturally and religiously relevant efforts at reconciliation by the US, its NATO allies, or under UN auspices. From 2002 onward, efforts to reconcile Afghanistan's warring parties focused on secular approaches tried (often with only modest success) elsewhere, such as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR). Such efforts have not halted the violence.

It is time to consider a religious approach to peacemaking in Afghanistan based on Islamic concepts of arbitration and mediation (*sulh*). This paper argues that the larger secularist bias in Western foreign policies have made the West blind to the religious aspects of contemporary global affairs and reports on the one-size-fits-all DDR programs instituted in Afghanistan following the Tokyo Donor conference of 2003. Finally, this paper articulates Islamic religious concepts that could be the basis for establishing the basis for reconciliation between warring parties in Afghanistan.

The Secularist Failings of US Foreign Policy

Although the U.S. is characterized by a diverse, religiously vibrant population it has, until very recently, largely failed to apprehend the religious undertones in its foreign policy, just as it has not organized to engage the religiosity of others. Princeton University professor Robert Keohane writes, "The attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fuelled by religious fervor" (Keohane 2002, 29-43). This secularist bias means that our leaders fails to appreciate the religious dynamics of foreign and security policy or disregard the religious dimension out of lack of tools, disinterest, fear, or antipathy. Cultural and religious blunders in Iraq and Afghanistan provide cases in point. There are at least five reasons that the U.S. and its allies have failed to consider interreligious approaches to ending the conflict in Afghanistan, all rooted in the secularist bias of their foreign policy commitments.

First, a secularist bias has become entrenched in most recent U.S. foreign policy. The classical meaning of "secular" was the social space shared by the sacred and the profane: the present, temporal world with all of its good and evil. However, today the term's popular usage tends to place boundaries around religion; everything outside the formal sphere of organized religion is now "secular." There is obviously a normative connotation in the contemporary evolution of meaning: that religious influences are not welcome outside a narrow sector. This secularist bias consciously restricts or bars religion from the wider public sphere due to concerns that religion is irrational, violent, or difficult to understand. Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright has made this point numerous times in interviews, stating that "Diplomats trained in my era were taught not to invite trouble. And no subject seemed more inherently treacherous than religion" (Albright 2006). The effect of a secularist approach to U.S. foreign policy is that it fails to account for the diversity of religious actors and trends in international affairs, making mutually productive alliances with religious actors impossible. In short, U.S.

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foreign policy generally does not, but should, take religion and religious actors seriously on their own terms.

Second, modernization theory (wrongly) predicted the end of cultural factors, including religion. Modernization theory, a school of thought about economic and political development, was particularly influential in the decades after World War II and remains influential in Washington and at the UN today. A fundamental tenet of modernization theory expects developing societies and citizens to become secular, bureaucratic, and materialist ("rational") in outlook as they take on aspects of the industrial West. One of America's premiere sociologists of religion and a key exponent of modernization theory in the 1960s says,

> I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernization comes more secularization. It wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious. So is the U.S. The one exception to this is Western Europe. One of the most interesting questions in the sociology of religion today is not, "How do you explain fundamentalism in Iran?" but, "Why is Western Europe different?" (Berger 1997, 972-978)

Berger observes that secularization theory is founded upon and asserts a universalist myth developed from the experience of Western history. The lesson that Europeans (and their progeny) drew from their own history was that the defensive wars against expansionist Islam and the subsequent Crusades, as well as the post-Reformation "wars of religion" ending in the Peace of Westphalia, "proved" that public religion was dangerous. The "lesson" (myth) continues: European governments banished religion from politics and the last four hundred years demonstrate the steady advancement toward the secular, peaceful apogee of civilization that Europe enjoys today—and which is available to all who will severely circumscribe religion in public life in favor of secular governance.

Although Western Europe has become increasingly secular over the past century in tandem with many of the features we associate with modernization, it seems to be the exception, not the rule. Indeed, there is a certain amount of self-serving academic, and normative, smugness in the claim that increased modernization results in secularization, but major trends of the past half century suggest that the reality for most people in much of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the United States is that religious faith continues to play a role in individual and community life. In fact, religion's role is growing in many places. Many social scientists and policy practitioners, trained in Western universities, have been shocked by the reemergence of ethnic, cultural, national, and religious identities that were obscured by the ideological cleavages of the Cold War. In practice, U.S. leaders have largely continued to follow the dictates of modernization theory, thinking that economic inputs alone, such as road and

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school building, will advance our foreign policy objectives in religious cultures from Kandahar to Kuala Lumpur.3

A third reason for Western secularist approaches is that foreign policy "schools" fail to provide intellectual resources for engaging religious dynamics. Foreign policy practitioners tend to be schooled in two main traditions of international relations theory: realism and liberalism (liberal internationalism). The first, realism, focuses primarily on the interactions of governments as they compete for security, power, prestige, and material interests. Realists like Henry Kissinger see international affairs as anarchic, competitive, and driven by the national interest. Such a worldview generally dismisses religion as irrelevant, be it embodied in non-state entities or the soft, but real, power of transnational actors such as Pope Benedict XVI or domestic heavyweights like Nigeria's Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinola. Liberal internationalists are more willing to acknowledge transnational and international actors such as the United Nations or multi-national corporations as well as the variety of domestic politics, but likewise give religion short shrift. Like realists, they tend to narrowly focus on materialist definitions of interests, rather than how religious and cultural identities inform the behavior of individuals and societies. Consequently, many liberal internationalist policy prescriptions offer economic and political development (democracy) without clear reference to how such *institutions* relate to embedded *identities* and *cultures* abroad. Liberal internationalists tend to highly value political processes (e.g. dialogue, consensus-building) and focus on political outcomes, whereas many people of faith world-wide are equally concerned with first principles and ultimate questions.

Fourth, foreign policy practitioners are not trained to deal with religious phenomena. Distinct from individual interest in matters of faith or university education in world religions is the issue of professional know-how: a government representative may or may not be personally religious but could work hard to develop professional understanding of faith and culture relevant to their posting. However, the U.S. does little in this arena. The secondary education of most of our diplomatic corps is law school or graduate study in international relations, steeped in the theories of realism and liberal internationalism discussed above. Furthermore, their superb on-the-job professional training on issues of economics, law, and development is weak in preparing our personnel for engaging religious actors and publics overseas. Former Secretary of State Albright captured this lacuna well: "When I was secretary of state, I had an entire bureau of economic experts I could turn to, and a cadre of experts on nonproliferation and arms control…With the notable exception of Ambassador [for International Religious Freedom] Robert Seiple, I did not have similar expertise available for integrating religious principles into

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3 Another way that the myth is inaccurate has been explored by scholars like José Casanova, Daniel Nexon, and Daniel Philpott is that Europe did not privatize or banish religion—European governments clipped the transnational Church in favor of nationalized religion on the principle that the king could choose the national faith, "*Cuius regio, eius religio.*" Hence, many people and communities within these societies continued to exercise religious faith intertwined with national identity (i.e. Spanish-Catholic, northern German-Lutheran). See Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics* 55 (October 2002); Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

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our efforts at diplomacy. Given the nature of today's world, knowledge of this type is essential" (Albright 2006).

Finally, separation of church and state is a contested construct, not only in the US but in Europe as well. It is unhelpful when US government officials set aside religious actors, themes, and issues as beyond the pale because of ambiguously-defined "separation of church and state" or "Establishment Clause issues." For some, this is laziness; for others it is trepidation. Either way, the results can be disastrous. Uncertainty about the boundaries of church-state issues often make government agents overly cautious and reluctant to acknowledge, engage, and support interreligious dialogue, even when such actions are perfectly legal.

Failed Secularist Approaches to Afghan Reconciliation

The US and its allies, as well as the UN, have simply not done a good job in engaging religious leaders and themes in interreligious efforts to "bury the bloody hatchet" in Afghanistan. Good faith efforts were made over a number of years to establish the rule of law, demobilize combatants, and develop a government of national unity. These approaches, however, were rooted in secularist cookie-cutter models employed with only limited success elsewhere. Such approaches tend to fail, in part, because they do not engage disenfranchised leaders (e.g. the Taliban) and because they lack culturally-relevant mechanisms for peace.

Following the formal defeat of al Qaeda and the Taliban in December 2001, wide-ranging efforts followed the Bonn Agreement to build Afghan institutions, invest in development and reconstruction, and ensure that Afghan citizens not only had livelihoods, human rights, and civil liberties, but also that violent jihadists no longer had a base to work from in Afghanistan.4 In 2003 the United Nations Development Program launched a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) campaign like those previously implemented in other post-conflict environments from the Balkans to Africa to Central America. It was titled the "Afghan New Beginnings Program" (ANBP). The goal was to demobilize the many armed competing power centers around the country, thus diluting the power of warlords and the potential for renewed conflict. ANBP had a budget of $140.9 million and a mandate to demoblilize 100,000 soldiers from the umbrella Afghan Militia Forces who helped topple the Taliban. Senior leaders were often co-opted by giving them high-ranking government positions (UNDP 2008).

Combatants who demobilized participated in a formal military ceremony, often with a military parade or review, handed in a weapon (often an antique model inferior to what they kept hidden), attended a seminar, and received compensation consisting primarily of food and clothing. The former militia members, after two decades of war, were to return to their families and become productive citizens. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice, over 62,000 former combatants, 11,000 children, and nearly 25,000 women were recipients of assistance through ANBP at a cost of $100 million. Moreover, much of the heavy weaponry (e.g. tanks) was turned in to cantonment sites (ICTJ 2008).

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4 Technically speaking, the ANBP program followed the Tokyo Donor conference of February 2003. Japan was to take the lead country on Security Sector Reform (as agreed in Bonn).

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A second phase of DDR began with Presidential Decree 50 in the summer of 2004. This declared any extant militias to be "illegally armed groups" and essentially was a final chance for such individuals and their leaders to demobilize. With the advent of national assembly elections the next year and concerns about Afghan security, a second formal program called Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) began. The "carrot" was that the leaders of illegally armed groups (regional and local militias) could participate in the elections if their groups disarmed; the "stick" was that those who had not/would not disband their fighting forces were barred from office. DIAG was largely unsuccessful except in a few cases.

Finally, it should be noted that the government of Afghanistan's Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) did adopt an Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice in December 2005 (AIHRC 2009). Four years later, there are few results, particularly as the security situation has deteriorated with a rebounding Taliban. The Action Plan called for a) formal remembrance of past victims of abuse, b) human rights (and corruption) vetting of government officials, c) truth seeking, d) reconciliation, and e) creation of a Task Force to recommend further measures (ICTJ 2008, 3).

It is worth noting that these approaches were all good faith efforts based on what was considered state-of-the art Western approaches to post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. There are numerous reasons why these approaches have not brought safety and security to Afghanistan, but one of them is simply that these efforts often did not take root because they lacked a cultural and religious relevancy to the local population. Secular human rights approaches, rather than those that appeal to the religious authority of Islam, seem unlikely to provide a firm foundation for respecting human rights in Afghanistan. Secular reconciliation efforts that disregard the cultural symbols of weapons and neglect the role of tribal and religious leaders in waging peace have proven their futility in engaging so-called "reconcilable" elements of the Taliban and other illegally armed groups. What is needed to complement other efforts is a religiously relevant approach to dialogue and reconciliation. Islamic concepts of arbitration and consultation may provide such an approach.

Reconciliation and Islam

There are multiple conflicts overlapping in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the violent Taliban and its al Qaeda associates attacking indigenous government and civilian centers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the intervention of NATO following the September 11, 2001 attacks and ongoing operations against insurgents in Afghanistan and Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal areas, the looming Kashmir question and stepped-up Islamist attacks in India, and the regional pressure of Shia Iran (long a rival to Sunnis and Hindu Indians alike), not to mention lethal criminality and warlordism. Many in the conflict justify their position based on their understanding of Islam. Thus, if there is to be reconciliation (as opposed to withdrawal or annihilation), Islamic theological and juridical resources need to be associated with practical political efforts.

The distinction between *dar al harb* and *dar al islam* is well-known. The latter refers to the world governed by Islam, the "abode of peace" where humanity is in right relationship to God and neighbor through submission to Islam. The former, the "abode of war," is that region, both temporal and moral, ungoverned by the law of Islam. Many believe—particularly those

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associated with violent Islamists like al Qaeda—that this portends and justifies violence against non-Muslims, at least in lands formerly conquered by Muslims or on the borders of Muslim countries. However, some (particularly from the al-Shafi school of jurisprudence) conceive of a third model, *dar al-sulh* or the *dar al-`ahd*, relationships of negotiated peace between Muslims and their neighbors (Johnson 2009).

From the time of Mohammed, Islam has had a tradition of arbitration and reconciliation, both internally and with non-Muslims: *sulh*. Mohammed (at times) sought peaceful accommodation with his Jewish and Christian neighbors and the fourth caliph—Ali—accepted arbitration (*tahkim*) with the governor of Syria over the objections of many of his hard-line supporters. The Quran and many jurists emphasize the importance of *sulh* as a binding contract for peace. (El Fadl 2003, 194-195). Muslims historically signed treaties with numerous non-Muslim neighbors, including Syria, Armenia, Cyprus, and Sudan (Nyang and Johnston 2003, 220). UCLA expert Khaled Abou El Fadl argues:

> Muslim jurists regularly cited the arbitration precedent in support of the desirability of negotiated settlements in political, commercial, and personal disputes. Although the arbitration incident sheds little light on recommended parameters of compromise, it does help to establish the normative value of compromise in Islamic political and legal discourse (El Fadl 2003, 185).

What of those who refuse to participate in efforts to resolve the conflict? According to El Fadl, the Quran (49:9) calls such people "transgressors" for violating the need for peace, and they are to be fought against:

> If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them. But if one of the parties transgresses against the other, then fight all against the transgressor until it complies with God's command. If it complies, then make peace between them with justice and fairness (El Fadl 184).

Furthermore, according to El Fadl, Islam does have a tradition of dealing with Muslim secessionists and rebels. If the rebels' underlying motivation is principled (*ta'wil*), "the rebels [were] to be treated leniently...they acquired a protected status known as *bughah*." Such rebels operated from an authentic normative commitment, not for the sake of violence itself, greed, kin- or tribal affiliation. El Fadl argues that conflict resolution—rather than battlefield domination or extermination—is the appropriate step with such rebels, providing them with a forum to air their grievances and attempting to reconcile them peacefully. Moreover, defeated rebels could not be "executed, tortured, or imprisoned" or lose their properties, but had to be reconciled to the community.5

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5 Ibid.

Towards Afghan Reconciliation in 2010

Billions of dollars have been spent by the UN and donor countries on Afghanistan and hundreds of millions provided in various forms of assistance to Pakistan. The international community has tried a variety of efforts to ensure a post-conflict future for Afghanistan that no longer threatens others and provides security, opportunity, and human rights protections for its citizens. In short, the West would like to get out and allow the locals to run their own affairs, assuming that Western citizens are safe from Islamist terrorism at home. The West should find a way forward that is culturally relevant, provides order, and reconciles many of the "accidental guerrillas" in Afghanistan and Pakistan while buttressing representative government, the rule of law, and human rights.

However, in some parts of the country violence has steadily increased in intensity over the past few years and the Obama Administration and its allies will send over 35,000 additional troops to Afghanistan in early 2010. Past efforts at reconciliation seem to have been unsuccessful, particularly in efforts under the influence of the Taliban. What are the prospects for some form of reconciliation, and what steps must be taken?

Assuming no game-changing event occurs (such as India invading Pakistan, Iran invading Herat, etc.), the Afghan government and its Western allies must try to achieve a basic level of security. Establishing a modest, durable security environment is the key to Afghanistan's future, and that future will have to include some sort of reconciliation with individuals and families that in the past have been associated with the Taliban—perhaps even senior figures in the Taliban.

That reconciliation must first be rooted in religiously and culturally relevant ideas, such as arbitration and consultation. Additionally, any arrangement that brings the Taliban in "from the cold" will have to be appealing enough to cause a reappraisal of their interests. That appraisal might be based on major military victories that leave the Taliban and its tribal allies stricken and on the verge of collapse, allowing its members to switch sides. A reframing of the Taliban's, and tribal, interests might include the opportunity for it to participate in governance, such as an evolution to being a political party. We have seen elsewhere how rebel groups can disband and become part of the political process, as occurred with Colombia's M-19 in 1991. Most importantly, however, such a "reframing" of its interests could take place in the context of arbitration (*sulh*) and/or a formal Afghan *loya jirga*.

Counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen, and others, argue that it is possible to strip away "second- and third-tier Taliban" from the hardened, "irreconcilable" leadership of the Taliban (and al Qaeda) (Kilcullen 2009). This may be accomplished primarily by reaching out to tribal leaders as points of authority rather than the Taliban's leadership, and could follow the first model of reconciliation noted above. For such to happen, there would need to be a reappraisal of interests combined with religiously-informed appeals to dialogue, not unlike what happened in Iraq's Sunni Awakening in 2007. In the Iraqi case, not only did the West commit to increasing security (through the "surge"), but tribal and religious leaders concluded that al Qaeda in Iraq was morally corrupt and that it was no longer in Sunni interests to avoid national reconciliation. A major summit of religious leaders—the Iraqi Interreligious Congress of July

2007 which included Muqtada al Sadr and dozens of other key religious figures—helped establish the basis for national reconciliation (Maki 2008).

Related efforts toward reconciliation could include religiously-relevant post-conflict efforts at justice and reconciliation, be it through a blanket amnesty rooted in "forgiveness" or like the model employed in East Timor. The government of East Timor had a two-tier transitional justice system. The first included a Special Crimes Investigation Unit and courts to try egregious crimes, defined in terms of the Rome Statute (war crimes), murder, and rape. However, the vast majority of East Timorese went before a separate juridical institution based in local communities, often including religious leaders. Perpetrators confessed their guilt publicly and were "sentenced" to modest community service. This quasi-amnesty allowed thousands to return to their homes while paying their debt to society and establishing the "truth" of what happened (Stahn 2001).

Conclusion

When the US negotiated peace with American Indians just a few years after the American Revolution, they used religiously-inspired, culturally relevant symbols to "bury the hatchet." However, the secularist approach to contemporary Western foreign and security policies has largely overlooked, or contemptuously disregarded, the highly religious context of war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan. This secularist bias, rooted in Western thinking on international relations and the appropriate role of disestablished (and therefore no longer dangerous) religion, has plagued our understanding of the dynamics of conflict and the possibilities of peace, from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 through the Afghanistan conflict of 2009.

What is to be done? One aspect of a religiously aware approach to ending conflict in the region is to engage theologically relevant approaches to mediation, arbitration, and consultation that are part of Islamic theology and history. In the case of Afghanistan, establishing a long-term peace that most Afghan citizens can embrace must include dialogue and reconciliation informed in part by Islamic principles. Moreover, it is likely that Muslim leadership on this issue (perhaps in the way that Malaysia has been a peace agent between Mindanao and Manila), such as through the offices of the Organization of Islamic Countries, may be the best way to mobilize religious resources to bury the hatchet in Afghanistan.

A Fatwa against Yoga: Mitigating Conflict in the Face of Increasing Fundamentalism in Indonesia

By Martin Ramstedt

Abstract

This article focuses on efforts at mitigating conflict that arose between the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholar (MUI) and the Bali-India Foundation (BIF) in the wake of the former's issuance of a fatwa against yoga in January 2009. These efforts occurred in the framework of an international yoga festival that was held in Bali in March 2009, attended by large numbers of Muslim yoga practitioners and teachers. The article explores the historical background and local context of the fatwa in order to provide a sound basis for the examination of the strategies employed in the actual mitigation of the conflict.

Why is there a Fatwa against Yoga?

Why would Muslim, or for that matter Christian or Jewish, clerics want to turn against Yoga? From Sarah Strauss' treatise on the *Positioning of Yoga: Balancing across Cultures*, we learn how "yoga has transformed from a regional, male-oriented religious activity to a globalized and largely secular" practice embraced by modern middle-class women and men in pursuit of physical health, psychological balance, and spiritual freedom. She discerned the beginnings of this metamorphosis in the work of Swami Vivekananda who, in the late 19th Century, was the first to disentangle the practice of yoga from the rigors of an ascetic lifestyle embedded in various Hindu and Buddhist traditions and to relocate it within the secular life-worlds of householders. Vivekananda's repackaging of yoga as a scientific method to attain health and freedom strongly influenced the teachings of other modern Indian gurus who recognized it as a means to universalize their spiritual messages. One of them was Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, the founder of the Divine Life Society, who turned yoga into a modern export product for both members of the Indian Diaspora and non-Indian audiences. Successfully implanted in the West from the 1950s onwards, yoga gradually attracted a wide array of followers looking for all kinds of things from alternative spirituality to fitness and stress-reduction. The concomitant proliferation of yoga styles range from decidedly spiritual forms of Raja Yoga or Kundalini Yoga to purely secular forms such as Beryl Birch's Power Yoga (Strauss 2005, xix, 2-3, 4, 5-6, 8, 36, 47-51, 96-100, 115-124, 126-130).

The recent blending of yoga into the global wellness trend has entailed the "re-import" of therapeutic forms of yoga to contemporary spas and fitness centers in Asia. The trend has even reached the Muslim world. In 2006, the Egyptian tourist agency T.E.N. Tours organized its first International Yoga Festival at El Gouna on the Red Sea. Officially opened by the Indian Ambassador to Egypt, the festival lasted one week and attracted more than 200 yoga

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practitioners and teachers from all over the world, offering meditation at the beach, Hatha yoga, Tai Chi, and macrobiotics classes. The success of the festival was repeated in consecutive festivals organized along the same line, including chanting of "universal" Hindu mantras at the pyramids and performances by international spiritual musicians. The fourth festival in the series was held in 2009 in a Marriot Hotel at the Dead Sea in Jordan.

The origins of the festival go back to 1992, when Egypt and India started a bilateral cultural exchange program which led to the establishment of an Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in the Indian Embassy in Cairo offering language courses, art programs and yoga classes to Egyptian citizens. Dr. Prabhakar Madhikar, a charismatic yoga teacher from Hyderabad, was brought over to teach the yoga classes, and his scientific approach attracted local doctors, journalists, academics, and other professionals. Eventually, he opened his own yoga rehabilitation practice in Cairo. Madhikar's successful introduction of yoga to Egyptian urban middle-class society was underscored by the production of a TV series on yoga broadcasted on 9 international sports channels throughout the Arab World.

This development, however, roused the suspicion of Egyptian Muslim scholars, and in 2004, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gomaa, issued a fatwa against yoga for its Hindu provenience (Solomon 2006). The Grand Mufti's fatwa was incidentally not the first Islamic legal opinion against yoga. Already back in 1984, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore had issued a fatwa, which was the first ever to forbid Muslims to practice forms of yoga that contain elements of Hindu ritual such as the chanting of mantras. Completely secularized forms of yoga, however, were permitted under the condition that they would only be practiced for health reasons. With the participation of Hindu practitioners and Buddhist lamas in the T.E.N. Tours' Yoga Festivals, it is obvious that this conditionality was not met in Egypt. It is therefore not surprising that the festivals have taken place in the face of more or less overt anti-yoga sentiments on the part of Egyptian religious leaders.

Four years after the ban of yoga for Muslims in Egypt, the 83rd National Fatwa Council of Malaysia, held in Kota Baru from 22-24 October 2008, also formally declared the practice of yoga as *haram* and hence forbidden for Muslims. While yoga classes throughout Malaysia are generally filled with citizens of Indian and Chinese descent, it has become increasingly common for Muslim women to join in too. Even Malaysian Muslim men have started to explore yoga. According to a BBC report, some Muslims have appreciated the calming effects of yoga to the extent that they have even combined it with their daily prayers (Brant 2008). It is understandable that such a development would rouse the concern of the Malaysian Fatwa Council.

At an official press conference on 22 November 2008, broadcasted by Malaysia's *The Star Online TV*, Malaysian Fatwa Council Chairman Datuk Dr. Abdul Shukor Husin stressed that yoga consists of three elements: physical movements, worshipping, and chanting. While the mere physical movements of yoga might not be wrong, worshipping in form of meditation geared to unifying oneself with God and the chanting of mantras would definitely "destroy" (Malay *merusak*) the *aqidah* or foundation of the Islamic creed and are hence in opposition to the Shari'a. Since one thing would usually lead to another, the practice of yoga is not likely to stop at mere physical movements. Muslims should therefore not engage in it at all.

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The fatwa raised strong criticism even from among Malaysian Muslims. For instance, the internationally renowned Malaysian Muslim scholar and long-time yoga practitioner Farish Ahmad-Noor rejected the fatwa on three grounds (Noor 2008):

(1) Millions of Europeans have practiced yoga without converting to Hinduism;

(2) Yoga practices including indigenous forms of massage have been part of Southeast Asian cultures for four thousand years. Both Malaysian and Indonesian Muslims still regularly practice pre-Islamic pressure-point massage, so why make a fuss about yoga;

(3) The fatwa closes down yet another neutral civic space where Malaysians could meet and interact beyond denominational, ethnic, and political ties.

The Malaysian fatwa was indeed passed at a time when the substantial number of non-Muslim Malaysians, e.g. Hindus, Buddhists and Christians of Indian and Chinese descent, were protesting against increasing government-sponsored Islamization (Patung 2007).

The Indonesian fatwa against yoga that soon followed the Malaysian one was issued in a very similar socio-political climate. Three days after the Malaysian Fatwa Council's official press conference on 25 November 2008, the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (MUI) convened a closed meeting on the matter of yoga. Ma'ruf Amin, Head of MUI's Fatwa Department, stated to the press that in the following two weeks, the Council would inspect several yoga centers in Jakarta, Bandung, and Bali, such as the Sai Baba centers, the Hare Krishna centers, and the Bali-India Foundation (BIF), in order to form a legal opinion on whether the courses offered there would contain elements of Hindu ritual. Amin exhorted those among the Indonesian Muslim community who were practicing yoga to stop while the investigation was underway. During the annual convention of Muslim Scholars in Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, from 24-26 January 2009, MUI finally issued a fatwa against yoga together with other *fatawa*

Naturally, the fatwa against yoga was a major topic at the first International Yoga Festival organized by the BIF, which had been one of the yoga centers investigated by MUI. Taking place in Denpasar from 3-10 March 2009, the festival attracted some 1,200 participants. The overwhelming majority were Indonesian, i.e. Hindu Balinese, Buddhist Indonesian-Chinese, Muslim Javanese and Muslim Sundanese, yoga practitioners, and teachers representing altogether 5,000 yoga students in Java and Bali. Dr. Acharya Laxmi Narayan, Director of the Yoga Research Institute in Rishikesh and Head of the Department of Yogic Science at SJRS College in Rishikesh, India, together with his assistant Apitha, Master of Yogic Science, and Dr. Yadav Somvir, the naturalized Indian founder and director of BIF, were advocating a universalized and science-oriented form of yoga, while a number of Balinese Hindu leaders as well as Balinese students of the Indian-derived Ananda Marga sect represented localized versions of Hatha yoga. An American yoga teacher, an American ethno-musicological researcher, a Dutch Muslim, and a Dutch film team documenting the festival were the only international audience. Like the international yoga festivals in Egypt, the BIF festival had scheduled a number of different activities, such as a yoga competition, an exhibition of spiritual paintings by Balinese, Javanese and Western artists, yoga-dance performances, yoga and ayurvedic classes as well as a yoga teachers' training course. The success of the festival was

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marked by the foundation of the first national yoga network, the Indonesian Yoga Association representing 30 yoga centers in Bali, Java, and Lombok.

However, the fatwa against yoga did constitute a major concern especially for the attending Muslim yoga practitioners and teachers. Given the recurrent Islamist violence in Indonesia, the fatwa threatened not only them but also BIF as an institution supposedly garnering Muslims to the practice of yoga. To preempt such accusations, Somvir had invited Dr. H. Salman Harun, Professor of Tarbiyah (i.e. Education and Upbringing) and Director of Multi-Faith Education at the National Islamic University in Jakarta, to give the keynote address and a seminar on the relationship between Islam and yoga scheduled for the third day of the festival. Somvir had also invited Dr. H. Utang Ranuwijaya, Head of MUI's Research Department who had led the investigation of the yoga centers, to a roundtable on the seventh day of the festival to alleviate the existing tensions between BIF and MUI. As I was allotted the task of moderating both Harun's seminar and the roundtable discussion with Ranuwijaya, I was in a privileged position to closely follow the different lines of reasoning and the final settlement of the dispute at the end of the roundtable. In the following I would like to provide some background information about the two disputants and then proceed with a more detailed account on the various efforts of mitigating conflict during the festival.

MUI as Motor of the Islamization of Indonesian Society

MUI was founded in 1975 as a governance tool of ex-President Suharto's New Order regime. It was tasked with providing Islamic support and legitimacy for Suharto's development policies, involving the issuance of *fatawa* as binding legal opinions for the heterogeneous Indonesian Muslim community. Additionally, MUI was to keep a check on the formation of political Islam throughout the country. With branches and committees at all levels of administration, MUI's arm reached down to every locale with a Muslim constituency even in areas with a predominantly Christian or Hindu population, like North Sulawesi or Bali. Being a state-controlled institution, MUI's members were appointed by the government and consisted of representatives of ten independent Muslim organizations and of the Islamic Spiritual Civil Service as well as the spiritual offices of the Indonesian military and police. It is noteworthy that MUI's *fatawa* often clashed with the views of the majority of Indonesian Muslims (Ramage 1998, 29; Hosen 2004; Hooker 2008, 30).

When ex-President Suharto accorded Islam more normative and institutional recognition in 1989 in connection with a major shift of his inner-Indonesian political alliances, a thorough Islamization process of Indonesia's state law and multi-faith society set in that has gained further momentum after the economic, political and legitimatory break down of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998 (Hosen 2007; Hooker 2008; Salim 2008; and Ramstedt forthcoming). At the same time, Indonesian Islam, which had hitherto been renowned for its moderate and occasionally syncretistic nature as well as its tolerance towards other faiths, has become much more radical, orthodox, and discriminatory. MUI has been one of the main motors of this process in an effort to detach itself from the tainted image of having been a puppet of the Suharto regime. This is borne out by a whole series of recent *fatawa* (Menchik

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2007, 1-2). Suffice it to mention here the fatwa against pluralism, liberalism and secularization of religion, the fatwa against interfaith prayer, and the fatwa against religiously mixed marriages. Together with the fatwa against yoga, these *fatawa* have helped to cement the boundaries between the different faith communities in Indonesia, which has resulted in a socio-political climate that seems to be less and less conducive to interfaith dialogue.

Since the fall of Suharto, MUI has indeed gained greater independence from the government and a stronger public profile, not the least because of two prestigious projects: (1) a Halal Certification and Assurance System; and (2) a strong involvement in the overseeing of Islamic banking.

BIF and the Practice of Yoga in Indonesia

Somvir, the founder of BIF, first came to Indonesia at the beginning of the 1990s, drawn to the country for its ancient Indian heritage and studying the Old Javanese rendition of the ancient Indian epic Ramayana. After having obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Delhi, he was requested as lecturer of Sanskrit, Hindi, and Hindu studies at Udayana University in Denpasar. A born communicator, he was able to forge relations across the factions of contemporary Indonesian Hinduism and closely cooperated with Indonesian Muslim scholars as well as Buddhist and Christian intellectuals. His being so well-connected eventually earned him the position of Director of the first Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in Bali, opened in 2004. Like all the other Indian Cultural Centers representing the Indian Council for Cultural Relations throughout the world, it has offered courses in traditional Indian music and dance, yoga, as well as classes and exhibitions on Indian art and culture.

After a couple of years, Somvir retired from the ICC in order to realize his long-standing aspiration to build a full-fledged yoga ashram where Indonesians could study yoga, ayurvedic medicine, and the benefits of simple living. Coming from a farmer's family in rural Hariyana, Somvir had entered one of the Arya Samaj boarding schools (*gurukul*) as a young boy, where he had obtained a good grounding in a yoga-based life-style. He had passed through his school years with excellence and then entered the well-known Gurukul Kangri University founded, in 1902, by Swami Shraddhananda, a member of the Arya Samaj, in the pilgrimage town of Hardwar. After his master's degree, he moved on to the University of Delhi where he began a more academic and less religion-oriented life-style. He nevertheless retained a close relationship to Swami Agnivesh who is arguably the most distinguished leader of the Arya Samaj today. Agnivesh has gained an international reputation for his campaigns against bonded labor, child labor, female feticide, and alcoholism, which have earned him an appointment as chairperson of the UN Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. When I visited Agnivesh together with Somvir in 2000, he was also engaged in international interfaith relations initiated by Hans Küng.

Inspired by Agnivesh's engagement for social justice, Somvir has felt particular concern for the Balinese and Indian youth negatively affected by the so-called blessings of modernity. He set up BIF to remind people of their spiritual heritage and to provide them with low-tech but effective means to lead a healthy life. As can be gleaned from BIF's website, alongside yoga, BIF

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also promotes the indigenous art and culture of Bali and India as a way to cultivate harmonious exchange and peace among people across the boundaries of class, caste, nationality, and religion.

Like other yoga teachers who have modeled their spiritual enterprises after that of the international Divine Life Society, the headquarters of which is based in Rishikesh, a town some 24 kilometers away from Haridwar, Somvir has presented yoga very much along the lines of Swami Vivekananda's exposition. He thus uses somewhat dereligionized, if still spiritual rhetoric interspersed with scientific metaphors in order to promote yoga as a universal and rational practice to achieve health, balance and contentment in life (cf. Strauss 2005, 2, 3, 6, 12-14, 20, 33-51; also McKean 1996, 13, 51, 52, 174-180, 182-184).

Again like other successful promoters of yoga as body-mind therapy, Somvir has skillfully used the forums provided by local mass media. For some years already, he has been running his own one hour-long yoga program on Bali televison broadcasted every Sunday morning. Moreover, he publishes a glossy bi-monthly magazine, which is available in major bookshops throughout Indonesia. He has furthermore cooperated closely with well-known Indonesian dancers and actors. Due to his popularity, he has frequently been invited to teach yoga in different places throughout the country, including the Muhammadiyah University in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

Apart from the yoga courses offered by more or less spiritual or even outright religious institutions such as BIF or the Gandhi Ashram dependencies in Bali and Java, more and more Indonesian tourist resorts and fitness centers also offer yoga classes to their cosmopolitan clients. The yoga styles presented in these classes do vary according to the respective teacher employed, who might be a Westerner or a local with excellent English language skills. However, the classes are thoroughly secular in the sense that no religious trappings are introduced to clients. Most teachers even refrain from introducing breathing exercises and meditation to their classes.

A different matter is the annual BaliSpirit Festival combining yoga, dance and music workshops. It has been organized by arty Western expats in Ubud, Bali, since 2008. Predominantly catering to an international clientele interested in yoga and alternative healing, the BaliSpirit Festival is explicitly dedicated to "creative and spiritual diversity".

Mitigating Conflict

The fatwa against yoga seemed to have united the different Hindu factions within Bali, as both traditionalists, represented for instance by the yoga group of the Balinese Brahmin priest Ida Padanda Made Gunung from Kemenuh, and modernists, represented amongst others by the low-caste6 Ubud-based Balinese yoga teacher Ketut Suambara, were attending the festival in relatively large numbers. Harun's keynote address was enthusiastically received. Taking a stance

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6 While the four castes, into which the different Balinese descent groups have traditionally been classified, are not officially recognized any more, they still play an unofficial role in contemporary daily life.

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similar to that of his Malaysian colleague Farish Ahmad-Noor, he underscored the trans-cultural and trans-religious benefits of yoga. In his seminar a few days later, Harun further refuted any contradictions between Islam and yoga, starting off with a comparison between the physical movements of the Sun Salutation, a major yoga exercise, and those of the salat, the daily Islamic prayer. He even referred to the postures of the salat as simple yoga. Dhyana, or meditation, he compared to the practices of Tafakur (contemplation) or Zikr (remembrance of God) in Sufism.

Harun's seminar was attended by about 30 yoga teachers, most of whom had an Islamic background. They mainly requested further details on the parallels between Sufism and yoga. One participant added that the Hadith would even mention the medicinal qualities of herbs and honey. Islam would hence have something comparable to ayurvedic medicine. The seminar ended with Harun emphasizing that the contemplation of the commonalities between traditions rather than their differences would be more appropriate for Indonesians because of the multi-cultural and multi-religious constitution of their society.

The roundtable discussion with Ranuwijaya was tactfully scheduled several days after Harun's seminar in order to preclude any embarrassment that might have resulted from a direct encounter between two speakers with such different takes on the relationship between Islam and yoga. A bodyguard in civilian clothes accompanied the MUI representative, who visibly relaxed in the course of the discussion attended by some fifty participants, who in turn kept a respectful and non-aggressive demeanor throughout the whole event. Ranuwijaya related how the MUI research commission had classified the yoga courses under investigation into three categories: (1) courses that would be completely enmeshed in Hindu ritual; (2) courses that would involve meditation, the chanting of mantras, and the affirmation of universal spiritual values; and (3) courses that would present yoga as a kind of gymnastics purely intended for health benefits.

While the first two categories would be forbidden for Muslims, the last one would be allowed in principle, provided that women and men would be in separate classes, and that the women would be decently dressed. Should the organization of separate classes not be feasible, then the minimal solution would be that the men practice in the front rows and the women in the rear. The professed goal of many yoga practitioners to attain union with God in meditation was anathema to Ranuwijaya. Should meditation be part of an otherwise purely secular yoga class, then Muslim practitioners are to practice Zikr instead. He further denounced the practice of Sun Salutations and the Lotus posture as unfitting for Muslims, because they would be religious in nature. He concluded by exhorting the Muslim participants, some of whom had appeared in veil and sports clothes, to choose only yoga classes of the third category.

Given the fact that the yoga classes at BIF usually included short meditations ending with the chanting of mantras, it was clear that MUI deemed them unfitting for Muslims. Somvir, however, tried to settle the dispute with MUI by openly accepting Ranuwijaya's conditions pertaining to a form of yoga permitted for Muslims, asserting that henceforth there would be no chanting of mantras, and that Muslim participants would be advised by all teachers of the newly founded Indonesian Yoga Association to practice Zikr during meditation periods. He further suggested that BIF and MUI should maintain communication on this issue. Ranuwijaya

departed with a final approval of Somvir's acknowledgment of MUI's conditions, and communication has henceforth been maintained between the two institutions.

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Conclusion

MUI's categorization of the different yoga formats echoes the distinctions drawn by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and the Malaysian Fatwa Council. In the face of the known attempts of some Indian yoga teachers at winning adherents of other faiths over to the universalized spiritual values of Neo-Hinduism (McKean 1996), MUI's position seems justified. At the same time, the fatwa against yoga testifies to MUI's propensity for a complete segregation of the different faith communities in Indonesia, which ultimately undermines pluralist civil society. This is all the more alarming as it mirrors similar attempts elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

In the different attitudes of Harun and Somvir towards the fatwa, we encounter two different strategies of extenuating the potential for interfaith conflict that springs from fundamentalist attitudes emphasizing the exclusivity of traditions. While Harun tried to build theological bridges between different traditions by pointing to structural and typological similarities between them, Somvir accepted absolute difference and then negotiated an agreement on the basis of what seemed possible under the circumstances.

In BIF's official dealings with MUI, Somvir's strategy was probably the more successful one. Harun's position, however, demonstrated to the participants of the yoga festival that contemporary Islam is not monolithic. It obviously prevented some participants from denouncing Islam as a whole. Both strategies therefore worked in favor of a peaceful settlement of the dispute between BIF and MUI.

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Until the Violence Stops: Faith, Sexual Violence, and Peace in the Congo

By Kayla Parker and Amanda Winters

Abstract

Although many of the world's religions are thought to debase women, progressive faith traditions and practices empower females as a means of attaining justice and thereby, peace. The brutal violence experienced by the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has summoned many religious people to come together in the pursuit of peace and justice. The Religious Institute's Congo Sabbath Initiative is one such instance of faith traditions allying to advocate for an end to the sexual violence in the DRC. The success of the Congo Sabbath Initiative can be replicated as people of faith continue to forge the path to peace.

I. Until the Violence Stops

"Eastern Congo right now is the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman or a girl. Used as a weapon of war, sexual violence and rape exist on a scale seen nowhere else in the world" (Ensler, Glamour). Upon learning of these violent injustices towards women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Religious Institute felt compelled to mobilize its national network of faith communities to awareness and advocacy. The result was the Congo Sabbath Initiative, which not only provided assistance to organizations working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but also raised awareness about the negative effects many wars and institutions can have on women worldwide.

II. Religion & Women

Religion is often regarded as a root cause of the second-class status of women around the globe (Kristof, 2010). There are indeed many religious texts, laws and interpretations that prevent females in the modern world from reaching their full potential. In the New Testament, St. Paul states that women "must be silent" (Timothy, 1:2). In one Orthodox Jewish prayer, males thank God for not making them a woman (*Birkot HaShachar*). The Koran says that the inheritance of female children should be half that of their brothers (4.11, 4.176).

Many of these texts were originally written to give women increased power in a patriarchal system, not take it away from them. For example, the Koranic law which states that male children are entitle to double the inheritance of female children was actually in place to assure that women received money from their deceased parents. Muslim scholar Dr. Kecia Ali explains that laws relating to inheritance and dowry were actually used to restrain the male power that was pervasive in the culture at the time (Ali, 2003).

Unfortunately, the literal interpretations of religious codes often reverse their original intent (Scovill, 2008). Many women today hold leadership roles in politics, yet are often unable

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to become leaders in their own faiths (Carter, 2009). In Ireland, where most citizens are Roman Catholic, Mary McAleese has been president since 1997 (Ireland Country Profile, BBC). Yet Catholic women are unable to be ordained as priests (*Lumen Gentium* 25:2). It is dubious that any of the prophets envisioned a world where women's progress is prevented.

Nelson Mandela's chosen group of global leaders, The Elders, is currently working on seven projects consisting of five regionally and two thematically based initiatives. One of the two thematic projects is to end the religious and traditional basis for the discrimination against women ("Our Work: Latest Initiatives", The Elders). This choice in subject indicates the gravity of the marginalization of women, mirroring the importance that the United Nations placed on this topic with the creation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979 (UN-CEDAW, 2007). Hopefully, The Elders and those with whom they engage will be able to begin the many changes necessary for this injustice to be rectified. Former President Jimmy Carter, himself a member of the select group, addressed the marginalization of women at the Parliament of the World's Religions' December 2009 conference. In addition to outlining the wrongs religions have done and continue to do to women, he reminded attendees, "every generic religious text encourages believers to respect essential human dignity" (Carter, 2009).

III. Religion & Peace

It is this deep sense of common humanity, expressed by former President Carter, that motivates people of faith to advocate for the rights of women and end discrimination and injustices everywhere. Religious leaders are often at the forefront of social justice projects; through these initiatives they work for peace. This notion of justice as a step towards peace was articulated by Pope Paul VI, who stated, "If you want peace, work for justice." Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh develops this concept further, stating, "There will be no peace where there is no justice and no justice where human persons do not have basic human rights." He points out that religious leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela, "who have worked successfully for peace have worked first of all for justice" (Hesburgh, 1956).

In order to attain peace, justice must be found. Peace is not a white dove that lackadaisically floats into a community. It requires work to attain and maintain, and is not sustainable in systems where injustice occurs. Therefore, peace advocates such as Dr. King identified and isolated issues such as racism and poverty, which were preventing his society from being peaceful. Dr. King then worked tirelessly to change the culture and legal systems maintaining this injustice. Religiously motivated peace advocates across the globe work towards their goals by advocating for justice (Hesburgh, 1956). The DRC is one nation that has been the object of global activists' attention in recent years, where many individuals and organizations have been devoted to creating peace.

IV. Brutality and Sexual Violence Against Women in the DRC

The DRC was blessed and cursed with natural resources that have long been the object of other nations' desires. As a Belgian colony from 1880-1960, the DRC's natural mineral and

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human resources were exploited through slave labor under autocratic rule (Center for American Progress, 2009).

Upon independence in 1960, the entire army rebelled against the newly formed government, which secessionist movements also threatened. Five years later, Mobutu Sesse Seko became ruler through a successful coup. He ruled with brutality and corruption for thirty-two years. It is estimated that from 1965 to 1997, Mobutu stole five billion dollars from his country. In 1994, the Rwandan genocide occurred. Mobutu not only provided shelter and protection to the nation's two million refugees in Eastern DRC, but also a safe haven for the armed forces who had conducted the genocide. This bold move caused Rwanda and Uganda to invade the DRC in 1996 to gain control of their rebel forces (Center for American Progress, 2009).

In 1997, DRC rebel leader Laurent-Desire Kabila ousted Mobutu and eradicated the strong Rwandan influences in the government. This caused Rwanda and Uganda to invade again, this time to support the Rwandan rebels they had originally fought against. Upon their second invasion, the foreign forces became very interested in the natural mineral resources of the East Congo and wanted to control and exploit the area. In order to protect his land, Kabila recruited forces from Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia. These forces stopped the invasion, and a ceasefire stating that everyone would exit the DRC was signed in 1999, but was violated by every party (Center for American Progress, 2009).

In 2001, Kabila was assassinated, and his son Joseph Kabila came into power. Under his rule, the government appeared to improve, but the war had simply adopted alternate forms to become less noticeable. Crimes against civilians were used as a tactic to create fear, gain control, and achieve ethnic cleansing. Sexual violence against women was among these civilian-target methods and became increasingly common (Center for American Progress, 2009). Disabling or killing the female population would remove power from their families and societies. Most forces involved in the conflict used sexual violence as a war tactic, some as a systematic procedure. Women who traveled for work were susceptible to being raped outside, and those who were forced out of their homes and into forest safe houses became easy targets. Yet many women were raped in their homes, some with entire families in the same room. Girls as young as three months and women as old as eighty were victims, some taken to army bases and forced to be sex slaves and perform domestic labor. Some were raped and then killed, others left to die shortly after or live a life of disease, injury, disability, and shame (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Although Kabila is now the leader of a democratic nation, the DRC continues to have a weak government. The conflicting armed forces remain, continuing their hidden war through brutality against women (Center for American Progress, 2009). Police officers, other authority figure, and common criminals are also predators in this climate of sexual violence, enabling the cycle to continue. In many cases, such acts were actually rewarded by leadership and patronage (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

There seem to be few systems that are supporting and advocating for women, and those that are have not been effective enough to fulfill this great need. Many women feel as though they cannot admit to having been victims of rape due to social stigmas (Human Rights Watch,

2002). Laws do little to assist these women, and medical assistance is hard to attain. Since the beginning of these conflicts in 1994, it is estimated that over 200,000 women and girls have been raped (Center for American Progress, 2009).

V. Religious Communities' Call to Action

These statistics and stories should be unacceptable to those of every faith tradition and should call those with deeply rooted religious values to create peace and advocate for justice. However, the situation is overwhelming, and the average individual has little power over the way of the world. As Episcopalian Timothy Palmer wrote in his sermon on the DRC, "Certainly crimes against humanity *should* be addressed from the pulpit. But once I tell you what I know about horrific crimes taking place in a remote country, what then? The more I learn about the Congo the more powerless I feel." He compares himself with the Christian messenger Elisha, who suddenly finds himself in the midst of war and immediately asks another, "What shall we do" (Palmer, 2009)? When people of faith are overwhelmed by the grandiosity of a terrifying situation, they feel small. Then they look to join their voices with others and find that together they can advocate for justice.

Several religious organizations developed service projects focused on women of the DRC, for example: Catholic Relief Services, Episcopal Relief and Development, Lutheran World Relief, Presbyterian Church (USA) Worldwide Missions, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), World Jewish Relief and World Relief (Evangelical) (Religious Institute). It is clear from the projects and their language that it is these organizations' religious convictions that drive them to do this work. Their beliefs that we are all related and are children of God who deserve love and care spur them to begin these projects and give them the strength to see them through. Although some may seem to proselytize or look down upon those who need assistance, most simply feel called to assist others because of our common humanity (Episcopal Relief & Development Lutheran World Relief, and World Relief cite human rights and dignity regardless of belief as motivation in their mission statements).

UMCOR eloquently explains this sentiment in the "Values" section of their website. It reads, "All people have God-given dignity and worth. The most essential partner in UMCOR's work is the beneficiary, the ultimate end-user of our service. There are no 'victims' in our vocabulary. There are only survivors whose courage, along with a humanitarian helping hand, can transform communities" (UMCOR). This belief that individuals are sacred inspires them to empower others. They travel to the Congo and aid women, not because their damaged bodies and souls will be easy targets of conversion, but because they feel connected to the pain of others and must work to restore justice for all in order for peace to prevail.

VI. The Religious Institute's Multifaith Response to the Crisis in the DRC

The Religious Institute, like many organizations, recognized the need for public awareness of the atrocities against women in the DRC. Believing that faith leaders can be powerful moral advocates in their communities, the Religious Institute called upon them to take action against the sexual violence occurring in the DRC.

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The Congo Sabbath Initiative was launched by the Religious Institute, in partnership with V-Day, UNICEF, and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict in January 2009. The mission of the project was to educate faith communities about the horror of sexual violence against women and girls in the DRC and turn them into advocates for change. The Religious Institute received endorsements for the initiative from fifty-three national religious leaders of many different faith traditions and organizations (Congo Sabbath: National Endorsers). With these endorsements, the Religious Institute called upon congregations in the United States to respond to the women's crisis in the DRC by acting within their faith communities.

By committing to host a Congo Sabbath, congregations agreed to participate in an advocacy activity around V-Day and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This activity varied by congregation but often included holding a worship service, hosting an adult education class, or raising funds for the City of Joy at Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, Congo--a center where women survivors receive medical treatment, education, leadership training, and a chance to earn income. The Religious Institute recruited more than 140 communities nationwide to host a Congo Sabbath and developed an online advocacy toolkit to assist them in developing their event. This web-based guide included worship resources—a responsive reading, a bulletin insert, a sample newsletter article, and sample sermons—as well as links to other information and resources on the DRC.

In addition to maintaining a strong partnership with V-Day throughout the project, the Religious Institute reached out to other national partners to raise awareness. National religious denominations, such as the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Methodist Church, the National Council of Churches, the United Church of Christ, and the Disciples of Christ, featured the Congo Sabbath Initiative on their websites. Enough!, a project of the Center for American Progress, also posted the project on their resources page.

The Congo Sabbath Initiative provided an opportunity for the Religious Institute to reach out to religious organizations that typically do not work on sexual violence issues. *Sojourners* magazine, which focuses mainly on issues of poverty and the environment, featured a full-length article on the Congo Sabbath in its April 2009 issue. Faith in Public Life reached out to their extensive list of progressive clergy and people of faith to ask them to join the Congo Sabbath Initiative. More than eighty faith communities responded, and this joint effort helped the Religious Institute reach its goal of recruiting more than one hundred congregations to participate.

The Congo Sabbath Initiative was uniquely positioned to help and empower women because it was a faith-based, grassroots effort. Too often denominations offer policy statements that result in neither the education of congregants nor the mobilization of communities for justice. Bypassing institutional statements allowed individual congregations to participate without cumbersome bureaucracy. Additionally, the grassroots nature of the initiative allowed congregations to address current events, rather than waiting months or years for an institutional response.

In light of the immense challenge to justice and peace that the sexual violence in the DRC poses, the goals of the Congo Sabbath Initiative seem lofty. Holding 140 Congo Sabbaths across the United States cannot stop the violence in the DRC, regardless of fundraising. But, as Rabbi

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Shelley Kovar Becker notes, "You do not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds...We need to do something, even if the only thing we can do is to rail against this" (Hill, 2009). The Congo Sabbath Initiative was a way for congregations to reach out to a marginalized community and become conversant and aware of the crisis. Becoming aware is the first step toward action. As King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963). The knowledge that these atrocities occur will help prevent them from reoccurring.   Congregants become advocates against the prejudices within their own communities that enable these hate crimes. It also allows combating crimes against women in the DRC to become a common cause, making it easier for the region to receive donations, grants and aid.

VII. Using the Congo Sabbath Initiative as a Model

The Congo Sabbath Initiative provides a powerful model for multi-faith outreach. In the Congo Sabbath Initiative, the Religious Institute highlighted a problem facing the world, found national religious leaders to recognize the importance of action, and provided resources needed by leaders from different faiths to advocate within their congregations. With the average size of faith communities in the United States being 186 congregants (U.S. Congregations Resources), every faith leader that participates in the initiative creates a ripple effect that magnifies the impact.

Building on the success of the Congo Sabbath Initiative, the Religious Institute has launched the Rachel Sabbath Initiative, named for the matriarch Rachel who died in childbirth. The Rachel Sabbath Initiative supports the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal 5 (End Poverty 2015: Millennium Development Goals), which focuses on improving maternal health. The Religious Institute is calling on congregations and denominations across a range of faith traditions to raise awareness and support for the UN's target of reducing maternal mortality worldwide and achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015.   In the year 2010, the Religious Institute hopes that increasing numbers of faith leaders will reach out to their congregations in support of saving women's lives worldwide, and the Rachel Sabbath Initiative will be the first step towards achieving this goal.

VIII. Religions Coming Together for Women's Peace in the DRC

While religion today often has a reputation of subjugating women, progressive faith traditions have worked to empower them. Numerous faith traditions affirm women's rights as human rights. This dedication to women's rights is reinforced by the idea that one must advocate for justice to create peace. The sexual war crimes against women occurring in the DRC have called upon the world's religions to raise their voices to stop the violence. The Religious Institute's Congo Sabbath Initiative is one example of many different faith traditions coming together to educate their communities and promote peace. This model of the Congo Sabbath Initiative can be used for future campaigns to promote peace and justice in the world. Until all of the violence stops.

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Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Method of Peace-Building in Israel and Palestine
By Rabbi Dr. Ronald Kronish

Abstract

Interreligious Dialogue is understood as a method of peace-building—bringing people together to learn to live in peace -- which is different than peace-making, whereby politicians and diplomats develop peace treaties between governments. In Israel and Palestine, we are engaged in interreligious dialogue in the midst of conflict, which means that we are not "resolving" the macro conflict, but are mitigating and managing it through our dialogue and educational programs. In recent years, we have embarked on pioneering programs which engage youth, young adults, religious leaders, women and educators in this process. Through our grass-roots educational work, we have developed a four-part model which combines personal encounter and interreligious learning, with discussion of core issues of the conflict and action projects. We believe that this model can resonate with many people in this field in Israel and Palestine and around the world.

Introduction

During the past eighteen years, I have been actively engaged in the grass-roots work of inter-religious dialogue and education. While this work has had its share of ups and downs, successes and obstacles, challenges and setbacks, I can say that without a doubt, I have learned a great deal about the role of dialogue in peace-building in our part of the world by trial and error and by persistence and partnership with key organizations.7
This article will be divided into three parts:

1. A theoretical section on the importance of peace-building programs as a supplemental and parallel track to peace-making political processes
2. A description of some of the most important peace-building programs that we have implemented with some success in Israel and Palestine in recent years, with a special focus on programs for youth and young adults
3. A new model, which is an outgrowth of our "best practices" in this field in our region in recent years.

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7 Over the years, my organization, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, has partnered with the World Conference of Religions for Peace www.religionsforpeace.org, the Face-to-Face program of the Auburn Theological Seminary www.auburnsem.org/multifaith/faithtofaith.asp?nsectionid=4&pageid=4 , the St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in London www.stethelburgas.org/ , and Risho Kosei-kai in Japan www.rk-world.org/ .

Section One—on peace-building, peace-making, and conflict resolution/management/mitigation/transformation

We are often asked—sometimes cynically—whether our inter-religious dialogue and action programs will solve the Middle East conflict. All too often people feel that all dialogue must be political or diplomatic and that only such processes will actually solve our core problems in Israel and Palestine.

Accordingly, it is important to state at the outset what the purpose of inter-religious dialogue is and should be in our political context. In order to do this, we want to draw an important distinction between "peace-making" activities and "peace-building" programs.

"Peace-making" is the work of the lawyers, politicians and diplomats. The goal of those who engage in such work is to create peace treaties between governments, what one of my colleagues calls "pieces of paper". While acknowledging the importance of these political/diplomatic processes, we need to be mindful of their limitations. Once these documents are prepared and agreements are reached, public ceremonies take place with lots of fanfare, publicity, and photo-opportunities. They are considered "historic" and offer new frameworks and possibilities for the peoples suffering through an intractable conflict for many years, even many decades. After the agreements are signed, sealed and delivered, both sides spend the next several years blaming the other side for not living up to its part in the agreement (in the case of the Oslo Accords signed on September 13, 1993 on the White House lawn, this has been the case for the past 17 years). This is the work of lawyers and politicians, who constantly remind each side of the supposedly legally binding nature of the agreement and the obligations of the other side to live up to the agreement.

"Peace-building,"8 on the other hand, is not the work of diplomats or politicians. Rather, it is the work of rabbis, imams, priests, educators, social workers and psychologists, who bring people together to enter into dialogical and educational processes that are aimed at helping people figure out how to live in peace with each other. This process—which is sometimes called "Track Two Diplomacy" or simply "People-to-People Programs"—supplements the political processes but is somewhat different in nature and substance. They involve long-term psychological, educational and spiritual transformations, which take place over many years.9

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8 According to Catherine Morris (*What is Peacebuilding? One Definition,* 2000), "The term "peacebuilding" came into widespread use after 1992 when Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then United Nations Secretary-General, announced his *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Since then, "peacebuilding" has become a broadly used but often ill-defined term connoting activities that go beyond crisis intervention such as longer-term development, and building of governance structures and institutions. It includes building the capacity of non-governmental organizations (including religious institutions) for peacemaking and peacebuilding."

9 Peacebuilding involves long-term processes and the transformation of human relationships, according to John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, pp. 82-83.

There is, of course, a close connection between peace-making and peace-building processes. When there is a momentum in the political realm—as there was in the 1990s with the Oslo Accords (1993), followed by the Fundamental Agreement between Israel and the Holy See (1993), the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan (1994) and the Wye River Agreement (1996)—then the existential and immediate need for people-to-people programs is more obvious and clear. Conversely, when there is a total freeze in political progress, as has been the case in Israel/Palestine from 2000 until now, then the existential need for peace-building programs is perceived to be more distant and difficult.

Nevertheless, we believe strongly in the importance of peace-building programs, even when the political processes are hardly functioning. These programs keep a flicker of hope alive in an ongoing conflict. They point the way to the future. They remind us that the goal of peace is normalization, not separation. They train the people for the possibilities of peaceful coexistence among people and peoples for the future, even if this is not the reality of the present moment.

One more theoretical note is in order here. Our programs are part of a growing field in the world known as "Religions and Conflict Resolution". The idea is that religions, i.e. their leaders and followers, can and ought to do their part to help resolve conflicts in various parts of the world.

Yet, in recent years, there has been much less focus on "resolution" (the word is hardly used any more) and much more focus on conflict mitigation, management or transformation. Indeed the government of the United States began a program a few years ago under USAID which it calls "Conflict Mitigation and Management".10 In other words, those who engage in peace-building programs are no longer expected to solve the macro political conflict. But, if they can reduce hatred and violence, then they will be accomplishing something, at least in the short-term.

Moreover, conflicts can be "transformed" from a violent phase to an educational/social phase, as in the cases of Northern Ireland and South Africa, where the bloodshed has ended and now what needs to be done is to overcome hundreds of years of hatred and separation. We in Israel/Palestine will be happy to get to this stage, the sooner the better, in which the war will have ended and we will be able to focus all of our societal energies on educational, spiritual, and psychological transformation. But even though we are not there yet, we need to begin wherever possible to bring people together to experience and learn about the possibilities and benefits of living together in the same country or same region. This is precisely what we try to do through our dialogue and action groups, especially with youth and young adults.

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10 According to the USAID Guidelines: "Mitigating, managing, and responding to violent conflict are priority areas for USAID assistance. This policy defines conflict mitigation as activities that seek to reduce the threat of violent conflict by promoting peaceful resolution of differences, reducing violence if it has already broken out, or establishing a framework for peace and reconciliation in an ongoing conflict. Conflict management refers to activities explicitly geared toward addressing the causes and consequences of likely conflict." http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/USAID_Conflict_MM_Policy.pdf

Section Two —Dialogue and Action groups as a method for personal and communal transformation

Dialogue and action groups can be a powerful method for transforming people into change agents for peace in their communities in both Israel and Palestine.

Through the implementation of programs for teens and college students, we in the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel have learned the importance of a model that includes dialogue, intensive experiences together, volunteerism and action projects.

In cooperation with Auburn Theological Seminary of New York, we offer an annual program for youth called Face to Face/ Faith to Faith. The program includes twelve months of dialogue and an intensive summer experience abroad. As a result of a comprehensive evaluation process of the program that was implemented last year,[11] we discovered that there are ten transformative ways in which participants are affected by such programs:

1. Seeing that the conflict has two legitimate sides, and being able to accept people who have different opinions
2. Becoming better listeners
3. Realizing that not everything is solvable
4. Looking at the conflict in a more complex and realistic way
5. Realizing that people are similar in many ways yet still have strong differences
6. Allowing them to grow up and become more confident in their own abilities
7. Influencing them to become more active in society
8. Becoming stronger in their own opinions while simultaneously becoming more tolerant and accepting
9. Having more knowledge about other religions
10. Realizing that "the others" are also human beings

In addition, we conduct an innovative program for college students from both East and West Jerusalem, which seeks to engage in interreligious dialogue and action in order to change the tenor of public discourse and improve relations between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish students at their universities and in the city of Jerusalem as a whole. Jerusalem is divided by both physical and psychological barriers in such a way that young people growing up in the same city almost never visit the "other" side. Participants in this program attend different universities/colleges, speak different languages, and belong to nations of opposing political objectives. They live in different realities.

During the course of the past year, the participants discussed various topics dealing with the different holiday traditions and they visited each other's homes and celebrated each other's holidays together in fulfillment of one of our central goals—to eliminate the psychological barriers that divide Jerusalem and expose the participants to the life of the "other." In order to get to know each other better, they engaged in a photography project wherein they divided up into pairs—one Israeli Jew with one Palestinian Christian or Muslim—and took photos of themselves in places they love in Jerusalem. Even the simple task of visiting different

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11 This evaluation report was prepared by Rebecca Russo, a Dorot Fellow interning with ICCI during 2008-2009.

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neighborhoods in East and West Jerusalem was a challenging and eye-opening experience for the participants; many had to overcome fears about visiting the other side of the city.

Last year, all of our dialogue groups experienced difficulties during the war in Gaza. The college student group met twice during this period: once during Hanukah, on the first day of the war, at the home of one of the Jewish participants. During this meeting, participants decided that despite the war, and the difficulties of the time, it was important for them to continue meeting. During the height of the war, they met again, and the participants had a difficult discussion about how they felt about the war, and what it meant for them to engage in inter-religious dialogue at such a time of conflict -- demonstrating their commitment to dialogue, even when the going gets rough.

As a result of this program, a number of our graduates went on to attend peace camps or work as counselors in inter-religious camps last summer. One of them participated in a "Building an interfaith community" Seminar in Bossey, Switzerland through the World Council of Churches, where she was given a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, encounter new point of views, and learn new perspectives on religions, peace and community-building. Another one served as a counselor in the Face To Face/ Faith to Faith Summer Intensive Experience, hosted by Auburn Theological Seminary in upstate New York in July; and a third raveled to Walberberg, Germany and participated in "Breaking Barriers", an Israeli-Palestinian Solidarity Project founded in 2002, an initiative by Israelis and Palestinians with aims to end the vicious circle of violence in Israel-Palestine by building mutual interest, solidarity, and trust between the people.

The fact that many of our youth and young adults go on to be involved in other peace and inter-religious seminars and camps is the true success of our informal educational programs for peace.

Section Three: A new model for inter-religious dialogue in the service of peace

Over the past 20 years ICCI has developed a model for successful interreligious dialogue, as a result of its work on the ground rather than through a theoretical laboratory of a university. In other words, it came about after many years of trial and error in Israel and Palestine, especially during the last ten difficult years, since the beginning of the second intifada, which began in September 2000.

Our model is comprised of four major elements:
- Personal interaction–getting to know each other as individual human beings
- Interreligious, text-based learning
- Discussing core issues of the conflict
- Taking action, separately and together

1. The Personal element

All of our dialogue groups bring together a diversity of people from various religious and national groups. Each comes to the dialogue with his or her own personal identity, which he or she shares with the group. The group learns to understand and respect the identity and narrative of each of its members, by listening carefully and genuinely seeking to come to know a lot about

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each participant. Through this process, people in the group come to recognize the human dignity and integrity of each other.

We have come to call this process "de-demonizing the other". In our part of the world, due to the ongoing violent conflict of many decades, Palestinians and Israelis who have never met each other before coming to our dialogue group usually see the other through the prisms of the conflict and the negative media stereotypes which dominate our print and electronic media. In our dialogue groups, we shatter these stereotypes by asking each person to share their identities and life stories with the other. When this is done over time—at least a year—we find that people are actually quite shocked to discover that the other, who is supposed to be "the enemy", is actually a human being.

This first layer of our dialogue process builds an important foundation of trust, which is essential for the rest of the dialogue. It often creates lasting friendships or at least much collegiality, which is a critical component for constructive, honest, and fruitful dialogue as the year progresses.

2. Inter-religious Learning

We have discovered over many years, to our sorrow, that individuals often know very little about the cultural practices and theology of other religions in Israel and Palestine. Accordingly, Israeli Jews know almost nothing about Islam or Christianity. And, what they do know is usually negative and was learned in courses in Jewish History in which they learned that Muslims or Christians either oppressed or massacred Jews throughout the centuries. Nor do Muslims or Christians who live in Israel or Palestine know much about Judaism. Much of what they do know is negative, as they learn it mostly from their print and electronic media and from the "street" and the family.

Therefore, a little education—properly and sensitively taught by good teachers—can go a long way in a short time to breaking down ingrained negative stereotypes of each other's religions. These teachers choose good texts with a positive message –from the sacred canons of each religion, such as the Bible and later commentaries (The Midrash and Talmud), the Koran and the Hadith, or the New Testament and the Church Fathers--and teach them in a way that can be readily understood and appreciated by "the other side".12 When this is done well, another very important level of trust is developed. Participants who have gone through this process in our dialogue groups can talk about common humanistic values shared by the three major monotheistic religions, and they can sense a spirit of religious partnership, which motivates them to continue the dialogue and to seek meaningful paths of action together.

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12 This educational component to our dialogue process is especially important in our work with religious leaders from the three Abrahamic faiths, as in our KEDEM Program (Voices of Religious Reconciliation) from 2003-2008. In dialogue groups conducted by the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Muslim, Jewish and Christian religious leaders not only brought texts with positive messages in text study sessions, but they also re-interpreted problematic texts in creative and beneficial ways in the spirit of reconciliation.

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3. <u>Discussing Core Issues of the Conflict</u>

Since our dialogue process takes place in Israel and Palestine, in the midst of an ongoing and often violent conflict, we cannot ignore the contemporary context in which we live and function. More accurately, we choose not to ignore the conflict (whereas other organizations actively seek to prevent "politics" or "the conflict" from entering into the discussion).

We believe that in a genuine dialogue process the core issues of the conflict can be discussed in an open, honest, and sensitive fashion, guided by careful and consistent professional facilitation, without creating animosity or acrimony. In fact, we have found that participants in our dialogue groups continue to come back to the table year after year precisely because the discussion is frank and forthright. This means that the discussions in this part of the dialogue process are often very painful and difficult. But when significant levels of trust have been developed beforehand, most people find this phase particularly meaningful and enriching as a way to genuinely get to know the other. It leads to deep mutual understanding of the other's religious, cultural, and existential reality, even if it also delineates where people fundamentally do not—and often cannot—agree with the other.

4. <u>Taking action, separately and together</u>

Many years ago, one of my Muslim colleagues said to me when we were preparing to convene a dialogue group: "Dialogue is not enough!" It is not enough for us to learn and undergo personal transformation. As responsible members of society, we must take our learning and create change. We are obligated to work for peace, to influence others, and to cause a ripple effect. As a result, we strive for our groups to experience both dialogue and action. In other words, all of our participants –religious leaders, women, youth, young adults, educators-- are asked to take some action –separately or together—as a result of the personal transformational processes that they go through within this intensive experience.

Action can take many forms—personal, social, educational, and/or political, but it is agreed that every person who is moved by the dialogue process is obligated to share their experiences with others in whatever ways possible. From our experience, we have found that often simple human gestures of reconciliation, such as visiting the sick or the bereaved, can go a long way towards cementing personal relationships and creating genuine trust and profound relationships among friends and colleagues (former "enemies") who are involved in long-term dialogue processes. Moreover, each person—through personal and professional networks and associations—should be committed to acting in such a way as to bring the insights and lessons of their dialogue processes to the attention of people in their own communities. In this way, each person in each dialogue group is a "multiplier" who can spread the message of the possibilities and benefits of peaceful coexistence, and the method of dialogue and education, to many other people in his or her society.

Director of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) since 1992, **Rabbi Dr. Ronald Kronish** is a noted rabbi, educator, author, lecturer and speaker. During the 30 years he has lived in Jerusalem,Israel, Dr. Kronish has lectured to a wide variety of groups, including students, teachers, and visiting Jewish, Christian and interreligious groups. In addition, he has

been a scholar-in-residence at universities and communities across the United States, Canada, Europe and the Far East

Educated at Brandeis University (BA), Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in New York (MHL, rabbinic ordination) and the Harvard Graduate School of Education (doctorate in philosophy and history of education), Dr. Kronish has published articles and essays on Jewish politics, faith communities and the peace process, as well as education, culture and contemporary issues in America and Israel, in newspapers, magazines and scholarly journals. He has represented ICCI at the Vatican and at many international meetings and conferences, and is frequently consulted by media representatives for background information and briefings.

Dr. Kronish is the editor of *Towards the Twenty-first Century: Judaism and the Jewish People in Israel and America,* an anthology in memory of his father, Rabbi Leon Kronish. In addition, he has edited two books of essays: *Toward the Third Millennium* and *Pilgrimage in a New Millennium.* Furthermore, Dr. Kronish blogs at http://icciblog.wordpress.com

Going beyond the Rhetoric: The Muslim Aid/UMCOR Partnership in Sri Lanka

By Amjad Saleem

Abstract

Poverty, inequity, and social injustice are matters of conscience and demand a systematic response. Civil society plays a key role in development with Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) at the forefront of initiatives aimed at helping to achieve increased tolerance, social cohesion and understanding.

Faith communities have undeniably had as strong a history of internecine strife and struggle as they have of cooperation and collaboration. It is against this framework of internal and external disagreement that there is a need to build and sustain existing links and to explore new initiatives.

This paper highlights practical examples of dialogue and collaboration between Muslim Aid and UMCOR showing how different faith communities make natural allies for the promotion and success of cross border linking and play a part in making humanitarian work more efficient and effective whilst showing that inter-faith cooperation means something practical as well as spiritual.

Introduction

On 26 June 2007, a ground-breaking partnership was formalized at the Houses of Parliament in London. This alliance between the UK Islamic NGO Muslim Aid (MA) and the US Christian NGO The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) was unique in that it was designed to bridge the gap between the interfaith dialogue initiatives which operate at the international, regional and country level and grass roots action amongst disadvantaged communities.

What is symbolic about this partnership is that it originated out of the complex conflict in Northeast Sri Lanka, utilizing the unique relationship that each organization had with their respective faith communities and community faith leaders. This article will examine some of the lessons learnt from the partnership amidst significant challenges and limitations before providing some suggestions as to how in similar conflict scenarios, faith can be used as a tool for reconciliation.

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History of the Conflict

It is not my intention to provide a history lesson of the conflict and the causes behind the conflict13, suffice to say, that history will have to be briefly revisited in order to provide the context for the conflict as well as to identify the pertinent issues for the future14.

The legacy of the colonial period has been blamed by most analysts for sewing the seed of ethnic divisions in post-1948 Sri Lanka. The colonial period under the British fostered and emphasized a new concept of colonial identities15, weakening the process of ethnic assimilation that had existed hitherto (Rajasingham-Senanayake 1999, 99-135). Sinhala nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century as a counter-colonial movement that used Buddhist identity to mobilize popular support against Christian missionaries and later British capitalist interests (Moore 1989, 190). Thus from an early time, Sinhala nationalist movements became intertwined with Buddhism. Sinhala nationalism was also irked by what it saw as the excessive political demands of Tamil leaders and the disproportionate power and position Tamils had gained under British rule16.

Upon independence, it was inevitable the Sinhalese would redefine ethnic relations as they wished, and establish a voting system on ethnic lines17. Consequently, constitutional arrangements at independence lacked sufficient safeguards for minority rights18. However, it was not until 1956 that the full political logic of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism would be realized when, in a move for pure political gain, the opposition party campaigning on an uncompromising nationalist platform of "Sinhala Only"19 swept into power. This victory sought to reverse the preferential colonial treatment of Tamil elites. It was, however, a disastrous policy, which led to the minorities being sidelined and the start of decades of confrontation between the Tamils and Sinhalese. The policy also set in motion a process that

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13 There are many other much more well qualified people and well documented reports on the subject (a few which I have provided in the bibliography).
14 I realise that this can be dismissed as gross simplification of the causes. However it is not the mandate of this article to explore the historical causes of the conflict, but to explore this in relation to the future of the country
15 The British had divided Sri Lanka into three main ethnicities: Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim. Muslims are classed separately because of a slight difference in culture, food and dress. Within the Sinhala and Tamil Ethnicities, there is a further division based on religion as you have Sinhalese Buddhists, Christians and Muslims and within the Tamil community you also have Hindus, Christians and Muslims
16 With Tamils having a disproportionate share of government, university and professional jobs – largely due to better education – many Sinhalese felt excluded from political and economic power. For example in 1956, Tamils were 30 % of the Ceylon Administrative Service, half the clerical service, 60% of engineers and doctors and 40% of the armed forces despite the Sinhalese being 70% of the population (International Crisis Group 2007, 5).
17 It was the product of a contradiction between a democratic system in which 70% of ethnic voters were previously underrepresented in the State.
18 Section 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution, independent Ceylon's first, states: "No law shall make a person or any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable. No law shall confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions. Any law made in contravention of sub section (2) shall to the extent of such contravention be void". This only restricted parliament from enacting discriminatory laws but gave no protection against discriminatory practices (International Crisis Group 2007, 5).
19 Sinhala Only was a system to establish Sinhala as the single official language for government business within 24 hours of election and capture the votes of rural, Sinhala-educated elite.

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dropped the Tamil Language (and consequently Tamil speakers mainly from the minority Tamil and Muslim communities) from having equal legal status20.

By the 1970s, it was clear that the Government was pressing ahead with its attempts to decrease the dominant positions of Tamils (and other minorities) in state sectors and later in the private sector, thereby exacerbating ethnic tensions. Gradually, civil disobedience led to the emergence of small militant Tamil groups21 and the first demands for a separate Tamil state as a bargaining position in the hope of reaching a compromise of a devolution package22 was made23.

In 1983 with the murder of 13 policemen by the LTTE politically motivated anti-Tamil riots were sparked in Colombo, leading to the murder of as many as 1000 Tamils and the displacement of thousands of others24. This alleged pogrom, despite coming as a major shock to the country, still provided an opportunity for the marginal militant Tamil groups to gain new supporters and to internationalize their struggle. The eighties and nineties proved to be violent episodes in Sri Lanka's young history. In particular, with the defeat of the Indian Peacekeeping Force25, the mass displacement of Muslims from the north in 199026, the assassinations of key Sri Lankan leaders (both political and military) and the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandi, the LTTE emerged as one of the world's most ruthless terrorist organizations, known for its use of suicide bombers and the recruitment of child soldiers. This also posed a challenge for the Church (mainly those of the Roman Catholic faith) in Sri Lanka, which split along ethnic lines. The Sinhalese Christians more often than not sided with the government, whilst Tamil Christians, who were mainly from the North and East of the country, were sympathetic to the LTTE. Thus the Church and organizations linked to the Church have often been unfairly accused of being complicit and sympathetic towards the LTTE based on these issues.

History of the Partnership between MA and UMCOR

20 The Tamils were now the ones who felt excluded by a language policy and its effects on the availability of public sector jobs and services and started their largely non violent civil disobedience by democratic Tamil parties, but it was clear that Sri Lanka's path had been intertwined with the concept of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.
21 It was at this stage that the LTTE, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (one amongst many Tamil militant groups) started to blossom.
22 The devolution package was to give some autonomy to the northern and eastern territories (in which Tamils were dominant).
23 This was something that the State would never accept, as it was felt that this would lead to the breakup of the country.
24 This led to the mass migration of Tamils seeking refuge to places like Canada, UK and US thereby encouraging support for the 'Tamil' cause. It has been known as one of the darkest days in Sri Lanka's history and is often referred to as Black July, particularly as the security forces did very little to help the Tamils, supposedly at the orders of the government. Later on evidence has shown that the government of the day (and ministers at that time) had been part of the anti Tamil riots (Jayatilleka 2010). In 2004, then President Chandrika Kumaratunge tended a public apology for this act (Sunday Observer 2004).
25 A disastrous attempt by the Indian government to interfere both militarily and politically in the conflict in 1987.
26 About 100,000 Muslims were given 24 hours by the LTTE (without warning or reason) to leave the northern province. They eventually settled around the capital Colombo or in an area called Puttalum (3 hours north of Colombo) where they have been in refugee camps till today (International Crisis Group 2007).

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The partnership between MA and UMCOR began during the 2006 "Muttur Crisis," a complex political emergency in North East Sri Lanka (Clarke 2008).[27] Both organizations were active in the region and surrounding areas, helping to rebuild houses and to restore livelihoods ruined during the tsunami.   Sensing the grave and immediate need posed by renewed fighting, both organizations decided to work together to respond effectively.

This partnership enabled economies of scale and effective coordination but also had some other, unexpected outcomes. Both agencies worked in coordination with their respective faith and community leaders and councils to coordinate the mobilization of thousands of volunteers who brought food and other relief items to the IDP camps and distribution centers. This enabled individual volunteers, contributors and receiving communities to be exposed to the principle of non-discriminatory assistance based on need – something quite unique in many communities in Sri Lanka where much is divided along ethno-religious lines.   Discussions centered on the imperative of both faiths to serve humanity and to reduce the suffering of the disadvantaged.

UMCOR and MA discussed the observations on the lessening of tensions towards aid workers and, by analyzing field discussions with communities and faith leaders learned that the example of perceived Christian and Muslim 'enemies' working together to provide assistance had made people re-consider their opinions of NGOs. The result was a marked decrease in inter-community violence coupled with a significant increase in the delivery and utilization of humanitarian and developmental assistance. The inter-community contact provided by the working methodology of the partnership (which facilitated the formation of community development committees led by community faith leaders) and saw interfaith community cooperation and initiatives continuing long after the international presence had left.

Next Steps

In Sri Lanka, the two organizations began to develop a three-way partnership that included the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka (MCSL) and, most significantly, to launch a joint initiative to promote interfaith dialogue on peace issues, known as People Accelerating Towards Human Synergy (PATHS).

A set of grassroots community peace consultations and seminars was undertaken jointly by UMCOR, MA and MCSL between August and December 2007 around the country. In all of these consultations, people of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities were brought together to discuss issues of social tension and initiatives towards developing acceptance and understanding among the people in order to reunite them in their diversity for the betterment of the country.

What was significant from these sets of workshops was the fact that issues normally presented as contentious, and therefore needing solutions in order to advance peace in this country, were not mentioned at all as impediments for peaceful co-existence among the different communities. The workshops felt that the spirit of belonging to the country should be allowed to take root and the spirit of sharing and caring for each other (as humans) should be allowed to prosper so that no citizen of Sri Lanka would be alienated on account of religion, ethnicity, or

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27 See Clarke 2008 for more details about the history of the partnership

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territorial affinity. The workshops unanimously recognized that lack of consultation with the people, and the assumption that answers to the current national crises can only be hatched within the political circles are serious shortcomings the country faces in its peace efforts today.

In 2008, the consultations culminated in an international conference where around 200 religious leaders gathered together to look at post-conflict reconciliation from an interfaith and spiritual perspective. Delegates from across the country and the world deliberated for three days to arrive at a consensus that entailed understanding the need to move away from apportioning blame for the deceit and destruction, for the killing and maiming of combatants and civilians, and for the missed opportunities to settle the problem in the country. It was understood that to go down the route that had been tread before would never move the country beyond the conflict. Delegates recognized the need to take a new and bold step that would cast differences aside.

The conference demonstrated that people have the wish, the will, and the capacity through the collective spiritual strength powered by their respective religious foundations to make the leap required for the change necessary for the country. Delegates agreed that people and communities had been excluded from defining and taking responsibility for their own progress.

The spiritual guiding principles necessary to infuse human values and guide future policies for reconciliation and nation building were discussed under the following themes:

1. Honoring unity and celebrating diversity: From various teachings it was realized that there is space for every living being while cherishing diversity of climate, history, heritage, temperaments, and talents of the human race that inhabits this space. This recognized that each human born in a country is a trust of the whole in that country; any advantage of part of that country is best preserved and enjoyed by promoting the comparative advantage of the whole country to the whole world;

2. Equity and Justice: Justice and equity are the guiding principles for human well-being and must be adhered to in order to maximize development of the population and to safeguard a country. In order to apply equity, opportunities need to be fairly distributed, and justice is the vehicle through which equity can be ensured. Access to opportunities will not be equitable unless backed by resource commitment;

3. Eradicating social prejudices: Past social inequities among men, women, and children may have been caused by different circumstances for survival. Differently-abled people also have not been fully integrated into the society. To create a climate of harmony and peaceful co-existence, all fields of human endeavor will have to involve, without prejudice, every section of the people;

4. Morality and accountability in leadership: Trustworthiness is the heart of all human interaction and engagement. Those who are put in public trust should bear the responsibility of keeping that trust and must be willing to be held accountable for the manner in which they

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exercise authority. Morality, guided by strong spiritual conviction, should become the foundation of leadership at all levels if true progress is to be achieved;

5. Resource use and environmental safety: Spiritual and moral principles should ensure technological and economic considerations are appropriate for resource use. Saving natural capital for future generations will be an important consideration as against the temptation, for instance, of exploiting natural resources beyond their renewable capacity;

6. Consultation and advisory groups: Constant monitoring and awareness of global changes and social implications will be required.

Based on these spiritual principles, the delegates agreed on a resolution and comprehensive action plan designed to bring all stakeholders together with the purpose of addressing the national issue.

Lessons Learned
MA and UMCOR identified the following key attributes of the partnership in order to enable FBOs to work together and improve operational effectiveness (Hovey and Saleem 2008, 66-67):

- **The ability to work effectively in an insecure environment**: The sight of two different faith-based organizations working together had a calming effect in many conflict-affected communities. It is doubtful that this could have been achieved in such a short space of time without local faith leaders being engaged by an FBO with which they could identify.
- **The ability to work for common causes:** The common belief in serving humanity contributes to the ability to work together and can largely eliminate the competitiveness over resources in relief and development.
- **Working within networks:** Religions offer cultural, social and political networks unsurpassed by any other. An FBO can "plug into" this network, gaining immediate access to faith leaders – community "gatekeepers" – and thus an entry point to communities.
- **Sustainable empowerment and programming:** In traditional societies, making sustainable progress in empowering minorities and vulnerable groups (such as women) without exposing them to danger is difficult. However, although some faith leaders may wish to preserve traditional roles, most have the wellbeing of their communities at heart and can be agents for change. By working with these leaders, a long-term process of empowerment in its truest sense was initiated. The long-term presence of faith representatives in communities enables relief and development programs to be supported long after the original implementing partner has left.
- **Peace, reconciliation, respect and understanding:** The partners found that peace does not emanate from high-level political agreements but from communities on the ground. One of the most surprising aspects of the partnership was that it was the first

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time the majority of people had witnessed different faiths working together in a tangible manner. This is perhaps the area in which this partnership will be most effective: acting as a link between inter-faith dialogue and community action, translating rhetoric into practical action that demonstrates the benefit of dialogue in bringing about support for disadvantaged communities.

- **The ability to work for common causes:** The partnership is about developing an understanding, acceptance of, and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions and translating that into practical meaningful and tangible action such as the common belief in serving humanity contributes to the ability to work together and can largely eliminate the competitiveness over resources in relief and development as well as bring about an understanding of "unity in diversity," in the sense that within a society of diverse identities, there are still things that can unite us, and this should be celebrated and encouraged.

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Conclusion

In traditional societies, making sustainable progress in empowering minorities without exposing them to danger is difficult. While progress on this can be slow, the community faith leader can be an agent of change in these circumstances. While traditional roles are often preserved by faith leaders, and it must be recognized that some faith leaders are the cause of some problems, the majority are not and have the well-being of their communities at heart. The partnership found that both their tsunami and conflict responses put them in daily contact with a wide range of faith leaders, some of whom were (for example) more open to empowering women than others. By working with these leaders, a long-term process of empowerment in its truest sense was initiated, and by virtue of the continual presence of faith in Sri Lanka, the partners are confident that the process will be sustained for generations.

The partnership between UMCOR and MA meant that, in a region divided along ethno-religious lines, people would receive assistance from a Christian or Muslim NGO whose staff may be Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Hindu or any other faith, as well as atheist. This raised questions as to why these people of other faiths should be helping them where in the past issues were seen as a problem solely for that particular faith community. For many, this was the first time that interfaith cooperation meant something practical as well as spiritual, and it caused people to begin to view faith matters and communities of different faiths in a new light. This is perhaps the area in which this partnership will be most effective – acting as a link between interfaith dialogue and communities, translating rhetoric into practical action that demonstrates the benefit of dialogue to disadvantaged communities. Talk means nothing if your child dies of hunger.

The partnership of MA with UMCOR reached out beyond religious communities to benefit people in need, no matter what their religious faith, thereby giving much-needed hope and the chance for a new peace-building paradigm.

Hence the experience of MA-UMCOR can address the issue of social tension that could arise in a diverse society due to ignorance. This path towards dialogue and interaction has already been initiated by the partnership in the hope that it will start a march towards peace from the grass roots. There is hope that by being engaged and affording people the chance to express themselves, perceptions and stereotypical views that exist as a result of ignorance, misunderstandings, and a lack of communication will be eliminated, thereby paving the way for acceptance and understanding so that people can unite in their diversity for the betterment of this country.

The partners believe that the model provides an example to a wider world that organizations and peoples of different faiths can and do work together to set theological differences aside and work towards common goals, such as relieving suffering and poverty wherever they are found.

In Sri Lanka, the UMCOR-MA partnership demonstrated that there is a huge, untapped potential in engaging with faith. This coming together of faiths, which are often perceived to be in opposition to each other, can serve as an example to all, that organizations and people can work together to further the cause of humanitarianism without compromising their individuality or beliefs. It underlines the value of faith-based engagement to practical ends, which goes

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beyond dialogues. It is perhaps the 'missing link' between high-level interfaith dialogues and community action.

A postscript to this story now is that the UMCOR-MA partnership has stalled due to various operational constraints that mainly arise within the field of international development especially as a result of staff turnover. However, the seeds that were sown at the 2008 faith leader's conference have ensured that the principles and the methodologies that the partnership imbibed continue to bear fruit. This has led to the formation of the North East Interfaith Forum for Reconciliation (NEIFR) which recently submitted a proposal to the Lessons Learnt Rehabilitation Commission (LLRC) that was set up by the Government to investigate the lessons learnt in the wake of the end of the war. In their submission, the NEIFR recommended the formation of Committees of Conscience (to advise the government) and reconciliation and peace committee (to work at the grass roots level)

From the experiences shown, linking faith-based organizations together is a powerful tool for the promotion of dialogue, tolerance, interfaith cooperation, and harmonious living. It should be enhanced through a comprehensive education strategy, both formal and informal, that breaks down the seemingly insurmountable divide between "us" and "them." This education should begin at home, within families and small communities, where the benefit of dialogue and cooperation can be seen and felt. It should roll through schools, institutes of higher education and ultimately politicians, legislators, governments and multi-lateral organizations, including those present here today.

Amjad Saleem is currently working as Head of Communications for The Cordoba Foundation, an independent policy, research and public relations think tank based in London promoting intercultural dialogue and positive coexistence among civilizations, ideas and people, and advocating dialogue and action to promote understanding and acceptance of inter-communal and inter-religious issues in Britain, Europe, US and beyond. He has been active in the field of inter faith dialogue and work participating at all levels in different forums. He attended the World Parliament of Religions in Melbourne 2009 and is one of its ambassadors.

He was previously the Sri Lankan country director of British based NGO Muslim Aid, where he oversaw post tsunami and post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

His main interest is in building bridges between communities to help further respect, understanding and acceptance. He was instrumental in developing a unique partnership in Sri Lanka between Muslim Aid and UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), based in the States, which was heralded by the Commonwealth Foundation as the 'missing link' between interfaith dialogue and grass roots action. The partnership was praised by the UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown in a speech at the UN in November 2008 as an example of British Muslims working closely with their US Christian counterparts to solve real problems in South Asia.

Using this partnership, Amjad was instrumental in bringing religious and civil society leaders together in December 2008 to discuss real practical ways of reconciliation post conflict in Sri Lanka. Amjad is currently consulting with the Congress of Religions and The Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to establish an Interfaith Coalition for Peace to undertake practical projects

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using spirituality as a resource for reconciliation and rehabilitation. This culminated in a submission to the Government on the 1st of Dec of recommendations for post conflict reconciliation.

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Fear Beyond Fright: Jewish Responses to Tragedy
By Joshua M. Z. Stanton

Introduction
This paper seeks to provide a preliminary investigation into how Jews respond to fear-inducing experiences. In particular, it will focus on two of the most harrowing experiences of Jewish history: the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans and the Holocaust. What terminology has been used to describe these experiences? How has the memory of these events evolved over the generations, and can the process of adapting to the more ancient experience predict how Judaism will evolve as a result of more recent experiences? Each of these questions would take a book to answer. But even initial discoveries may yield practical outcomes; the best predictor of future responses to fear is most certainly the past.

Vocabulary and Historiography of Fear
　　　　Language both frames and reflects cultural attitudes towards particular experiences. Within Jewish thought, responses to fear may be seen through the lens of the two main words used to describe the emotion in the Hebrew Bible: *Yirah* and *Pachad*.28 *Yirah* retains a more positive connotation, as in awe or the majesty that God invokes.29 *Pachad*, by contrast, signifies outright fright or terror.30 In many respects, these terms mirror the eustress and distress that inspire each emotion. The *yirah* felt at the start of an interaction with the Divine may also be felt to a lesser degree at beginning of a major opportunity or conclusion of an impressive display of prowess; *pachad* may be inspired by God's anger, even as it is by mundane scares and frightful occurrences in a more muted way. *Yirah* (awe-full regard) and *pachad* (fright) define the type of emotion experienced, while the particular situation determines the degree to which that emotion is felt.

　　　　Within this continuum of fearful emotion, starting with the *Tenach* (Hebrew Bible) itself, I suggest that the Jewish people have exhibited at least five major coping strategies throughout history: 1) adapting an existing tradition, as in the codification of the *Mishneh* in the third century as a written guide to Jewish law and practice; 2) creating a new tradition, such as the mysticism that emerged following the expulsion of Jews from al-Andalus by the Almohads; 3) avoiding the cause of fear, as the Jews who left Spain did as a result of the Inquisition; 4) appeasing the oppressors, as did the Jews who paid ransom money to rescue their coreligionists

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28 Other Hebrew words for fear include *chared* (fear-induced trembling) and *bahal* (profound fear). However, they are used more infrequently and may themselves be categorized to a large extent within the *yirah*/*pachad* dichotomy.
29 We first see the use of *yirah* in Genesis 15:2, just before God promises Abraham a multitude of offspring, even at Abraham's old age: *Al-tirah Avraham*, "'Fear not Abraham'" (JPS). More aptly, it would seem that God is telling Abraham not to be awestruck by the message he is about to be given. We next hear of *tirah* in Genesis 26:24, when God reaches out to Isaac one night in Beersheba: "'Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Abraham'" (JPS).
30 In First Samuel 11: 7, for example, *pachad* is used to denote "Terror from the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man [together]" (JPS).

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from Crusaders; and 5) creating a new shared experience, as the *chalutzim* who settled Palestine did on Kibbutzim to establish the archetype of the independent "new Jew." Of significance, three out of five of the responses that are *remembered* in the Jewish tradition are active in nature. Only avoidance of the cause of fear and appeasement of the oppressor are submissive, suggesting that even in rationalizing the more terrifying experiences of the past two millennia, the Jewish people has in large part reacted actively – at least from an internal perspective.

It is important to note that while records of active responses to fear seem significantly represented in Jewish historical records, they may not in fact be representative of reactions exhibited by the "typical" Jew in a given situation. Rather, they may have survived as heroic exceptions within a fearful population. Yet even if unrepresentative of Jewish responses to fear, they are prominent features within Jewish historical memory31 and therefore are most likely to have an impact on future Jewish responses.

Even when taking into account the bias toward chronicling active responses to fear in Jewish historical records, two of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history appear to have produced more dramatic, even seismic shifts in Jewish theology and worldview: the destruction of the Second Temple and the Holocaust. The more ancient of the two enabled rabbinic Judaism to emerge as the dominant form of Jewish life, but not without a prolonged period of mourning and self-doubt about what the Jews could have done to induce what appeared to be a divinely inspired act of retribution. Answers to this question varied greatly, from the more simplistic interpretation that acts of "senseless hatred" (*sinat chinam*) between Jews inspired God's wrath to Maimonides' more nuanced view that the destruction of the Second Temple was in fact a Divine gift, supplanting the ritual cult with rabbinical guides to ethical behavior. The destruction of the Temple was interpreted and reinterpreted. Maimonides' well-known understanding of the destruction of the Temple, for example, occurred well over a millennium after the event itself had taken place, and even today contemporary Jewish theologians grapple with the destruction of the Second Temple as a it relates to their broader construal of Jewish historiography and ethics.

My contention is that the Holocaust will ultimately prove to be an equally defining turning point in Jewish thought. One third of all Jews in the world were brutally exterminated in less than a six-year period. What are this modern tragedy's implications about Jewish life, ethics, and history? How should Jews respond when faced with anti-Semitism? When is force appropriate, and when must it be eschewed? What communal institutions would best defend and support Jewish communities in the Diaspora? Are Jews still a "chosen" people if left for the slaughter? While many preliminary answers have come to the fore, it may be generations or even centuries before the Jewish tradition has garnered broader lessons from the frightful experience of the Holocaust and fully incorporated them into our religious practice. I am optimistic that such lessons will not only challenge Jewish scholars but potentially even

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31 Historical memory documents how people perceive and interpret the past and compare it to the events as understood through primary source documentation; it is an emerging subspecialty within history. While the subfield of historical memory has significant limitations, it offers a profound opportunity to understand the mindset of Jews who experienced fear in different historical periods.

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revolutionize the communal practice of Judaism, much as the destruction of the Second Temple did two millennia ago.

Case Study 1: Rabbinic revival as response to the destruction of the Second Temple

  When Roman legions destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem, after a rebellion failed to rid the Jews of their powerful and periodically oppressive overseers, it appeared that Judaism itself might also disappear. Aside from the sheer devastation that the armies wrought, the event created major theological quandaries. If Jews communicated with God through sacrifices at the Temple, would they lose touch until a new one was erected? If God was powerful, how could He allow this to happen? Were the Jews still God's chosen people? The problems were manifold, but over time, Jews found comfort in the emerging rabbinic traditions and leadership. While fear and suffering were immediate, rabbinic Judaism grew to become the dominant stream of Judaism in the span of a few generations. In time, it managed to fill the void left by the Temple establishment and institute a form of Judaism that many practitioners and scholars consider superior to what had existed before.

  Rabbinic Judaism took form within the Pharisaic traditions of Judea during the Second Temple Period, which stretched from the completion of the Second Temple in 516 B.C.E. until the fateful Bar Kokhba Rebellion against the Roman Empire in 132 C.E. that dashed the last hopes of rebuilding it (Ben-Sasson 172, 303, 325).[32] Towards the middle of this defining epoch of Jewish history, sectarianism emerged, with at least three major groups jockeying for power and legitimacy: the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Essenes (Stone 74).[33] On one extreme, the Sadducees represented the Temple's priesthood, which was supported by Judea's aristocracy and maintained a great deal of symbolic and material clout. On the other, the Essenes lived ascetic lifestyles, seldom marrying and sequestering themselves in rural communes.[34] Between the elite and those unwilling to remain a part of the society were the Pharisees, who received popular support and were known for their love of study. Rich and poor alike were welcomed into their ranks, provided they had a sharp wit and willingness to work hard. Unlike the Sadducees, who kept the secrets of the Torah locked within the Temple compound in Jerusalem and the Essenes who withheld it in their compounds in the countryside, the Pharisees sought to make the Torah accessible to the thinkers of Judea. Among the Pharisaic adherents were many priests and scholars who meticulously studied the Torah and made use of an oral tradition to help explain its meaning. This ever-evolving oral heritage enabled the Pharisees to adapt the teachings of the Torah to new circumstances.

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32 The Bar Kokhba Rebellion is not to be confused with the Great Rebellion that provoked the Roman Legions to destroy the Second Temple in the first place.

33 Since the Zealots were more of a political faction than a spiritual one, I have omitted them from this discussion. Also, a growing school of scholarship holds that there were many more factions within Judaism, of which we only have clear records of three. These divisions are primarily based on the historical account of Flavius Josephus and have defined the "mainstream" of Jewish historiography about the end of the Second Temple Period.

34 Michael Edward Stone in his work, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions* theorizes that the Essenes may have "become a sectarian community because of their opposition to the expulsion of the Zadokite line from the High Priestly office" under the Hasmonians (75 -76).

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The Pharisees took full advantage of this flexibility after the failed Jewish rebellion from 66 to 70 C.E. prompted Roman rulers to level the Second Temple.35 Jewish zealots within the population had challenged the Roman Empire's sovereignty over Judea and were soundly defeated. Rome devastated not only the rebels, but Jewish society more broadly. The Essenes were all but wiped out in the course of the war, while the Sadducees, who had relied on the Temple for legitimacy, lost the symbol of their power and ritual purpose (Schiffman 277). What remained of the razed Temple and terrified society was the tradition of the Pharisees. Their broad base of support and dependence on multiple academies rather than a single religious holy site sustained this intermediate sect in the midst of the destruction wrought by the Romans. The tradition proved flexible enough not only to withstand a second abortive revolt in 130 C.E. but to sustain the Jewish people for two millennia, even after Judea was abolished as a state altogether.

Central to the reestablishment of Judaism after the fall of the Second Temple was Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, a top scholar and Pharisee who, though born a priest, was critical of the distance that priests placed between themselves and ordinary people (Ben-Sasson 319-320). He was said to have escaped the siege of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. in a coffin, smuggled by his students to safety outside the city (Ben-Sasson 319-320). Though it is clear that he reemerged in Jabneh following his unlikely escape from the besieged Temple complex, the circumstances of his arrival and work to refashion rituals previously centered in the Temple remain enmeshed in conflicting accounts. What we know from these sources is his that he worked tirelessly to reconvene the Sanhedrin – the High Court of rabbinical sages previously seated at the Temple – and to adapt Jewish practices to an era without a central ritual cult (Ben-Sasson 319-320). Fear that Judaism would be lost in the chaos of Roman oppression sparked what became an unprecedented movement for Jewish renewal.

A major factor that contributed to Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai's revival of Judaism from its state of disarray was the institution of the synagogue. The synagogue had existed both in the Diaspora and Land of Israel during the Second Temple Period and provided a center for communal worship and gathering. Its rituals had been based around the Temple – such as the three daily worship services timed to coincide with the sacrifices taking place in Jerusalem – and it provided a blueprint for Jewish communal life. In fact, during the epoch of the Second Temple, the idea of prayer, rather than sacrifice, as a means of worshiping the divine had become so prevalent that a prayer room was established within the Temple complex itself (Schiffman 275). Because of the emergence of synagogues, a network of Jewish communities was already in place by the time of the Temple's destruction. The Jewish High Court in Jabneh, once it gained legitimacy, could then focus its efforts on honing and administering Jewish law and establishing schools and synagogues (Ben-Sasson 323 – 325). It had no need to devise a Jewish communal structure from scratch.

Under Rabbi Johanan and the other rabbinic authorities of Jabneh, a remarkable culture of learning coalesced. Students came from afar to study under the rabbinic sages of the

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35 It appears that a significant enough number of Essenes took part in the Great Rebellion for the Romans to essentially wipe them out (according to Josephus). Please also note that there were some places that held out until 73 C.E. However, by the time Jerusalem was taken, the result of the Rebellion had already been determined

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Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court), eager to learn Jewish law and in time earn rabbinic ordination (327 – 328). Students often studied under multiple sages, shifting from one to the next until they found one whose teaching style and understanding of Jewish law meshed with their own.

Ironically, the destruction of the Temple and resultant fear it provoked in many respects led to the enrichment of Jewish thought. A meritocracy in which wealth and ancestry were of far less importance replaced the rigid class structure. Moreover, the lower-class origins of the Pharisees compelled their rabbinic heirs to emphasize social justice and practicality far more than their Sadducee counterparts had in Second Temple Judaism. While the trauma and *pachad* (fright) at having a seemingly indestructible Temple razed cast a pall over the period, Jewish life was rekindled – from the historical vantage point – with remarkable speed under the auspices of rabbinic Judaism. Arguably, what had been lost was replaced by an even more impressive tradition, which gained widespread support in the Jewish Diaspora and provided the foundation for Judaism as we understand it today (Schiffman, 277).

The weighty history of Judaism during the Second Temple Period reveals both the remarkable hope that initially compelled Jews to fight for their autonomy in two fateful uprisings and the stark realization that independence could not be achieved in the foreseeable future. In many respects, it is the burden that Jews bore throughout the Diaspora. Had God turned on the Jews? Were they destined always to be "strangers in a strange land" or even slaves, as they had in Egypt?36 Yet the remarkable tradition of rabbinic Judaism proved to be such a gift that Jews also felt privy to a marvelous intellectual and spiritual fortune, which was to be cherished and preserved (Wylen 186). With the Torah as their mainstay and the compilations of Jewish legal texts and commentary (*Mishneh* and *Gemarah*) as guides to its interpretation, the Jews had built an intellectual temple that could replace the physical one that was lost. The *pachad* (fright) caused by Roman brutality roused a tradition that inspired *yirah* (awe) for generations and which may never have otherwise endured.

Case Study 2: Evolving response to the Holocaust

The Holocaust is one of the only events in Jewish history comparable to, if not more terrible than, the brutalization of Judea during and after the Great War with Rome. While the Holocaust's impact is still felt generations after the event itself ended, the full extent to which it will influence Jewish theology, practice, and culture remains to be seen. It is difficult to forecast what may emerge within Judaism, as it evolves in the coming centuries and incorporates the terrifying experience of the Holocaust into the belief system and the collective memory of its practitioners.

Even so, the Holocaust itself merits examination as a study of how Jews reacted to oppression and fear at the hands of the Germans. Raul Hilberg, one of the founders of Holocaust

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36 The claim that Jews had been slaves in Egypt is based on the Torah and has come under dispute in recent years by archaeologists.

Studies, presents a daring thesis about their response in the introduction to his magnum opus, *The Destruction of the European Jews*:

> The destruction of European Jewry was fundamentally the work of German perpetrators...Yet every day German exertions and costs were being affected by the behavior of the victims. To the extent that an agency could marshal only limited resources for a particular task, the very progress of the operation and its ultimate success depended on the mode of the Jewish response. (22)

This reaction, Hilberg argues, was formed following the destruction of the Second Temple, when the best Jewish response to anti-Semitism was to mollify the oppressor or flee the locale. As a result, the Jews worked towards the "alleviation" of threats and pogroms through "petitions, protection payments, ransom arrangements, anticipatory compliance, relief, rescue, salvage, reconstruction" (22). They did so even when the Nazi plot against the Jews turned out to be far more than an episode of anti-Jewish foment and one that may have warranted, in retrospect, resistance and even an outright revolt to prevent it.

Hilberg's thesis has proven controversial, with Daniel Goldhagen[37] contending that the destruction of European Jewry could be attributed singularly to the attributes of German society and Hannah Arendt[38] advancing the idea that the "atomization" of a population under dictatorial rule, such as that of the Nazis, is what facilitates barbarism on the part of the rulers. Hilberg's thesis rests carefully between these two extremes, neither negating the agency of ordinary Germans in enabling the massacre of Europe's Jews (as in Arendt) nor blaming Germans and their culture entirely for the Holocaust (as in Goldhagen). As such, Hilberg offers a more plausible account of events that may never truly be explicable.

Hilberg suggests that the Jews had learned from historical experience – particularly during the Middle Ages in Europe – to avoid confronting those perpetrating anti-Semitic violence for fear fomenting further atrocities. The most common of the Jewish responses to fear in Europe since the Middle Ages, therefore, have been appeasement and avoidance; events that provoke *pachad* (fright) resulted in acquiescence in order to minimize injury, loss of life, and loss of livelihood. Hilberg says,

> The Jewish posture in the face of destruction [during the Holocaust] was not shaped on the spur of the moment. The Jews of Europe had been confronted by force many times in their history, and during these encounters they had evolved a set of reactions that were to remain remarkably constant over the centuries... Preventive attack, armed resistance, and revenge were almost completely absent in Jewish exilic history (Hilberg 22).

According to Hilberg, Judaism adapted to the adverse circumstances of exile from Judea in the second century and eschewed armed resistance as a viable response to violent outbursts of anti-Semitism.

Hilberg's claim rests on the assumption that information was passed on by Jews who survived or witnessed pogroms throughout the Middle Ages, creating a collective memory of

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37 See *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996).

38 See *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).

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responding to force through acquiescence. This notion is supported by the fact that Jews possessed a common written language and traveled widely for purposes of trade, 39 scholarship, and the search of better living conditions. Jews from one region could thereby easily relay their experiences to those in another, creating a high degree of shared memory and wisdom about how to approach adverse scenarios. Moreover, the rabbinical legal system ensured a high degree of communication between communal leaders, as rabbis made precedents and sought each other's advice on challenging cases within Jewish law.

The Holocaust, according to Hilberg, may therefore be construed as an event in which the Jewish communities of Europe dramatically miscalculated the actions that would "result in the least damage and least injury" based on past experience (23). The calculation to concede property and personal freedoms to the Nazis was intended to minimize damage, but ultimately hastened the demise of European Jewry and enabled the efficient bureaucratic apparatus of the Nazis to annihilate a third of all Jews alive in the world at the time. Because of the gruesomely efficient Nazi bureaucracy, Jews no longer served an essential administrative function (as Hilberg argues they had in previous regimes throughout history) and could thereby be wiped out entirely without a significant cost to German society.

The failure of "learned" responses to anti-Semitic aggression during and leading up to the Holocaust has already prompted major shifts in the historical memory of the Jewish community and self-critical rebukes as searing as those present after the fall of the Second Temple. As far back as 1942, when reports of mass executions began to make their way into Jewish newspapers (and to a shockingly small degree into the mainstream media), significant segments of American Jewry have criticized their leaders for their insufficient responses (Wyman 1 – 5). Jewish leaders' unspecific recommendations to President Roosevelt in December 1942, followed by the adamant inaction of President Roosevelt in the subsequent months delayed any meaningful response by the United States until the beginning of 1944 (7 – 24). Only under pressure from Congress and the U.S. Treasury (rather than from Jewish organizations) did Roosevelt establish the War Refugee Board (WRB) by way of executive order. While estimates suggest that WRB may have saved as many as 100,000 – 200,000 lives, Professor David Wyman of the University of Massachusetts concludes that "Strong and persistent pressure after the War Refugee Board was formed [in 1944] would have been necessary to have forced the Roosevelt Administration to give the board the support it needed for a maximum rescue effort" (26). Within Jewish historical memory (and arguably historical source materials themselves), it is clear that Jewish leaders were unable to convince President Roosevelt to save their coreligionists from near-certain death.

The inability of the American Jewish community to garner and maintain public and political support for the effort to save European Jews has left an enduring imprint on the American Jewish psyche, much as it has on that of Jewish communities around the world. Acquiescence in continental Europe coupled with impotence abroad dramatically altered the

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39 Trade was facilitated by one of the earliest systems of international law, *Halacha*, which was enforceable and highly uniform its application. Trade was also one of the few jobs open to Jews, who were in large part prohibited from owning land.

Jewish response to *pachad* (fright) from that which Hilberg determines to be the pre-Holocaust mentality of most Jews. Rather than seeking to mitigate anti-Semitism through diplomacy or compliance with a given regime, the Jewish community came to see collective action and even outright resistance as desirable and praiseworthy responses to fear. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis and the work of Zionists to establish a safe haven for Jews in spite of British equivocations became emblematic of the new Jewish ethic of resistance and self-sufficiency.

Recent events have added further nuance to the Jewish response to the Holocaust and somewhat softened the intense need to feel independent and capable. Widespread efforts by Jews and non-Jews alike in the United States to memorialize the Holocaust through monuments, museums, and education programs have dampened the sense of mistreatment and impotence that Jews felt after the Holocaust. With ample *lieux de mémoire40* in the public sphere and secular society, American Jews have had their sense of helplessness and mourning partially transformed into a feeling of acceptance by the broader society in a way unprecedented since the destruction of the Second Temple.

This evolving emotional response on the part of the American Jewish community has been hastened by the growing sense that Israeli military actions since the 1967 War may have contributed to the elusiveness of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. With recent polls indicating that the vast majority of American Jews support the Middle East peace process, the feeling that Jews must act unilaterally to protect themselves has been tempered by the realization that multilateral action may on occasion save lives on all sides and be both the more prudent and ethical course (Fingerhut 1).

Conclusion

Reactions to the Holocaust continue to evolve, much as reactions did to the destruction of the Second Temple. These two events, perhaps the most traumatic in Jewish history, share remarkable parallels. The initial *pachad* (fright) that the Jewish community experienced after the fall of the Second Temple morphed into *yirah* (awe) at the remarkable work of the Mishneh. What had seemed an insurmountable blow to Judaism became a transformative force for reform, change, and redirection within the religious tradition.

Analogous trends appear to be emerging as the Jewish community continues to reestablish and redefine itself in the generations after the Holocaust. Fear of insufficient action has been tempered by the realization that overzealous self-defense can also hold negative consequences; concerns about the hostility of others to Jews have been mollified by the abundance of public memorials in the United States and Western Europe for the Holocaust and education programs seeking to promote tolerance. While the ultimate results of Jewish *pachad* (fright) and trauma during the Holocaust remain to be seen, it would be unsurprising if they prove to be as remarkable as the rabbinic tradition did when it emerged over nineteen centuries

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40 "Places of Memory" is a term coined by French historian Pierre Nora and includes memorials, monuments, works of art, etc.

ago from the ruins of the Second Temple. Fear of the most terrible sort may yet again prompt results worthy of awe, as its causes are studied and adapted to throughout the generations.

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Response to Fear in the Muslim Tradition
By Hafsa Kanjwal

Abstract

This paper explores the role of fear in the Muslim tradition and the religious or historical sources to which Muslim can turn to in order to manage fear on both a communal and individual level. The paper begins with an analysis on the varied references to fear in the Quran and traditional Islamic scholarship and then focuses on the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the experiences of the early Muslim community in regards to moments of fear that they experienced and their response.

Introduction

In a way, Islam serves as an antidote to fear. The foundational beliefs and teachings of the Muslim tradition, especially as communicated through the Quran and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad, give the believer a panoramic perspective on worldly suffering.41 This perspective is rooted in the fundamental insecurities of a believer's existence, and propels him to place complete faith in Allah. In a number of Quranic verses, the injunction is clear: nothing of this world - no individual, group or calamity - should serve as a cause of fear for a Muslim.42 A true believer's fear should stem from two ultimate realities: the Almighty Creator and the Day of Judgment. It is thus the responsibility of the believer to cultivate the proper type of fear, and in doing so, work to rid himself of the improper types.43

Despite Quranic injunctions that Muslims must overcome their worldly fears in order to truly manifest their belief in Allah, the Quran acknowledges that individuals, and the community or *ummah* as a whole, will experience challenges that can lead to despair. Managing fear, therefore, is often addressed in Quranic discourse. The Quran chronicles instances in history when prophets and their followers suffered from despair and anxiety, including stories of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh and the struggles of the early Muslim community in Mecca and Medina.

This paper explores the role of fear in the Muslim tradition. I will first analyze the varied references to fear in the Quran and traditional Islamic scholarship. Next, I will focus on the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the experiences of the early Muslim community in regards to moments of fear that they experienced and their response. The example of the Prophet is

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41 The Quran and the example of the Prophet Muhammad through his teachings and practices, known as the *Sunnah*, serve as the two primary sources of guidance for Muslims. All other Islamic hermeneutical works, including *fiqh* or *shari'a* stem from these two sources. This paper will primarily focus on the Quran and the Sunnah. A chapter of the Quran is known as a *Surah*.

42 This sentiment is expressed in Surah 3, Verse 175 in the Quran which states, "It is but Satan who instills [into you] fear of his allies: so fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [truly] believers!" For this and all other translated Quranic verses, I will be using "The Message of the Quran" translated and with commentary by Muhammad Asad, published by The Book Foundation in 2003.

43 Professor Anjum is the Imam Khattab Chair of Islamic Studies at the Department of Philosophy, University of Toledo.

imperative for the scope of this paper, as he embodies the ultimate role model for all Muslims. The goal of this paper is to shed light on religious or historical sources to which Muslims have turned in order to understand how to manage fear—on both a communal and individual level—through faith.

The Quran and Traditional Islamic Scholarship

The Quran uses a number of Arabic words to express fear, although the precise definition of each differs based on context. The general term *khawf* is used in *Surah* (Chapter) 3, Verse 175, "So fear them not, and fear Me alone, if you are believers." Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, a Sufi and prominent Sunni jurist, wrote an entire chapter on "The Station of al-Khawf" in his work on spirituality, *Madarij us Salikeen*. In the chapter, he cites *khawf* as part of a spiritual path for Sufis.44 Ibn Qayyim includes a *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad, in which Ayesha, the wife of the Prophet states:45

> "O Messenger of Allah, is the verse 'And those who dispense their charity while their hearts fear that to their Lord they must return' [23:60] referring to someone who commits fornication, drinks alcohol and steals and still fears Allah?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "No, Oh daughter of as-Siddiq, but it refers to one who fasts, perform prayer and gives charity, and fears that it may not be accepted from him." (Tirmithi) Al-Hasan, commenting on this, said, "By Allah, they (the Companions) obeyed Him and strove hard in it, yet they feared it might be rejected. A believer combines righteousness with fear in his heart, while a hypocrite combines evil with impunity."46

This hadith underscores the importance of cultivating fear for a believer, as fear positions him to remain steadfast on the path of righteousness.

Ibn Qayyim then addresses the nuances in the different types of fear. The general term *khawf* is used for the fear of an ordinary believer who, when faced with a trial, takes flight or is motivated by his survival instinct. This is the lowest degree of fear that is required by faith. The word *rahbah* is similar to *khawf* and describes the urge to run away from danger as a result of fear—in most cases, of death.47 The words *khashyah, wajal,* and *haybah* are also translated as "fear". *Khashyah,* which is more specific than *khawf*, is associated with those who have an

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44 *Madarij us Salikeen*, which is translated as the "Ranks of the Divine Seekers," is an eminent work on Muslim spirituality by Ibn Qayyim, who was born in the year 1292 and died in 1350 CE. Ibn Qayyim, who was born near the city of Damascus, in Syria, was a student and close companion of the great 13th Century Hanbali reformer Ibn Taymiyya.

45 A *hadith* is a tradition based on reports of the sayings, actions and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, known as the Sahaba. A hadith also includes a chain of transmission.

46 This hadith was referenced in *Madarij us Salikeen*, translated from the Arabic by Ovamir Anjum. For more, see: http://www.islaam.com/Article.aspx?id=664.

47 Overcoming the fear of death, which is a human beings ultimate fear, is a primary responsibility for a Muslim, and is mentioned in many works by Islamic scholars of spirituality. For Muslims, death is not the end, but a transitional phase that will bring one closer to meeting with the Creator. Once a Muslim overcomes the fear of death, other fears become small. In Surah 4, Verse 84, the Quran exclaims: "Fight thou, then, in God's cause –since thou art but responsible for thine own self – and inspire the believers to overcome all fear of death."

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innate awareness of Allah, and as a result, are in a state of tranquility when faced with adversity. This is more akin to a state of awe and is expressed in Surah 35:28: "and (as) there are in men, and in crawling beasts, and in cattle, too, many hues? Of all His servants, only such as are endowed with [innate] knowledge stand [truly] in awe of Allah." Another word in Arabic that is from the same root as *khashyah*, is *khushoo*. Muslims are urged to specifically develop *khushoo*, or "submission", in their prayers as expressed in Surah 23, Verse 1-2: "Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers, those who humble themselves in their prayer." This humility and submission during prayer is a result of a believer's awe and fear of Allah and the knowledge that He is omniscient.

Ibn Qayyim describes *wajal* as the "trembling of the heart" upon the cognition or remembrance of someone whose power or punishment one fears.48 Finally, *haybah* is the fear associated with the virtuousness and glorification that comes as a result of the fear of displeasing Allah. According to a number of Muslim scholars, this is the highest stage of fear towards which the believer and community must strive.49 Another word for this is *taqwa*, translated as "Allah-consciousness" or "piety." Developing *taqwa* helps a Muslim pursue righteousness and keeps him from the acts that are forbidden.

Khawf is a complement to the Arabic term *raja',* which means "hope". A sound believer must be able to balance both hope and fear, and ensure that neither are too extreme. Fear that results in despair is impermissible, as is hope that results in a sense of security—if one feels secure, or fearless, where is the need for belief in a Higher Power and Sustainer? Ibn Qayyim asserts that fear is but a means towards an end—that end being receiving Allah's ultimate pleasure in the hereafter. It is said of the people of Paradise that "no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve" (Asad 274). In another beautiful Quranic verse, Muslims are told that "among His wonders is this: He displays before you the lightning, giving rise to [both] fear and hope, and sends down water from the skies, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless: in this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who use their reason!" (24). This call to reason is an important command. Muslims should not let their fears overcome them to a point where their reason is impaired.

In another Surah, the Quran "urges the believers to fulfill their spiritual and social responsibilities, and ends with a reminder of man's utter dependence on Allah" (Surah Maa'iadah). A verse in this Surah is especially relevant to the context surrounding the contemporary fears and challenges of the global Muslim community. It was revealed at a time when the Prophet and his companions were facing persecution and hostility from their neighbors in Medina. It states: "O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, Allah will in time bring forth [in your stead] people whom He loves and who love Him - humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: [people] who strive hard in Allah's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them."50 Sayyid

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48 *Madarij us Salikeen*
49 It is important to mention that while many examples relaying the role of fear might reflect an individual response or reaction, religiously speaking, the moral imperatives for individual believers in Islam are also those for the community at large.
50 *The Message of the Quran*, Surah 5, Verse 54.

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Abul Ala Mawdudi, a major 20th century Islamist thinker in the Indian subcontinent, writes about this verse in his exegesis of the Quran:

> That is, they will fearlessly follow the Way of Allah and act upon His commandments, and declare to be right what is right, and wrong what is wrong, according to it, and will not mind in the least the opposition, the censure, the criticism, the objections, the derision and ridicules of their opponents. They will boldly follow the Way of Islam which they sincerely believe to be right, even if the popular opinion is against Islam and they are exposed to the ridicule, derision and taunts of the world (88).51

Ultimately, this verse affirms that the believers will surely be persecuted or rebuked in this world because of their religion. It urges Muslims to not be intimidated by those who seek to defame Islam, and instead stand proudly by their faith.

The Life of the Prophet Muhammad

The *Seerah*, or life of the Prophet Muhammad, is an important source of guidance for Muslims. Muslims look towards his physical and spiritual journey as a model for how they should conduct themselves in this world. In recent years, a number of English-language biographies have been written about the Prophet by contemporary Muslims (and non-Muslims) who try to relay the relevance of his message to modern readers.52 The Prophet embodied the "living Quran," and the ideals that believers aspire towards are in his manner, speech, looks and behavior, based on the context of his own life and those who surrounded him. It is especially in the moments of adversity—both in the Prophet's personal life and in the history of the first Muslims, that we can find appropriate responses to managing fear.

It is difficult to imagine a day in the life of the Prophet when he must not have felt even a minimal amount of fear. From his early childhood, which was for the most part spent as an orphan, to his last days of fulfilling his mission, the Prophet faced innumerable challenges: the death of close friends and family, betrayal, persecution, and war. Furthermore, he not only served as a prophet, but also head of state, military commander, diplomat, businessman, legislator, and family man.

One of the most fearful moments of the Prophets life is when he received his first revelation from the Angel Gibrail in the cave of Hira near Mecca, where he would seclude himself for days in worship and reflection. His wife Ayesha narrates in a hadith:

> Then Allah's Apostle returned with the Inspiration and with his heart beating severely. Then he went to Khadija bint Khuwailid and said, "Cover me! Cover me!" They covered him till his fear was over and after that he told her everything

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51 Mawdudi's exegesis is entitled *Tafhim al-Quran,* which means "The Meaning of the Quran." For more, see: http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/5/index.html.

52 These biographies include *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet* by Tariq Ramadan, *Memories of Muhammad* by Omid Safi, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* by Karen Armstrong, and *And Muhammad is His Messenger* by Annemarie Schimmel. I will primarily be using Ramadan's biography.

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that had happened and said, "I fear that something may happen to me." Khadija replied, "Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your Kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones. (*Sahih Bukhari*)

Khadija bint Khuwailid was the Prophet's first wife. Her immediate support and faith in him from the start of the revelation was a tremendous source of comfort, as was the support of the initial converts to Islam. This hadith is remarkable in that it not only signifies the love and trust between the Prophet and his wife, Khadija, it also humanizes the Prophet for ordinary believers. Here was a simple, illiterate merchant in Mecca, who was being told that he was the Messenger of Allah! The enormity of this life-altering moment cannot be overlooked. With such an onerous and unexpected task ahead of him, the Prophet no doubt felt an abundance of emotions in addition to fear, including immense psychological strain. This hadith reveals a significant lesson for Muslims: domestic and community solidarity in moments of fear. Even the Prophet of Allah had to turn to his closest family and friends during this time period for comfort.

As the Prophet received more revelations and broadened his base of support in Mecca, the heads of the various clans became increasingly threatened by his message, observing that it challenged the very economic, political and religious fabric of society. These individuals included heads of the tribe of Quraysh, who at the time, practiced polytheism. By calling on the people of Mecca to worship one God and get rid of their idols, the Prophet was undoubtedly challenging their basic belief systems. As a result, the Muslims were persecuted, leading the Prophet to make a critical decision. He told a group of nearly one hundred Muslims to migrate to the land of Abyssinia, which is in modern-day Ethiopia. The Prophet instructed them to "find there a king under whose command nobody suffers injustice…[and] remain there until Allah delivered you from what you suffer at present" (Ramadan 59) The king of Abyssinia was named Negus, and he was a practicing Christian who was known for his tolerance and just nature. The Prophet believed that the Muslims would be welcome in his land.

The Meccans tried to sabotage their departure by sending emissaries to Abyssinia to persuade the king to expel his Muslim subjects. The king refused to heed their concerns unless he heard from the Muslims themselves about the tenets of their faith and the message of their Prophet. Although he was impressed by the call to oppose injustice and reject idol worship, the emissaries sought to create a divide by highlighting the Muslim understanding of Jesus as a mere mortal, which undoubtedly stood in stark contrast to the understandings of the Christian king. The king demanded to know more about Jesus in Islam, and "the Muslims were aware of the dangers this encounter involved: an explanation of the differences between the two religions might lead Negus to send them back" (61). Nonetheless, they remained true to the teachings of the faith in their response. This impressed Negus, who sent the emissaries back and welcomed the Muslims to his land.

This narrative reveals an important lesson for contemporary Muslims, particularly those living in Western societies. Muslims should not only look towards other Muslims in moments of fear or adversity—it is imperative to cultivate alliances with and seek solidarity with diverse faith groups. The Prophet recognized that although Negus was a Christian, he was a man of principle

and justice, and *that* was the basis for his trust in him. Furthermore, this incident speaks to the Quranic verse mentioned earlier in Surah Maa'idah. In spite of facing the threat of being expelled from Abyssinia, members of the early community did not compromise their religious principles for the sake of appeasing Negus. It is by their truthful representation of their faith tradition that they were ultimately saved.

Meanwhile, in Mecca, the situation for the remaining Muslims and the Prophet was deteriorating. Although some of the Muslims were protected by their tribal or clan affiliations, this protection was challenged when the Meccans began an economic boycott of the Muslim community. In addition, the Prophet personally suffered a loss with the death of his wife Khadija and his guardian and uncle, Abu Talib. Seeking to find a tribe that would offer the Muslims protection, he went to the town of Taif. There, he was met with a cold reception and asked how Allah would allow His Messenger to beg for their support. As he left, the population of the tribe ridiculed him and the children threw stones at him, causing him to bleed. In a moment of utter despair, he sought refuge in an orchard, and turned towards his Creator:

> O God, to You alone I complain of my weakness, the meagerness of my resources and my insignificance before men. O Most Merciful of the Merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord. Into whose hands do You entrust me? To some remote stranger who will ill-treat me? Or to an enemy to whom You have granted authority over my affairs? I harbor no fear as long as You are not angry with me. Yet Your gracious support would open a broader way and a wider horizon for me! I seek refuge in the light of Your face, by which all darkness is illuminated and the things of this world and the next are set aright, so that I do not incur Your anger and am not touched by Your wrath. Nevertheless, it is You prerogative to admonish as long as You are not satisfied. There is no power strength but in You (69).

This prayer expresses the Prophet's fears about fulfilling his mission on this earth, which was undeniably becoming more challenging with each passing day. According to Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss Islamic scholar and academic, the prayer "tells of humanity's helplessness and of the Messenger's extraordinary spiritual strength. Seemingly lonely and without support, he knew that he was not alone" (69).

Eventually it became clear that the Muslims needed to leave Mecca and migrate to Medina. The Prophet and one of his closest companions, Abu Bakr, were two of the last people to leave. The clan chiefs in Mecca had decided to execute the Prophet. In order to trick the executioners, the Prophet decided that his nephew would take his place in his bed the night of the departure. The planning of the *hijra* or migration had been in effect for nearly two years. One might ask why the Prophet of Allah would need to plan or strategize. It was ultimately this strategic organization that enabled the Muslim community to safely relocate to Medina. As Ramadan states:

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Only after making intelligent and thorough use of his human powers had he trusted himself to the divine will, thereby clarifying for us the meaning of reliance on God: responsibly exercising all the qualities (intellectual, spiritual, psychological, sentimental, etc.) each one of us has been granted and humbly remembering that beyond what is human possible, God alone makes things happen. Indeed, this teaching is the exact opposite of the temptation of fatalism: God will act only after humans have, at their own level, sought out and exhausted all the potentialities of action. That is the profound meaning of this Quranic verse: "Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (81)

Before the departure, the Prophet made sure to repay all of his debts in Mecca, even to his enemies. Even in the midst of a trial, he fulfilled his social obligations. Abu Bakr and the Prophet strategized an escape plan where they hid in a cave near Mecca and gathered intelligence about their pursuers' whereabouts through Abu Bakr's family. At one point, a group of Meccan men arrived in front of the cave, preparing to enter. Abu Bakr became alarmed that they would be seen, but the Prophet reassured him, saying: "Have no fear, for God is with us," and added, "What do you think of two [people] whose third is God?" (82). Miraculously, a spider had woven a web that covered the entrance, and a dove had nested there. To the blood-thirsty Meccans, it appeared that no one could possibly be hiding inside the cave. The incident at the cave was another fateful moment for the Prophet; in spite of his carefully executed strategy, he was still in danger of being discovered. At that moment, "trust in God, of which the Prophet reminded Abu Bakr…took on its full meaning and strength" (82).

Once in Medina, the challenges for the Muslim community did not come to a halt. The Meccans and the Muslims went to battle a number of times, the first of which, the Battle of Badr, the Muslims enjoyed a resounding victory despite having significantly fewer soldiers. In the Battle of the Trench the Muslim army, led by the Prophet, strategized once more. They dug a moat wide and deep enough around the city of Medina to prevent the Meccans from entering. Such resourcefulness in military strategy is "revealing of the manner in which the Prophet taught his Companions both deep faith and the exploitation of intellectual creativity in all circumstances….the genius of peoples, the wisdom of nations, and healthy human creativity were integrated into their mode of thinking, without hesitation or timidity" (138). Nonetheless, as the battle ensued, the Quran describes the fear that gripped the Muslims. In Surah Ahzab, the Quran declares, "[Remember what you felt] when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when [your] eyes became dim and [your] hearts came up to [your] throats, and [when] most conflicting thoughts about God passed through your minds: [for] there and then were the believers tried, and shaken with a shock severe." Again, the juxtaposition of strategy in addition to maintaining faith and fearing none but Allah is depicted in this situation.

The use of rationality and strategy was not restricted to the battle; in these adverse circumstances, even legal thought was developed as it related to practice, accounting for fearful or adverse circumstances. For example, although normally it is recommended that Muslims pray together, during times of fear, especially in battle, the Quran states:

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> Thus, when thou art among the believers and about to lead them in prayer, let [only] part of them stand up with thee, retaining their arms. Then, after they have finished their prayer, let them provide you cover while another group, who have not yet prayed, shall come forward and pray with thee, being fully prepared against danger and retaining their arms: (for) those who are bent on denying the truth would love to see you oblivious of your arms and your equipment, so that they might fall upon you in a surprise attack. But it shall not be wrong for you to lay down your arms [while you pray] if you are troubled by rain or if you are ill; but [always] be fully prepared against danger (Surah 4, Verse 102).

This prayer is called *Salat ul Khawf*, or the Prayer of Fear. It is permissible when in fear of human beings, but also "when one is gripped with the fear of hurt from some beast like a lion or python and there is very little time left to make the prayer." (Mufti Shafi Usmani, Maariful Quran, Volume 2 561) It is important to note that flexibility is allowed with regard to religious practice. Thus, the response to fear need not only happen within a spiritual or political realm, but also in the legal realm.53

After the three main battles against the Meccans, the Prophet decided that it was time to make a peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca with some of his followers. The *Hajj*, or pilgrimage, is a religious requirement for every Muslim. As the sanctuary within Mecca was considered off-limits for warfare, and the Meccans, by custom, were expected to be welcoming of all those who wished to enter, the Prophet hoped that he and his followers would be allowed in. Nonetheless, the Meccans resisted the entry, and the two opposing parties meet on the plain of Hudaybiyyah, nearly ten miles outside of Mecca, to negotiate a settlement. At first, it appears to the Muslims that the Prophet made a number of compromises in the treaty, including an agreement that the Muslims would not make the pilgrimage that year but the year after. His followers become incensed, stating that the treaty only was of benefit to the Meccans and had humiliated the Muslims. Yet, the patience and foresight of the Prophet is evident, as this treaty proved to be a watershed moment for his community.54 The Prophet was able to make a number of compromises to maintain peace in the region, based on his "deep spirituality, strict rational coherence, extraordinary intelligence, and strategic genius."55 By agreeing not to make the pilgrimage that year, the Prophet understood the vulnerability the Meccans felt, especially after the Battle of the Trench, and he knew they wanted to protect their prestige. The Quran affirmed his decision, and a revelation was sent down:

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53 In Islamic thought, this legal realm is primarily in the area of *fiqh,* which is defined as Islamic jurisprudence, based on the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. It is related to Islamic law (*sharia*). Many of the rulings cover religious practice, such as prayer, fasting, performing the hajj, etc.
54 Although this paper will not go into detail about the implications of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, it is described in detail in the chapter "A Dream, Peace" in Ramadan's biography of the Prophet.
55 Ramadan 157

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> Indeed, God has shown the truth in His Apostle's true vision: most certainly shall you enter the Inviolable House of Worship, if God so wills, in full security, with your heads shaved or your hair cut short, without any fear: for He has [always] known that which you yourselves could not know. And He has ordained [for you], besides this, a victory soon to come."56

Ultimately, the Muslims peacefully took over Mecca—the same city that had, only a few years ago, driven them out. That moment alone, is not considered the prime victory. The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, which set the stage for long-term peace between the Muslims and the Meccans, is considered a victory in Muslim history. This incident, which has strong political and diplomatic relevance today, displays that "listening, the ability to shift one's point of view, sensitivity to the other's dignity, and foresight" are critical to inculcate in any response to adverse situations (Ramadan 157). One must continuously be able to balance short-term advantages, for longer-term security.

The ability to cultivate patience during times of adversity is also addressed in another Prophetic hadith. This hadith could be seen as an example of how the Prophet urged his followers to *not* manage fear. In this hadith:

> The Prophet passed by a woman who was weeping beside a grave. He told her to fear Allah and be patient. She said to him, "Go away, for you have not been afflicted with a calamity like mine." And she did not recognize him. Then she was informed that he was the Prophet. So she went to the house of the Prophet and there she did not find any guard. Then she said to him, "I did not recognize you." He said, "Verily, the patience is at the first stroke of a calamity. (*Sahih Bukhari*)

This hadith urges Muslims to not only always fear Allah, but also remain patient in the face of calamity.

Conclusion

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from the Quran and the life of the Prophet Muhammad as it relates to coping with fear. Fear, in many ways, enables religion to remain relevant. It is in moments of adversity that believers are able to find inspiration. Fear cannot be separated from its emotional, spiritual, physical, and political ancillaries. In some cases it impinges upon physical well being, in others, it must be developed for spiritual purification, and in others, it factors into communal survival within a hostile climate.

A strong theme throughout the Quranic verses and the example of the Prophet has been the importance of fearing only Allah. As it applies to worldly fears, Muslims are urged to use their rational capacity, such as strategy, innovation, and creativity to deal with their fears. Whether this means building alliances, making compromises, or creating new traditions, the

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56 *The Message of the Quran*, Surah 48, Verse 27

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Prophet and the history of the early Muslim community sets an example for a number of models for contemporary Muslims.

As this paper was meant to be an introduction to the scriptural and historical sources that Muslims can turn to in order to manage fear, a number of questions pertaining to the role of fear for the contemporary Muslim inevitably arises. Going forward, we must ask ourselves: What induces fear for the contemporary Muslim? How has the community dealt with these fears thus far? What are the situations today that call for alliances? How are Muslims making compromises that could be deemed beneficial and what compromises impinge upon our religious principles? In addressing these questions, this paper hopes to relay Quranic discourse and lessons from the Prophet Muhammad's life to serve as a foundation for the discussion.

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From the Editors in Chief:

This fall, members of our Board of Scholars and Practitioners and friends participated in a panel discussion at the American Academy of Religions to consider the promise and challenges of inter-religious dialogue.

It was noted by many in the audience that inter-religious dialogue as a field has experienced great growth in the past decade, and the Journal itself, as well as its collaborative leadership model, were lauded as examples of a new wave of scholarship in the Academy.

We have included here the paper given by board member Madhuri M. Yadlapati, which framed the conversation in a theoretical and systematic context. Her paper was answered by fellow board members in a considered conversation; we are pleased to share it here in this special section, with our readers.

In peace,
Joshua Zaslow Stanton and Stephanie Varnon-Hughes
Editors in Chief

Raimon Panikkar, John Hick, and a Pluralist Theology of Religions

By Madhuri M. Yadlapati

Abstract

Although many Christian pluralist theologies of religion have been advocated in different forms to promote the real value of many religious traditions, critics most often target the classic pluralist proposal advanced by John Hick, one which explains the many religions as separate paths toward one transcendent goal. This paper traces the ways in which Raimon Panikkar's pluralist theology departs from Hick's by adopting a different response to Kantian epistemology. By relying on relational ontology and religious dialogue that exercises deconstruction of one's own presuppositions, Panikkar's pluralism better meets certain stated goals of pluralism like peace, cooperation, and increased mutual understanding among different religious communities.

Introduction

In the field of Christian theology of religions, the threefold typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism is commonly used to identify three broad positions on the possibility of truth and salvation in non-Christian traditions. Pluralism itself is a plurality of positions and has been advocated by theologians in a variety of very different ways. Nevertheless, when critics attack "the pluralist position", they tend still to hone their criticism exclusively on the classic proposals of John Hick. Many of these criticisms of Hick raise valid concerns about his disguised claim to objectivity and what is seen ultimately as yet another exclusivist position. However, the pluralistic proposals of Paul Knitter, S. Mark Heim, and Raimon Panikkar, to name a few, depart in important ways from Hick's proposal and incorporate concerns about noting real difference, particularity, and subjectivity. This paper investigates the degree to which Panikkar's pluralism is different from Hick's. First, we will briefly lay out the current landscape of Christian theology of religions, including Hick's classic proposal and the most commonly raised problems with it. We will then examine the pluralistic theology of Raimon Panikkar to determine whether it escapes the common criticisms made of Hick's pluralism.

Christian Theologies of Religions

The threefold typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism is still the dominant one used to lay out Christian positions on the possible salvific value of non-Christian religious traditions. Positions of exclusivism, or the more neutral term particularism, assert that the religious goal of salvation is possible exclusively within the Christian religion, that the claims made in Christian tradition about who Christ is and what God accomplished in Christ (human reconciliation or salvation) should be considered unique and true. According to this view, Christian claims are not just one mythic representation of a common human religious sensibility

but are concrete propositions about human destiny that demand the particular decision of a person to accept or deny them in his or her religious life.

While particularists may deny that this ultimate religious goal of salvation is possible outside the church proper, inclusivists might address the salvation of non-Christians in more inclusive ways: for example, that non-Christians may be saved yet, whether by a decision after death or by God's mysterious will, that a Christian understanding of the abundance and infinity of God's love allows Christians to hope for the potential salvation of all, or that whatever is found to be true and salvific in other traditions is ultimately the work of God in Christ. Some inclusivists suggest that these other traditions may contain a partial or limited religious truth that is explicitly and most fully realized in Christianity.

Pluralism refers to a range of positions that affirm the potential ultimate value of many different traditions. Different religious traditions may have authentic religious value and lead to salvation or liberation. Pluralists like John Hick define the goal of religion, or "salvation", as the transformation from ego-centeredness to Reality-centeredness, and then argue that the various religious traditions of the world all share this common goal. (Hick 1989, 240) According to Hick's pluralism, different religious traditions represent different particular paths to the same ultimate goal. The differences between them are only superficial, then, like cultural flavor, and not substantive differences that persist in the final aims of religious life.

Common Criticisms of Hick's Pluralism

Three related problems emerge with Hick's pluralism: a claim to objectivity, a reduction of actual difference, and a marginalization of religious perspectives. (See *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, edited by Dennis Okholm and Timothy Phillips as well as Gavin D'Costa's *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* for examples of these criticisms.) The first is that in proclaiming that the different religious traditions represent different paths to one common goal, he is arguing for a neutral and objective meta-perspective, one that transcends the subjectivity of each of the different religious perspectives. While Muslims, Christians and Hindus, for example, may be conditioned by the limits of their respective traditions of revelation, Hick's pluralist represents the neutral and objective scientist of religion who can see beyond all these partial perspectives and even discern the true goal of each of these paths. Hick's "pluralism by meta-perspective" claims a bird's-eye view of the situation and a unique position from which to judge truth-claims. Although pluralism explicitly rejects the exclusivist position that only one community has the full and final take on Reality, critics like Gavin D'Costa maintain that Hick is advocating what is basically again an exclusivist position; in this case, the "objective" student of religion alone, and not the particular religious follower, has unique access to religious truth. (D'Costa 2000, 47)

Other critics like S. Mark Heim argue that although pluralism promises to address postmodern concerns of validating genuine difference among world cultures, it ends up diminishing and collapsing those differences by seeing them all as only superficial flavors of what is ultimately a single common goal of religious life. (Heim1995) Hick's pluralism in one sense reduces the unique and particular claims that comprise the world of each tradition.

The third problem emerges out of the first two. Such a meta-perspective is not only just as subjective and particular as any of the traditional religious perspectives, but in fact it appeals only to the nonreligious and especially to those who have been contemptuous of religion. Hick's meta-perspective immediately claims superiority over all other partial perspectives and therefore fails the ideal it seeks to implement. Instead of valuing subjectivity and difference, it reduces actual differences and claims a higher, objective view over all religious perspectives.

At the heart of these three problems is that Hick's pluralism applies Kantian skepticism to the myths of religious communities, but not to its own mythic perspective of neutrality. If we cannot certifiably know the Real through demonstrable empirical reason, we cannot talk about it critically. Without any concrete knowledge of the Real, all we have are the multiple hypothetical renderings of the Real. All we have is religious myth. All particular religious claims are, relatively speaking, accepted yet failed attempts to do the impossible. My feeling is that a little relativism is not a bad thing; it can be quite instructive and a helpful antidote for the absolutism that often dominates religious discourse. However, Hick's pluralism is not satisfying, because it applies that conclusion of relativism only to particular religious claims and not substantially to its own position. Panikkar takes a different approach altogether and rejects the metaphysical premise of Kantian skepticism.

Panikkar and Kant

To understand how Panikkar's position of pluralism is different from Hick's, we need to lay out four particular components that are fundamental to Panikkar's thinking. These are the proposals he makes in different texts cited below of what he calls ontological knowledge, the cosmotheandric principle, dialogical dialogue, and pluralism. The first two demonstrate Panikkar's relationship to Kantian epistemology, and the last two demonstrate his practical program of pluralism and what he intends to accomplish through it.

Two components of Kant's work have influenced how philosophers have viewed religious knowledge ever since: he separated knowledge from ultimate reality itself, and he restricted religion to its practical value of supporting morality. First, he restricted rational knowledge to our mental organization of sense experience. Kant's intention was to clarify the limits of critical reason, and leave room for matters of faith. The latter could not be experienced and understood through critical reason, but instead lay on a solid moral foundation. The limitation of knowledge to what we can experience has been used as the groundwork for a modern agnosticism. We can know nothing beyond the appearance of things (*phenomena*). We cannot through critical reason access independent things themselves (*noumena*). Metaphysics is doomed to failure insofar as it claims a critical and certain knowledge of the Real insofar as it is independent of its appearance to us. Hick proceeds to apply this resulting agnosticism to all particular religious claims but then claims to understand the Real that is an object or goal of the different religions through his philosophical meta-perspective.

Second, religious ideas about the self, the universe, and God have practical value and are foundational in that they regulate our knowledge. Kant saw a practical rationality in religious beliefs about God and the immortality of the soul. We cannot know that God exists, according to Kant, but it is rational to postulate that God exists, because such an idea is necessary for reason

to make sense of experience. Kant intended this to justify a rational faith, one that is not knowledge (because knowledge cannot access ultimate reality independent of our experience) and that is not a blind acceptance of revelation (which is outside the bounds of rationality). Instead, religious ideas were to constitute a rational faith because these ideas of the soul and God help ensure moral reason. However, this rehabilitation of religion on a solid moral foundation is often ignored and the inability to know anything about God is often emphasized today. This is where Panikkar's ontological knowledge and cosmotheandric principle depart from Kantian epistemology and reaffirm the responsibility of reasonable knowledge of the sacred.

Ontological Knowledge

Panikkar rejects the Enlightenment and Kantian separation of knowledge and beings. He refers to this split between epistemology and ontology as "hunter's epistemology". According to the hunter's epistemology, the hunter or subject searches for a target, its object, and then shoots at it after bringing it into focus as a clear and distinct idea. As an alternative, Panikkar offers "ontological knowledge", which rejects that subject-object dualistic paradigm. "Ontological knowledge, on the other hand, requires the knower so to grow as to be able to embrace the known - to reach a certain identification between the two." (Panikkar 1996, 237) This ontological knowledge is not a return to pre-critical knowledge or to simple identity monism. It does not presume unity or identity between different particulars and therefore reject the need for our relating them together. Instead, it presumes their interrelationship. What I encounter to know is not one with me; what I encounter is already related to me and wrapped up with what I myself am. Our individual identities are built on the basis of our mutually constitutive relationships with each other.

Panikkar turns the process of knowledge into a self-transformation within the knower. This respects the priority and integrity of the object of knowledge insofar as it does not consume it or change it. Instead, the knower bears greater responsibility to modify herself in order to accommodate the object of knowledge on its own terms. The process of knowledge is no longer a model of shooting at a chosen target, and hitting or missing. What occurs in knowledge is an active change of relationship between entities, and as a consequence, a change of identities.

Cosmotheandric Principle

Panikkar's hypothesis of interrelationality among things depends on the theological intuition he describes as cosmotheandrism. The cosmic, the divine, and the human are three irreducible dimensions that make up the Real. Panikkar proposes that this triadic intuition exists both in consciousness and in reality. (Panikkar 1993, 62) Frank Podgorski refers to interrelatedness as "the hermeneutical key to understand and 'stand under' the mythos which both reveals and yet conceals reality." (Podgorski 1996, 107) No one element can subsist or be understood in isolation. Reality is defined as the *perichoresis* of the three together. They are not one, but all three dimensions characterize every moment of reality and experience.

The cosmotheandric principle elucidates that every being has a transcendent dimension and an immanent dimension, by which it both escapes us and is experienced by us. The element

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of the freedom of being, its mystery or endless openness, characterizes the divine dimension. (D'Sa 1996, 35) The human dimension of every being lies in its knowability and its life in our creative interpretations and appropriations. The earthly dimension is the secular or worldly. Everything that is related to human consciousness or experience is tied to the universe. Human experience is bounded by the world. All experience, therefore, is *worlded*, so to speak. Panikkar also describes cosmotheandrism as the inter-relationship among an I, Thou, and It, in which "I" refers to the divine experience, "Thou" refers to the human experience of being addressed by God, and the "It" refers to the cosmos as the context of this sacred relationship. (Panikkar 1996, 238)

The three dimensions considered as irreducible but interdependent dimensions describe the nature of reality that constitutes the identity of any being. Reality is not a passive unconscious object waiting for us to acquire it in our sights but rather, it is a living network of relationships. For Panikkar, the Ultimate Mystery does not exist "in itself" beyond human experience, but within the diversity of humanity and world. He explains that the particular names ascribed to this mystery are not just labels attached onto this mystery, but that "each authentic name enriches and qualifies that Mystery which is neither purely transcendent nor purely immanent." (Panikkar 1981, 23) Although Panikkar rejects an ontotheological metaphysics, the cosmotheandric intuition sets up a theoretical foundation for his practical programs of pluralism and inter-religious dialogue. At its core, Reality is not experienced as a static reality, but as a dynamic perichoresis of the ineffable, the knowable, and the material dimensions of reality.

With ontological knowledge and the cosmotheandric intuition, Panikkar intends to help remedy the phenomenological problem of religious knowledge that emerges with Kant. The concern over how to know what is beyond knowledge is replaced with the concern of how to describe and correct the relationship between humanity, God, and cosmos. We know the sacred, even if we define it through intuition rather than critical reason to be beyond ordinary empirical experience, because we already participate in a relationship with it that constitutes both it and us.

Dialogical Dialogue

In *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Panikkar outlines the rules of encounter with those of other religious traditions. What Panikkar means by "intrareligious dialogue" is that before any of us engage in dialogue with people of another religious tradition, we must first have within ourselves an inner dialogue between our own system of commitments and that other tradition. Whereas *dialectical dialogue* trusts an all-powerful Reason that ensures the reasonableness of the other and of the whole process, *dialogical dialogue* trusts in the other as a mutual subject; it is a dialogue among subjects about themselves. The aim of such openness is to place the other in a position not simply of equality but even of priority. Dialogue with those of other religious traditions therefore becomes a religious exercise of humility and unknowing, as one opens one's presuppositions to be inspected and challenged by the other. For Panikkar as for Paul Knitter, religious dialogue requires that one be fully prepared and willing even to be converted by the other's position.

The justification of the dialogical dialogue, Panikkar explains, lies "in the very nature of the real, namely in the fact that reality is not wholly objectifiable, ultimately because I myself, a subject, am also a part of it, am in it, and cannot extricate myself from it. The dialogical dialogue assumes a radical dynamism of reality, namely that reality is not given once and for all, but is real precisely in the fact that it is continually creating itself." (Panikkar 1999, 31) Instead of presuming the existence of a "thing in itself" or an atomism in which human beings were each independent monads, dialogical dialogue assumes "that we all share in a reality that does not exist independently and outside our own sharing in it, and yet without exhausting it. Our participation is always partial, and reality is more than just the sum total of its parts." (Panikkar, 1999 37) This view of dialogue almost moves beyond the logos-structure of reality, by rejecting the ultimacy of the dialectical view of reality as something we eventually, through target practice, come to know. Instead, dialogical thinking embraces the other's uncovering of my own myths, which I take for granted. The other helps expose my presuppositions as what they are, and then I can either discard them or incorporate them into my conscious assumptions upon which I build. Panikkar says in the style of mysticism that I trust the other not out of an ethical principle of duty, but because I have experienced the 'Thou' as the counterpart of the 'I': "I discover the Thou as part of a Self that is as much mine as his - or to be more precise, that is as little my property as his." (Panikkar 1999, 38)

Dialogical dialogue incorporates the priority of the human other that Emmanuel Levinas prescribes as an ethical-religious principle. All we can access in the other is the face of the other person, which reveals something to us, but which conceals vastly more from us, and beyond which we cannot presume access. To attempt to know the other any further would be an act of sheer violence. In the context of an inter-religious encounter, this implies not tolerance, but one's accountability for one's religious convictions before the other. It means that I expose my convictions that support me at the deepest level of my being and allow the other to inspect them and to interrogate me, because this discourse is itself revelatory.

Pluralism

Too many critics lump together the different proposals of pluralism and most often attack all of them on the basis of the particular pluralist hypothesis made by John Hick. Panikkar's pluralism is quite different, first and foremost because while Hick accepts the skeptical consequences of Kantian epistemology, Panikkar rejects the premise of Enlightenment epistemology and instead proposes discourse based on the relational ontology of the cosmotheandric intuition. Panikkar explicitly denies that pluralism means that there are many different truths or that there are different ways of expressing one truth (as Hick's pluralism suggests). The word pluralism may not be ideal to suggest the posture he prescribes of openness to the mystery and contingency and freedom of reality to manifest itself. Terms like Trinity and *Advaita* express this non-objectifiable mystery in orthodox Christian and Hindu language. (Panikkar 1981, 24) Pluralism is not a theoretical system or an attitude that respects religious diversity, but an attitude that respects the freedom of reality to transcend our systematizing efforts to contain and define it. It actively resists the tendency to absolutize any claims to validity. Pluralism affirms that "there is a *fluxos quo* which will never permit us to freeze

anything real, that reality and the logos itself are open-ended." (Panikkar 1996, 255) Contra Hegel, Panikkar rejects a panlogicism and denies that logos is the whole of human truth, and with the spirit of Heidegger, he affirms the opacity of Being as it unconceals itself and yet maintains itself outside the light of logos. In Panikkar's usage, then, pluralism becomes a rejection of a rational logocentrism. As he writes, "pluralism is not a supersystem, a meta-language…an intellectual panacea. Pluralism is an open, human attitude, which therefore entails an intellectual dimension that overcomes any kind of solipsism, as if we - any we - were alone in the universe, the masters of it, the holders of the Absolute." (Panikkar 1996, 257) For Panikkar, pluralism is a religious prescription of extreme humility and a reminder to live without total security, to dwell religiously in our vulnerability. He describes this in the paradigm of Christian mysticism as kenosis. "Only when a Man is completely empty of himself, is in a state of kenosis, of renunciation and annihilation, will Christ fulfill his incarnation in him. Only kenosis allows incarnation and incarnation is the only way to redemption." (Panikkar 1981, 61) The exercise of self-emptying or deconstruction is a religious mandate, in a sense. This is why pluralism and intrareligious dialogue are necessary for Panikkar.

Conclusion

We have traced the ways in which Panikkar's pluralism begins from a different response to Kantian epistemology than does Hick's. The guiding question is whether Panikkar's pluralism escapes the problems ascribed to Hick's pluralism. The central problems with Hick's pluralism are the claim to objectivity, the reduction of actual difference, and the marginalization of religious perspectives. The first may be a valid objection, but Hick defends his proposal as only a hypothesis and not an exclusive access to religious truth. The second and third problems are more serious. The marginalization of all particular religious views is seriously problematic and effectively undermines the presumed goals of such pluralism, namely, peace, cooperation, and increased mutual understanding. A conversation about the relationship among the religions simply cannot occur primarily apart from religious insiders.

We can see that Panikkar's pluralism avoids at least these particular problems that beset Hick's. First of all, by moving away from Enlightenment and Kantian epistemology, and towards a relational ontology in which we are constituted by our relationships with each other, with God, and with the world, Panikkar avoids the problem of skepticism where there is no way to connect our knowledge with reality. Knowledge itself becomes a process of growth and self-transformation rather than hitting a target whose existence before us we cannot even guarantee. The relational ontology at the center of the cosmotheandric intuition is a mystical intuition of the interrelated dimensions of the sacred. This is explicitly a theological vision. While Hick's pluralism excludes religious insiders, it is possible that Panikkar's pluralism restricts the conversation too narrowly to one that can occur only among religious insiders with particular theological commitments. However, much of Panikkar's recent writings suggest an expansive definition of the category of the religious beyond what is institutional to what is a dimension of ultimacy. He suggests the possibility that purely secular insights may in the contemporary scene be more 'religious' in the sense of ultimacy than those of traditionally religious institutions.(Panikkar 1995, 33) In particular, because Panikkar's pluralism is an attitude of

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resisting reification, it easily incorporates the capacity of secular insights to challenge any dogmatic attempts to contain and constrain transcendence.

In short, the greatest difference between Panikkar's pluralism and Hick's is that, for Panikkar, pluralism is itself a religious task, revealing Panikkar's commitment to work squarely within a religious tradition. His views are distinctly Christian and Catholic. He says an authentic inter-religious encounter is possible only because "it is an encounter in the Presence of the one who is already present in the hearts of those who *in good faith* belong to one or the other of the two religions." (Panikkar 1981, 58) He says elsewhere that Hinduism and Christianity both meet in God. He is guided throughout by a distinctly Christian faith in God who becomes incarnate, who reveals Godself, to be *Immanuel*, or "God with us". He is guided also by a distinctly Catholic striving towards unity and universality. He identifies in Christianity a thirst to realize unity with the hope "that all may be one." (Panikkar 1981, 55) However, this unity or oneness should not be mistaken for uniformity. The goal of the inter-religious encounter is not assimilation of each other's views, but rather mutual enrichment and growth. Such enrichment and growth can result only from an approach that is kenotic, or self-emptying. He describes this process variously as an outgoing mutual love that overcomes the egocentricity of knowledge, as a special asceticism that strips off all external form for "a lonely vigil with Christ... dead *and* alive on the Cross", and as a communion *in* Christ and *of* Christ. (Panikkar 1981, 58-60)

When we look at the rules Panikkar institutes for intrareligious dialogue and what he means by pluralism as a vigilant openness to the mystery of reality, it is clear that it does not fall prey to the common criticisms made of the pluralist position and does advance the goals of peace, cooperation, and mutual understanding. Most important, and most attractive, I think, is that Panikkar's pluralist position aims not at some kind of live and let live tolerance among different perspectives, but instead at a dynamic religious interaction. While Hick's pluralism presumes a neat ordering of different paths to one common and higher religious goal, Panikkar's pluralism prescribes a religious posture of openness that stays quite messy and dynamic. It is this dynamism that marks the religious posture of kenosis for Panikkar, as we humans respond to an eternally infinite mystery that continually interrupts the totalities of our respective experiences and reminds us of their very incompleteness. Dialogue is justifiable not primarily because we all need to get along with each other, but because we need contradictory truth-claims to jolt us out of our complacency, ignorance, and ingrained preconceptions. Rather than subject religion to some comprehensive Reason, Panikkar's pluralism presents the challenges of inter-religious encounter as first and foremost a religious task. Subjecting our myths to the criticisms of others helps us grow in our sacred interrelationality. Pluralism describes reality's infinite transcendence of our attempts to contain it, and it prescribes the religious task of kenotic unknowing to better grow in our dynamic relationship with others, with God, and with the world.

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