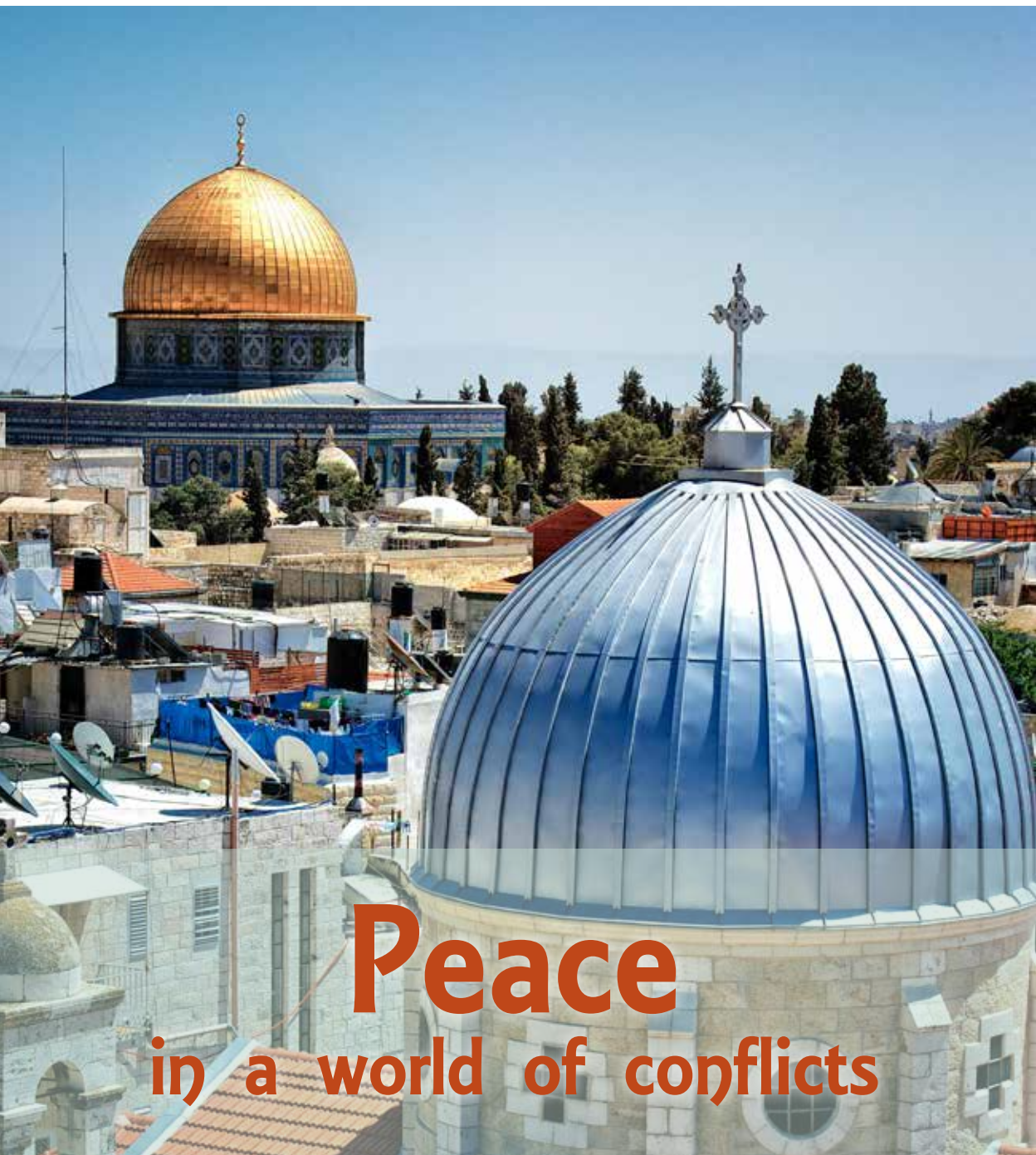


A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL | Issue 9 | 2016

Religions

Published by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue



Peace
in a world of conflicts

Religions/Adyan is an annual and bi-lingual (English and Arabic) publication in interfaith studies published by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue and the relations between Islam and other faiths.

In a world of religious misunderstandings, violence, and hijacking of religious faiths by political ideologies, *Religions/Adyan* intends to provide a welcome space of encounter and reflection upon the commonalities and shared goals of the great religions of the world. The title of the journal suggests religious diversity while suggesting the need to explore this diversity in order to develop keys to both a deepening of one's own faith and a meaningful opening to other creeds. The Qur'ân suggests a commonality of faith and a striving for the Truth within the context of religious diversity:

“To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.” (The Table Spread 5:48, version of Yusuf Ali)

As a refereed international publication published the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, *Religions/Adyan* finds its inspiration in the universal message of monotheism broadly understood, while engaging the various religious faiths that share common principles and values within this broadly defined context.

Religions/Adyan encourages comparative studies and interreligious exchanges in a spirit of dialogue and mutual enrichment. Its aim is to promote understanding between religious faithful of various traditions by exploring and studying the rich field of their theological and spiritual common grounds, their mutual and constructive relationships, past, present and potentially future, a better understanding of the causes of their conflicts, and the current challenges of their encounter with atheism, agnosticism and secular societies.

In addition, *Religions/Adyan* wishes to highlight and revive the universal horizon of Islam by fostering studies in the relationships between Islam and other religions and civilizations in history, the arts, and religious studies. This is also a way to revitalize intellectual discourse in Islam, within the context of an interactive and cross-fertilizing engagement with other faiths.

The essays published in *Religions/Adyan* exclusively engage the intellectual responsibility of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the DICID. They are published as part of an ongoing dialogue on religions, and should not be construed as the expression of the positions of any sponsoring organization.



Photo courtesy of Kai-Henrik Barth

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Editorial

Both in the past and the present religion has given rise to inspirations of war as well as to promotion of peace. While religious values entail a desire to promote peace both on this earth and in the thereafter, religions — including those which are conventionally deemed most “peaceful”— often make use of warfare symbolism and do engage into conflicts sanctioned or justified by some of their representatives.

Is there a necessary connection between religion and violence? Before attempting to answer this question, it must be stressed that religions, or religious people, have no exclusive privilege over war and violence. The arguably most murderous and atrocious wars ever took place in the 20th century — namely World War I and World War II, and their main motivations were not religious, but rather political and ideological. However, there is no question that religious principles and feelings have played an important role not only in wars, but also sometimes in inordinate violence of all kinds. It bears specifying, however, that violence can come in many forms, whether external or internal, and that even outwardly similar violent actions may be motivated by very different intentions

and factors. Moreover, even if taken only metaphorically and spiritually, the positive meaning of violence cannot be all too facilely discarded. This is brought home, among many examples taken from religious texts — and whatever interpretation one may give to it, by the oft-quoted sentence from *Matthew* (11:12) : "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

In examining the question of religious violence in general, it is important to start from the elementary fact that religions are teaching and often preaching what they consider to be the Truth in an absolute sense, as well as the true way(s) of gaining access to It. In other words, religions are focused on the Ultimate Reality. It means, secondly, that any religious approach of the Ultimate is claimed to be founded on the Ultimate itself, most often through some revelation or original spiritual recognition. As such, religious truth transcends, without necessarily negating it, the realm of rationality and socially negotiated rules and ways. Based on this fact, the point is often made by secular opponents of religions that religious truth claims are the primary causes of intolerance and,

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

لِلْحَمْدِ إِذَا الْحَمْدُ وَالْمَجْدُ وَالْعُلِّيَّاتُ رَكَتُ بَعْطِي مِنْ تَشَاءٍ وَمُنْعِ
الْهِي وَمُخَلَّافِي وَمُحَرَّرِي وَمَوْعِدِي الْبَيْتِ الْبَيْتِ الْأَعْيَارُ وَالْمَسِيحُ
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَبَارِكْ وَسَلِّمْ

therefore, violence and war. In other words, according to these critics, the absoluteness of the religious message cannot but fuel conflict, since it admits of no relativization, therefore no compromise.

On the other hand, though, it is widely acknowledged that religions strive to establish a relationship with what they conceive as the Principle of the universe. They see this relationship as the chief principle of human integration into the order of the universe, and thereby the way of reaching a sense of harmony and peace with the whole of existence. On the human level, this sense of connection, proceeding from the Principle and therefore virtually giving way to all connections, is deemed to promote and preserve

peace among human beings.

Thus, the religious mind seems to be characterized by two tendencies that are potentially at odds. On the one hand, the truth of the Absolute, or the absolute Truth, stands as the very condition for a state of authentic inner and outer peace, but this condition or principle is also potentially a source of conflicts, in some circumstances, with those aspects of reality and fellow human beings who are considered not to be aligned with religious truth claims. An objective consideration of the complex relationship between religion and peace cannot ignore the serious questions raised by those two tendencies.

The question of peace, the preservation of peace, and the use of

violence is necessarily connected, in religious traditions, to the fact that religion involves both ethico-spiritual demands and socio-political realities. In this connection, socio-political peace can provide a context for inner peace, while outer conflicts hardly predispose to the latter. Conversely, in an arguably more determining way, inner peace fosters the virtues that promote social harmony. Religious perspectives, therefore, recognize in principle the correspondence between the legitimacy and justice of the socio-political order and the spiritual and ethical values embodied in the life of individuals. However they traditionally tend to place a greater emphasis on the latter, because only the person can exercise discerning intelligence, faith, free will and compassion. Thus even strongly socially oriented religious ethics such as Confucianism place self-cultivation as the ultimate source of social harmony. One of the challenges of modernity come from the fact that our societies tend to lie either on the socially constraining side of politically imposed "religious order", which often result in hypocrisy or oppressive coercion, or on the side of secular neutrality, which result in religious "invisibility" and indifference, if not implicit or explicit hostility toward the religious dimension.

Patrick Laude
Editor-in-Chief



Interview with Karen Armstrong

Religion and violence

Renaud Fabbrì: On the one hand, the stated goal of the great world religions is to establish peace within the world, between God and human beings and within each person. On the other hand, today, religion and sectarian identities fuel many conflicts throughout the world (prompting an author like Richard Dawkins to stigmatize religion as the most important source of violence in our world). As a religious scholar, how do you account for this paradox?

Karen Armstrong: The problem is that in the modern world we have

developed a new idea of “religion”, one that was entirely alien to all pre-modern cultures. In the West, during the Enlightenment, as part of Western modernization, philosophers, such as John Locke and statesman, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, defined “religion” as an essentially private quest that should be kept separate from all other “secular” undertakings. Because of Westernization and colonialism this view has percolated throughout the world. But no other culture has anything like this. In the premodern world, religion was not a separate enterprise but permeated all activities, including government and

warfare (which has always been an essential part of statecraft]. This is not because people were too stupid to distinguish two entirely distinct things, but because human beings have an inbuilt need to imbue their lives with ultimate meaning, without which we fall very easily into despair. Furthermore, human suffering is a matter of sacred import: the Prophets of Israel had harsh words for those who performed the temple rituals but neglected the plight of the poor and oppressed. And the *Quran* is a cry for justice and for the creation of a society in which wealth was shared fairly and the weak and vulnerable treated with dignity and respect. These are political matters. But warfare has always been part of human society. Consequently, “religion”, which pervaded all human activities, has acquired a violent edge. So what we call “religion” is neither all about peace nor all about war.

RF: Many authors from Plato to Eric Voegelin have stressed the connection between political disorder and the disorder within the human soul. For you, what madness has taken hold of the modern soul so that we are faced with an explosion of religious conflicts? What is mostly responsible for this state of affairs? The religions themselves, the modern or post-modern context, new types of religious belief and practices? Do you think that the insights from the spiritual and even mystical traditions can cure the modern soul?

KA: The modern soul is certainly disordered! But this disorder has also taken a purely secular turn. One could see the French Revolution, with its cry for liberty, equality and fraternity, as the beginning of the modern period; it ushered in the first liberal state, which separated religion and politics, in Europe. But during the Reign of Terror, the revolutionaries publicly beheaded 17,000 men, women and children. The French Revolution was one of the first nation-states; but in the late 19th century, the British historian Lord Acton, predicted that the nationalist emphasis on ethnicity, culture and language would make those who did not fit the national profile extremely vulnerable: in some circumstances, he said with chilling accuracy, they could even be enslaved or exterminated — and indeed during the First World War the atheistic Young Turks exterminated a million Armenians in order to create a purely Turkic state. The inability to tolerate ethnic minorities has been the great flaw of secular nationalism, leading to such crimes as the Nazi Holocaust. The two World Wars were not fought for religion but for secular nationalism. In the early twentieth century, there was an explosion of political and Marxist-inspired terrorism. During the 1950s, millions were slaughtered in the Soviet Gulag. So our modernity has been extremely violent — largely because our technology enables us to kill on

an unprecedented scale. Human beings are violent creatures. Now we are simply witnessing another outbreak of violence and terrorism — this time, religiously articulated.

RF: When faced with acts of violence perpetrated in the name of a religion, the understandable reaction of many believers is simply to claim that violence has nothing to do with their faith or more problematically to put the blame on external factors, the wrong-doings of others etc.... In your opinion, what may prompt believers to adopt a more critical and reflexive attitude toward their own faith and the history of their religion?

KA: We must all, religious or secularist, adopt a self-critical attitude. The religious have a particular responsibility to bring to the fore those tendencies that lie at the heart of all religious traditions that speak of the imperative of compassion and respect for all others. Each has developed its own version of the Golden Rule: Never treat others as you would not wish to be treated yourself and insisted that this is the essence of faith. This is the standard by which religious people should measure themselves day by day. The Golden Rule is no longer a nice ethic but an urgent global imperative. Unless we ensure that all peoples are treated as we would wish to be treated ourselves the world will simply not be a viable place.

RF: With globalization, religious principles are being increasingly challenged both by the rise of a post-modern relativism and by extremist movements that threaten to destroy religion from within. What role traditional spirituality and ethics can play in addressing the currents at play in derailing world religions and to turn them into totalitarian and nihilistic ideologies? What concrete strategies can be devised in this respect? Or is it too late?

KA: This I have dealt with in the preceding answer. But the point is that every single religious human being has to activate their tradition in a positive way. It is no use waiting for religious leaders to take the initiative. We all have to do what we can, in whatever sphere of life we find ourselves, to think creatively, and practically, — not simply leaving this to other people. All too often, religious people are simply concerned with their own spirituality. They want — in Christian terms — “to be saved.” They meditate and take part in yogic meditation in order to feel peaceful and tranquil. They want to look after their own families or their own countries and do not care about the rest of the world. But all the religious traditions insist that you cannot simply indulge a private spirituality; the religious imperative impels us all to heal the suffering we see all around us — actively and realistically. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



did not spend time communing with God on Mount Hira; his revelations impelled him to begin an active struggle to heal the problems of this time. Jesus wrestled with Satan in the Wilderness but then embarked on a healing mission to create a new world in which rich and poor would

sit at the same table. After achieving enlightenment, the Buddha spent the rest of his life travelling through the cities of India to help human beings live creatively with their suffering. The religious enterprise must be active.



Post-secularism and the legacy of the Axial Age

RF: The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas recently made the hypothesis of a post-secular turn in contemporary thinking, even envisioning the emergence of “post-secular world society” in which religious and secular actors would become equal partners, addressing together contemporary ethical challenges at the global level. How do you posit yourself and your work vis-à-vis this maybe irenic hypothesis formulated by Habermas?

KA: As I have said above, secularism, a grand new experiment during the 18th century, has had its great failures. But all human ideologies have their moments of decline. Religion is certainly making a

come-back. Northern Europe is now looking increasingly old-fashioned in its defiant secularism; in most other regions people are turning to religion again — and not always in a violent way. Both secularism and “religion” have great ideals as well as great failures. We all have to pool our insights. We can no longer split ourselves into these divisive camps. We are living in a globalized world in which our economies are profoundly interdependent, our histories are intertwined, and we all face the same looming environmental danger. It is now time to work together to save our world. My work has been to try to help secularists understand the religious imperative and religious people to understand that all traditions have their profound insights, all have a distinctive genius — and all have their particular vulnerabilities.

RF: Building upon the work of Karl Jaspers and others, you wrote a book about what you called the “Great Transformation” of the Axial Age. Why is it so important for us in the present historical moment to turn to the Axial Age and its heritage? What can we still learn from the sages and prophets of this period?

KA: The Axial Age peaked in the sixth century BCE. Two things were illuminating about the Axial Age — when all the great world traditions as we know them came into being — Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism,

Daoism, Greek philosophical rationalism, and monotheism. The first of these was innovation: the great sages and philosophers were not afraid to bring something entirely new to the traditions they had inherited, to innovate and attempt something drastically novel. All too often religious people seem to imagine that they have to cling to the past, instead of using the great insights of their tradition to speak to the circumstances of the present. This is desperately needed today. Every religious tradition is a dialogue between an unchanging Eternal Absolute and changing conditions on the ground; once a faith tradition is unable to speak to its troubled present, it will die — as paganism eventually died. The second insight was the ethos of compassion. Every single one of the Axial Sages developed the Golden Rule (See above) and insisted that you could not confine your compassion to your own group. You had to have what one Chinese sage called *jian ai*: “concern for everybody.” You could not confine your benevolence for your own group or for people you liked. These sages were not living in peaceful, idyllic circumstances — but were living in societies like our own, where violence had reached an unprecedented crescendo. They said that unless human beings treated other people as they would wish to be treated themselves, they would

destroy one another. That has never been truer than it is today.

Every single one of the Axial Sages developed the Golden Rule and insisted that you could not confine your compassion to your own group.

RF: Do you think that the problematic of the Axial Age has some relevance for a Muslim audience, since the emergence of Islam postdates the end of the Axial Age by several centuries?

KA: Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were both latter-day developments of the original Axial spirit developed by the Prophets of Israel. The *Quran* too reiterates the essential aspects of the Axial movement, especially in its concern for compassion. Indeed, the *Quran* insists that it is not teaching anything new but that it is simply a “reminder” to forgetful human beings who can easily overlook these essential principles.

RF: You sometimes suggested that we may be entering a “new Axial Age.” The Axial Age was marked by the emergence of new faiths and the renewal of older ones, new insights about the self, the world and the divine Reality. Short of a new revelation, how this “new Axial Age” could transform the shape of our world

and the meaning of our lives?

KA: We don't need a new "revelation". By a new Axial Age, I referred to the scientific and technological revolution that has utterly transformed our world. But this does not mean that we can forget those crucial Axial principles (outlined above). We need them more than ever — to counter some of the dangers of the new technology, not least the dangers to the environment and the dangers of scientifically produced weaponry.



Photo courtesy of Archer10, Dennis

Foreword

It may sound ironic to devote an issue to the question of peace while the world at large is going through a period of turmoil, unprecedented by its magnitude since at least the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Not only is the Middle East struggling with sectarian violence and foreign interventions in the chaos left by the Second Iraq War and the Arab Spring but also a haven of peace such as the European Union is facing major security as well as political challenges. To many observers, it seems that it is the entire international system, built upon the premise that neoliberal globalization would open a new area of peace and prosperity, which is collapsing.

Needless to say that the neoliberal vision, now rapidly eroding, is based on the denial of some of the fundamental insights brought by the Axial Age revolution, namely that no political order can last without deep spiritual roots. War and disorder on an unprecedented scale not only call into question what was left of the "secularization theory" – the idea that, with progress, religion will slowly die out – but also create paradoxically the conditions for a return to the "theologico-political question". The dream of building a "neutral" culture (to use the terminology

of Carl Schmitt), that is to say a culture in which religious and political conflicts would be replaced by socio-economical problems, has turned into a nightmare. It could not be otherwise because the neoliberal *utopia* is resting on a faulty anthropology that ignores the existential thirst for transcendence at the heart of human nature. As René Guénon foresaw, the "death of God", the "disenchantment of the world" have only managed to prepare the ground for a "great parody" that disfigures traditional religion and spirituality.

In the face of the contemporary crisis, many authors including Karen Armstrong but also more recently Jürgen Habermas are inviting us to draw from the "transcendental visions" that have taken shape during the Axial Age, this great spiritual and civilizational revolution that swept across Eurasia between the 8th and the 2nd century BC and gave birth to the best of the world we live in. What the Axial sages discovered was that the Sacred Reality was radically transcendent and yet accessible through an inner experience, through the narrow gate of the human soul. They also came to realize that the inner or spiritual order and the outer or political order were fundamentally in a state of creative

tension. On the one hand, religious worship requires a stable political order, which sometimes must be secured through war. On the other hand, the experience of faith frequently conflicts with the contingencies and intrinsic violence of political life. This tension lies at the heart of the Hindu epic called the *Mahabharata*, which teaches that *dharma*, the socio-cosmic law, can never be divorced from the prospect of *moksha*, deliverance, but sometimes must be defended through the use of immoral political means. A fundamental consequence of this state of tension is that the political order can never be fully secularized. The very idea of justice always presupposes, if only implicitly, a transcendent norm. At the same time, all attempts to build a theocratic order (except maybe during the enchanted parenthesis of prophetic times) have failed, ending in hypocrisy and sometimes in bloody nightmares. The truth of a divine Revelation can never be incarnated into a concrete political society.

Some of these perennial insights about the human condition have been partially lost with secular modernity but may find a new relevance today, especially as we are witnessing what Habermas recent-



ly characterized as a "post-secular turn" at the global level.

In the present issue, alongside the contributions of contemporary scholars, we have chosen to reprint a text by a religious and political philosopher, Eric Voegelin. His work is still little-known in the Middle-East but can potentially illuminate the religious dimension of the contemporary crisis and the rise of an apocalyptic and millenarian ideology that pretends to establish the "city of God" on earth but would destroy religion from within if it were to succeed. In the lineage of Plato who could declare that "the City is the soul writ Large" (*The Republic*), Voegelin believed that political dis-

order is always the expression of a deeper *spiritual* crisis at the level of the individuals who form a particular society. Voegelin himself mostly focused on the religious roots of totalitarian movements of his life time (Nazism, Fascism, Communism etc.) and died in 1985. But his thought remains inspirational for those who seek to understand the relationship between religion and politics in the contemporary world, how religion may contribute to peace but be also a cause of war and violence on a genocidal scale. For Voegelin, at the origin of many bloodthirsty movements, lies the delusion that through the "magic of violence", man could not only free himself from his personal state of spiritual alienation, but also establish a perfect order in society *here and now*. The dream of creating paradise on earth, of "immanentizing the *eschaton*" and bringing an end to history looms behind the contemporary jihadist ideology, which largely distorts the traditional understanding of *jihad*. This type of delusion is also part of the fabric of the American neoconservative discourse which, breaking with classical American conservatism, with its solid tradition of "common sense", did more than its share in destabilizing the contemporary Middle East and the entire world.

Renaud Fabbri
Managing-Editor

Eschatology and Philosophy: the Practice of Dying

Eric Voegelin

Once certain structures of reality become differentiated and are raised to articulate consciousness, they develop a life of their own in history. One of the important insights gained by philosophers, as well as by the prophets of Israel and by the early Christians, is the movement in reality toward a state beyond its present structure. So far as the individual human being is concerned, this movement obviously can be consummated only through his personal death. The great discovery of the Classic philosophers was that man is not a “mortal,” but a being engaged in a movement toward immortality. The *athanatizein*—the activity of immortalizing—as the substance of the philosopher’s existence is a central experience in both Plato and Aristotle. In the same manner, the great experience and insight of Paul was the movement of reality beyond its present structure of death into the imperishable state that will succeed it through the grace of God—i.e., into the state of *aphtharsia* or imperishing. This movement toward a state of being beyond the present structure injects a further tension into

existential order inasmuch as life has to be conducted in such a manner that it will lead toward the state of imperishability. Not everybody, however, is willing to attune his life to this movement. Quite a few dream of a shortcut to perfection right in this life. The dream of reality transfigured into imperishable perfection in this world, therefore, becomes a constant in history as soon as the problem has been differentiated. Already the Jewish apocalyptic thinkers expected the misery of the successive empires of which they were the victims soon to be superseded by a divine intervention that would produce the state of glory and the end of empire. Even Paul expects a Second Coming in the time of the living and revises the dream only under the impact of the experience of believers in Christ dying before the Second Coming.

*Metastatic*¹ expectation of a new world succeeding the old one in

1 *Metastasis*: Change, transformation, revolution. The term is introduced by Voegelin, in his book *Israel and Revelation*. It is subsequently used to refer to any unrealistic expectation regarding a possible transformation of human beings or society. (Managing-Editor)

The following text is chapter 27 from Eric Voegelin's *Autobiographical Reflections* (University of Missouri Press, 2011). The text is reprinted with the permission of the publisher.

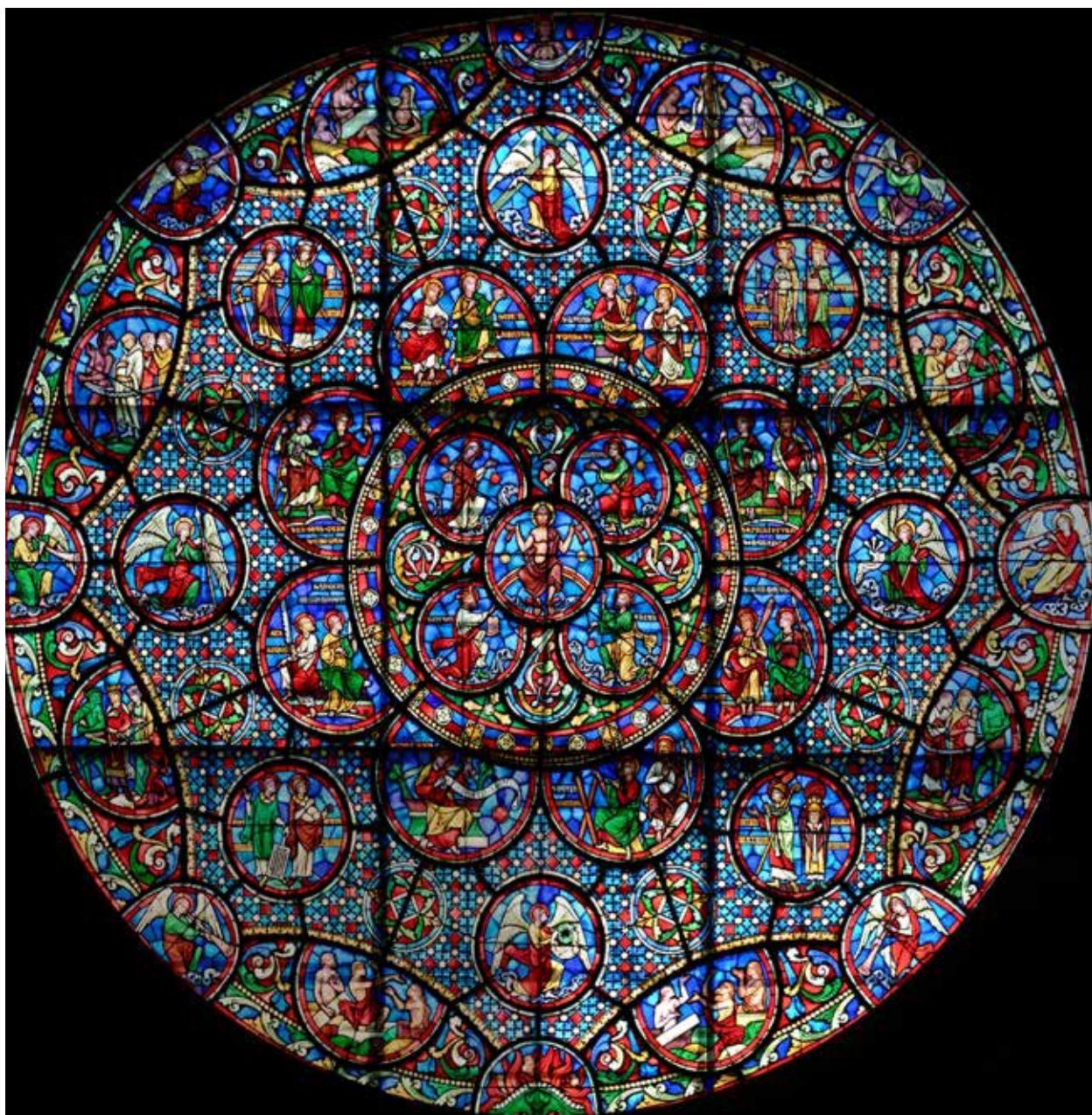


Photo courtesy of François de Dijon

the time of the presently living has become a permanent factor of disturbance in social and political reality. The movement had been suppressed by the main church with more or less success; at least the apocalyptic expectations were pushed into sectarian fringe movements. But beginning with the Reformation these fringe movements moved more and more into the center of the stage; and the replacement of Christian by secularist expectations has not changed the structure of the problem.

In the modern period, an important new factor entered the situation when the expectation of divine intervention was replaced by the demand for direct human action that will produce the new world. Marx, for instance, expected the transformation of man into superman from the blood intoxication of a violent revolution. When the expected transformation through blood intoxication did not occur in 1848, he settled for a transitional period that he called the dictatorship of the proletariat. But at least Marx still knew that external actions alone, like the appropriation of the means of industrial production by the government, did not produce the desired transformation. On the upper level of Marxist thinkers this point is still clear. The establishment of a Communist government is an external event that is supposed, in due course, to produce the expected transfiguration into superhuman perfection. Marx knew perfectly well that the

establishment of a Communist government meant in itself no more than the aggravation of the evils of a capitalistic system to their highest potential. On the vulgarian level of the later Marxist sectarians, and especially of contemporary utopians, the understanding of this problem has disappeared and been replaced by something like a magic of action. The eschatological state of perfection will be reached through direct violence. The experience of a movement in reality beyond its structure has been transformed into the magic vulgarity of aggressive destruction of social order.

Still, though this experience is exposed to the vulgarian transformations just indicated, the experience is real. Otherwise it could not have this permanently motivating effect that is visible even in the deformations. Hence, every philosophy of history must take cognizance of the fact that the process of history is not immanent but moves in the In-Between² of this-worldly and other-worldly reality. Moreover, this In-Between character of the process is experienced, not as a structure in infinite time, but as a movement that will eschatologically end in a state beyond the In-Between and beyond time. No philosophy of history can be considered to be seriously dealing with the problems of history un-

2 In Voegelin, the expression "In-Between" refers to the human experience of a tension between this world and the next, between man as a mortal being and the Divine. (Managing-Editor)



less it acknowledges the fundamental eschatological character of the process.

In the modern period ... the expectation of divine intervention was replaced by the demand for direct human action that will produce the new world.

The understanding of the eschatological movement requires a revision of the deformations that the concepts of Classic philosophy have suffered at the hands of interpreters who want the nature of man to be a fixed entity. The Classic philosophers were quite aware of the problems of eschatology, as I have just

indicated. They knew that they were engaged in the practice of dying, and that the practice of dying meant the practice of immortalizing. The expansion of this experience into an understanding of history makes it, of course, impossible to erect concepts like the nature of man into constants in reality. This, however—and there lies the difficulty of understanding

the problem—does not mean that the nature of man can be transfigured within history. In the process of history, man's nature does no more than become luminous³ for its

³ For Voegelin, consciousness has three aspects. Consciousness is *intentional* (i.e. oriented toward objects), *reflexive* (i.e. conscious of itself and of the process of history) and *luminous*. Luminosity refers here to the almost mystical

eschatological destiny. The process of its becoming luminous, however, though it adds to the understanding of human nature and its problems, does not transmute human nature in the here-and-now of spatio-temporal existence. The consciousness of the eschatological expectation is an ordering factor in existence; and it makes possible the understanding of man's existence as that of the *viator* in the Christian sense—the wanderer, the pilgrim toward eschatological perfection—but this pilgrimage still is a pilgrim's progress in this world.

This eschatological tension of man's humanity, in its dimensions of person, society, and history, is more than a matter of theoretical insight for the philosopher; it is a practical question. As I have said, Plato and Aristotle were very much aware that the action of philosophizing is a process of immortalizing in this world. This action does not come to its end with Plato and Aristotle; it continues, though, in every concrete situation the philosopher has to cope with, the problems he encounters in his own position concretely. If the Classic philosophers had to cope with the difficulties created by a dying myth and an active Sophistic aggressiveness, the philosopher in the twentieth century has to struggle with the "climate of opinion," as Whitehead called this phenomenon. Moreover, in his concrete work he has to absorb the enormous advances of the sciences, both natural and

historical, and to relate them to the understanding of existence. That is a considerable labor, considering the mountains of historical materials that have become known in our time.

A new picture of history is developing. The conceptual penetration of the sources is the task of the philosopher today; the results of his analysis must be communicated to the general public and, if he happens to be a professor in a university, to the students. These chores—of keeping up with the problems, of analyzing the sources, and of communicating the results—are concrete actions through which the philosopher participates in the eschatological movement of history and conforms to the Platonic-Aristotelian practice of dying.

experience that consciousness has of being part of reality as a whole. (Managing-Editor)



The Problem of Peace in the Ecumenic Age

Barry Cooper

Eric Voegelin (1901-85) was born in Cologne but received his formative education at the University of Vienna, initially under the supervision of Othmar Spann and Hans Kelsen, who wrote the postwar Austrian constitution. He studied in the UK, France, and the United States with the sponsorship of a Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fellowship during the mid-1920s. Exposure to Anglo-American political science led him away from the legalistic *Staatslehre* tradition of Kelsen and towards a more direct encounter with political reality. During the 1930s, especially after the rise of National Socialism in Germany, he wrote two books on Nazi race doctrines and a third on Austrian authoritarianism. When Austria was

absorbed into the German Reich, Voegelin had to flee for his life to the United States where he taught until 1969; he then moved to the University of Munich where he stayed until 1969 and established the Institute of Political Science. He then returned to America where he was a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford.

During the 1940s he wrote an eight-volume history of political ideas which he then extensively reworked into his major publication, *Order and History*. In 1952 he published a kind of summary in his most famous book, *The New Science of Politics*. *Order and History* began not with the Greeks but with a consideration of what he called the “cosmological” imperial civilizations of

Egypt and Mesopotamia and moved on to the radical break with the cosmological form, and with the cosmological empires of the Ancient Near East, experienced by the Israelites and the “differentiated” symbolic form we conventionally call revelation. Two additional volumes, *The World of the Polis* and *Plato and Aristotle* were published in 1957; both dealt with the Hellenic differentiation of consciousness that came to its fullest expression in philosophy. The publication of the first three volumes of *Order and History* was followed by a seventeen-year silence before volume four, *The Ecumenic Age* was published. Two years after his death, a fifth volume, *In Search of Order*, appeared.

His was a remarkable career. From his earliest discovery of commonsense philosophy in the US to his late meditative essays, Voegelin was constantly concerned with clarifying the structures of human participation in reality, from the physical reality of the cosmos and the body to participation in society and its political order to the loving participation of the search for the ground of being that humans typically symbolize as divine. He was equally concerned with the deformation of what he called dogmatic derailments by which symbols that express the different dimensions of human participation in reality are flattened into concepts that are supposed to refer to external phenomena. His rejection of dogma has led

many of his readers to refer to him as a mystic – a term that he did not repudiate. Unlike so many political scientists, Voegelin combined the breadth of knowledge of a historian such as Arnold Toynbee with the philosophical insight of one such as Henri Bergson.

The title of this paper refers to the fourth volume of *Order and History*. *The Ecumenic Age* continued the chronological sequence that ended with volume three. The “ecumenic age” referred to the period from the rise of the Persian around the eighth century BC to the fall of the Roman Empire around the eighth century AD (CW, 12: 98).¹ Chronologically at least there was considerable overlap with Karl Jaspers’ “axis age.”² For Voegelin, however, the “Ecumenic Age” constituted an “epoch” because these empires overwhelmed the two societies, the Israelite and the Hellenic, that had nourished the differ-

1 CW refers to Voegelin’s *Collected Works*, 34 volumes, available from the University of Missouri Press.

2 Jaspers first developed his notion of axis-time or axis-age in *Vom Ursprung und Zeil der Geschichte* (Zurich, Artemis, 1949). An English translation *Man in the Modern Age*, was published by Doubleday in 1957. See also Joseph W. Koterski, Raymond J. Langley, eds., *Karl Jaspers on Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy*, (New York, Humanity Books, 2003); Johann P. Arnason, S.N. Eisenstadt, and Björn Wittrock, eds., *Axial Civilizations and World History*, (Leiden, Brill, 2005); Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *Axial Age and its Consequences* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012). Voegelin expressed his reservations regarding Jaspers’ concept in the “Introduction,” to volume two of *Order and History*, called “Mankind and History,” in CW, 15: 86-90.

entiated truth of existence achieved by philosophers and prophets – or as Voegelin said with increasing frequency, through the differentiation of pneumatic and noetic consciousness – beyond that gained in the cosmological empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia as discussed in the first volume of *Order and History*. The fact that “the pragmatic order of history did not go the way of [the] spiritual order” of Israel and Hellas raised for him two new questions: (1) was the attempt at forming societies in accord with the truth of existence, which we conventionally call religious truth, as in Israel and Hellas, simply crushed by the new imperial powers, which certainly imposed a peace of some sort, or did the attempt fail for some other reason? And (2) did these new imperial powers belong to the same category as the earlier Near Eastern cosmological empires against which Israel and Hellas distinguished themselves and differentiated the truth of existence? In short, was there anything new about these imperial powers, and if so, what?

The short answer to these questions was: first, the “insight that concrete societies organized for action in pragmatic history were no proper vessels for the realization of transcendent order at all,” was apparent both to the prophet Isaiah and to the philosopher Plato. Accordingly, the new empires were not the agents that brought the realization that no finite society could properly

represent the now differentiated truth of existence.³ The peace imposed by the ecumenic empires left untouched the religious search for “the peace of God that passeth understanding” as it was expressed by the early Christians (*Phil.*, 4:7). Indeed, that insight had already been gained by what Voegelin called the initial “leap in being” achieved by the prophets and philosophers. Moreover, the correlate, that universal humanity was distinct from the parochial humanity of specific concrete societies, seemed to imply that a plurality of societies had to be included if universal humanity were ever to achieve its adequate symbolic form. With that second insight, Voegelin said, appeared the “faint outlines” of “the fundamental division of spiritual and temporal order” (*CW*, 17: 168-9). Not until St. Augustine wrote *The City of God* in the early fifth century, however, “was a symbolism found that integrated the pragmatic and spiritual orders into a whole meaning, at least after a fashion, at least for Western civilization, at least for a time” (*CW*, 17: 202). The weak point in Augustine’s formulation, indicated by the qualifications quoted in the previous sentence could now be specified. It was not the “intermingling” of the two cities in history nor was it his extension of Plato’s ar-

3 For a solid commonsensical analysis of Voegelin’s discussion of ecumenic empire, see, Geoffrey Barraclough, “Eric Voegelin and the Theory of Imperialism,” in *The Philosophy of Order: Essays on History, Consciousness and Politics for Eric Voegelin on his Eightieth Birthday*, (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1981), 173-89.

gument regarding *Eros*, namely the two cities expressing two loves –of self to contempt of God or of God to contempt of self. Rather, Augustine’s limitation was his subordination of “these great insights to a historiogenetic pattern whose unilinear history came to a meaningful end in the dual ecumenism of the Church and the Roman empire” (*CW*, 17: 230). Historiogenesis was a concept Voegelin developed in the 1960s. In his *History of Political Ideas*, his early studies of modern Gnosticism, and the early volumes of *Order and History* all proceeded on the assumption that history was properly conceived as “a process of increasingly differentiated insight into the order of being in which man participates by his existence” (*CW*, 17: 45). He largely subscribed to the notion that the process of increasing differentiation and regression from maximal differentiation could be discussed adequately in terms of historical succession. In the development and elaboration of his argument regarding order and history, Voegelin encountered two problems. First, the categorization initially envisaged five historically connected types of order; but as Voegelin increasingly mastered the empirical materials, the study grew so it could easily fill many more volumes. But more important, he discovered that the empirical types, however many they were, could not be aligned in any time sequence or “course,” a term he borrowed from the early European

philosopher of history, Vico.⁴ Even in the earlier volumes of *Order and History*, it was clear that the differentiation of Hellas and Israel were not connected on a meaningful time-line, to say nothing of the contemporary but historically unconnected Chinese differentiations.

The historiogenetic form of a single time-line, that is, was incapable of accommodating the enlarged historical knowledge that inevitably accumulated over time. This was evident to Voegelin in the *History of Political Ideas*, as well as in *The New Science of Politics* (*CW*, 5: 154ff, 176f; *CW*, 19: 206ff), though he used less specific language there to indicate the limitation of Augustine’s symbolism.

As to the second question, whether the new empires were of the same type as the older cosmological empires of the Ancient Near East, the answer was already clear: no, they were not. Conventionally historians discussed the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires as if they were akin to the Egyptian or Babylonian. However, in none of the latter conquests did the victors organize a Persian, Macedonian, or Roman society. They were all multi-society or multi-civilizational power organizations. Indeed, the Romans could not even produce a succession of Italian emperors. Accordingly,

4 In Voegelin’s study in the *History*, he noted that Vico ran into similar problems. See *CW*, 24: 136-48. See also my *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1999), 363ff.



“the empire as an enterprise of institutional power ... had separated from the organization of a concrete society and could be imposed as a form on the remnants of societies no longer capable of self-organization” (*CW*, 17: 170, 271; cf. *CW*, 19: 87-146). Similar problems appeared with the Byzantine and the Islamic empires.

Together, these two developments suggested a “curious convergence of trends” (*CW*, 17: 170). On the one hand, the spiritual communities that maintained the experiences of revelation and philosophy tended to separate from the surrounding societies –as “schools” or “prophetic”

organizations, for example– and the imperial organizations embarked on indefinite expansion without reference to existing societies. On the one side, the universality of spiritual order seemed to reach out towards the whole of humanity and on the other, the new empires seemed to seek to expand over the whole of humanity. In both cases the meaningfulness of specific concrete societies such as Israel or Hellas or many others was eclipsed by the importance of the new spiritual communities such as Christianity and Islam. In keeping with the principle that “the self-interpretation of a society is part of the reality or its order” (*CW*, 17:

175), one could properly describe this convergence of trends as constituting the new epoch.⁵

Relying chiefly on the Greek historian of Rome, Polybius, Voegelin argued that the “*ecumene*” was conceived not as a subject of order but as an object to be conquered. The *ecumene* was initially the inhabited world, then the known world—that is, an object of exploration, as it tended to become at the end of Alexander’s anabasis— and finally it referred to the legal jurisdiction of Rome. It was never however a “self-organizing society” so that, while one can speak of an “Ecumenic Age,” referring to the existence of imperial power organizations dominating several distinct societies, one cannot speak of an “Ecumenic Society.” The reason was obvious enough: conquest was exodus. In order to conquer one must leave home, both literally and figuratively. Voegelin, following the Greek historian, Herodotus, who first formulated the problem in terms of the envy of the gods, called such expan-

sion a “concupiscential exodus from reality” undertaken behind the apparently realistic project of ecumenic conquest (*CW*, 17: 188, 240). Such an enterprise could be conducted only if a concupiscential conqueror was willing to leave home literally. The *ecumene* therefore advanced or diminished according to the expansion or contraction of imperial power.

The search for spiritual order did not end with the annihilation of specific societies by imperial conquest nor was it to be found in the apparently meaningless acts of conquest.⁶ Here Voegelin introduced the term “ecumenic religions” to describe the new spiritual communities established by the evangelism of Paul, Mani, and Mohammed. It was evidently not enough to observe, as did Polybius, the extraordinary large-scale nature of events—a sentiment that was strongly felt in

5 Voegelin’s description of the expansion of ecumenic empires as limitless power organizations bore a remarkable resemblance to Hannah Arendt’s discussion of nineteenth-century European imperialism, the meaning of which was summarized in Cecil Rhodes’ remark, “I would annex the planets if I could.” See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed., (New York, Harcourt Brace and World, 1966), Part II, 121ff. Voegelin noted the resemblance as well in his 1961 Stevenson Memorial Lecture at the Royal Institute of International Affairs; see *CW*, 11: 140. One of the implications, to be discussed at the end of this chapter, is that human beings still exist at least in some respects within the epoch constituted by Voegelin’s “Ecumenic Age.”

6 Central here was the evidence of the report of Polybius that the victor over Carthage, Scipio Aemilianus, gripped Polybius’ hand in fear and said, “a glorious moment Polybius; but I have a dread foreboding that someday the same doom will be pronounced on my own country” (*The Histories*, 37: 20). Appian, *Punica*, 132, reported that Scipio wept and “was seen weeping for his enemies.” He recollected the fate of Troy, the Assyrians, the Medes, Persians, and Macedonians. See Ernest Barker, *From Alexander to Constantine: Passages and Documents Illustrating the History of Social and Political Ideas*, 336 B.C.–A.D. 337, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1956), 121ff. In a similar vein, after marching nearly 12,000 miles over eight years, Alexander’s army had had enough upon reaching the river Beas in northern India. See Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*, (London, Allen Lane, 1973), 368ff.

Herodotus and Thucydides as well.⁷ Those who underwent the events were compelled to reflect on their own position as participants in the process. By Voegelin's analysis, Paul, Mani, and Mohammed, no less than Anaximander, Plato, Aristotle and Augustine, were concerned with what Voegelin called a "spiritual *exodus*" (*CW*, 17: 188ff).

The relation between concupiscential expansion and spiritual exodus constituted, he said, the great issue of the Ecumenical Age. From the side of conquest the problem was obvious: there were pragmatic limits to the limitless desire to conquer. The pretense of unlimited expansion was contradicted or "embarrassed" by actual limits –or what amounted to the same thing, by a refusal of an army far from home to keep going unto the ends of the earth. "The experience of this untenable result," Voegelin said, "prepares the situation in which the ecumenic rulers become ready to associate their empire with an ecumenic religion in order to channel the meaning of a spiritual exodus into a concupiscential expansion that has become flagrantly nonsensical" (*CW*, 17: 258). The nonsensical element of the entire enterprise was obvious

in commonsense terms as a futile quest to reach the ultimate horizon beyond which was supposed to be found the divine source of human universality.⁸ In short, you can't get there from here.

The effort was not entirely a waste of time, however, because the failure of concupiscential expansion was followed by a retraction in alliance with a consciousness of universal humanity as found in the aforementioned universal religions. Neither ecumenic expansion nor universal religions turned out to bring peace to the *ecumene*. The actual *ecumene* was still the habitat of human beings within the horizon of the cosmos. Or again, in commonsensical terms, if you succeeded in exploring the *ecumene* to its end, you end up where you began for the obvious reason that the shape of the actual *ecumene* is a sphere. As a result, the successful concupiscential explorer (or one reflecting on the achievements of the age of exploration) was compelled to acknowledge the mystery of the distinction between the *ecumene* and the *cosmos*.⁹ Nothing

7 In "What is History?" an unpublished essay written around 1963, Voegelin argued that the beginning of as Herodotean inquiry (*historia*) that eventually turned into a Thucydidean write-up (*syngraphe*) of a historiographic text, as with Polybius, was the encounter of a concrete human being with a disturbance that the person involved considered worthy of remembrance. See *CW*, 28: 10ff.

8 A modern version was Khrushchev's remark that Yuri Gagarin went into space but didn't see God.

9 In this context, Thomas More's *Utopia* reflected an "intermediate situation" where his fictional wanderer, Raphael Hythlodæus, whose name meant one "well-learned in nonsense," and who was said to have accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on his last three voyages to the New World, explained that he (like More himself) was at much at home in one place as in another since everywhere was equidistant from heaven. That is, the end of the journey lay beyond the world and wandering the world led not to any somewhere but to Utopia,



could be changed by exploring space and annexing the planets (see also *CW*, 11: 140). This commonsensical insight was gained in the absence of any equivalent “religious” limitation to conquest.

Even when ecumenic rulers succeeded in associating their power organization with an ecumenic religious movement, there were problems with the complex synthesis. Granted, there was an “affinity of meaning” that connected empires claiming to organize humanity un-

which is to say, to Nowhere. See *CW*, 17: 141; 22: 109ff. See also St. Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965), xviii, 301-03.

der one umbrella of administrative authority with spiritual outbursts that also claimed to represent humanity (*CW*, 11: 136). Granted, in short, there was something to Jaspers’ axial age inasmuch as the several world empires existed from Atlantic to Pacific at the same time as the spiritual outbursts.¹⁰ Not that there was a causal connection between these phenomena (*CW*, 17: 204), but that, taken together, they constituted what Voegelin called a “configuration” of history (*CW*, 12: 95ff; 28: 37-42). Voegelin was quite clear about what was involved on the imperial side: “a power organization, informed by the *pathos* of representative humanity, and therefore representative of mankind – that would be the core, as it emerged from the historical phenomena, of a definition of world-empire” (*CW*, 11: 136-7).

To achieve a similar precision from the side of the spiritual outbursts or “religion,” required a more detailed analysis. The problem centered on the meaning of the term “world,” which “presents extraordinary difficulties to philosophical analysis” (*CW*, 11: 142). In both ancient and modern usage “world” included the element of territory and persons living on it, but also the notion of an all-pervading order. In the classical sense the emphasis, as we

¹⁰ See Peter Wagner, “Palomar’s Questions: The Axial Age, Hypothesis, European Modernity and Historical Contingency,” in Arnason, Eisenstadt, and Wittrock, eds., *Axial Civilizations and World History*, 87-106.

have seen, was on the visible and external cosmic order. In later Christian and Muslim usage the accent lay more on the internal order of the person. The differences in meaning, Voegelin said, “apparently reflect the actual historical process in which the experience of human existence under a world-transcendent God has differentiated from the primary, more compact existence in a cosmos that includes both gods and men” (CW, 11: 144). That is, the spiritual outbursts involve the differentiation of consciousness.¹¹

The implication for a world-empire was that the element of a “world” implied more than the imperial dominion over territory and human beings. Here Voegelin closely paraphrased the opening words of his *History of Political Ideas*, written in 1940: “To establish an empire is an essay in world creation, reaching through all the levels of the hierarchy of being” (CW, 11: 145; cf. 19: 225). The essay in world creation was always related to the invisible order of the cosmos and so to “religion,” insofar as it was also an evocation of true existence within the world. “The character of an evocation attuned to the ‘unseen measure’ makes a human imperial creation analogically commensurate with the world, [and] endows it with the sense of a ‘world’” (CW, 11: 145).

Returning to the example of

Polybius, while it was true that he wrote the history of a Rome that aimed at the rule of the *ecumene*, the story of Scipio at Carthage indicated that even the *telos* of empire was senseless. Scipio’s difficulty could therefore be specified more closely: on the one hand he recollected the cosmic rhythms of rise and fall, but on the other he rejected the cosmological rhythms in favor of a *telos* that, so to speak, cut across them (CW, 17: 230). Such a position was necessarily inconclusive, not to say conflicted and even incoherent. In this context, the Gospel of Matthew (24: 14) provided a solution: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world [*ecumene*] for a witness to all nations; and then the end [*telos*] shall come.” This new missionary order, Voegelin said, “sounds like a deliberate literary answer (although it hardly can be one) to Polybius” (CW, 11: 151). That is, Saint Matthew declared that the *telos* of the *ecumene* was that it be filled with the Gospel, which is to say the *telos* of human action again lay beyond the world. In commonsensical language, one might say that the Ecumenic Age witnessed the dissociation of the primary experience of the cosmos into the opacity of concupiscential expansion and the luminosity of spiritual outbursts. However, there would always be those who would wonder if the dissociation was complete. Once the Gospel had filled the *ecumene*, what then? The same problem arises within Islam in

¹¹ I have discussed this problem in chapter three of *Consciousness and Politics: From Analysis to Meditation in the Late Work of Eric Voegelin*, (Notre Dame, St. Augustine Press, 2016).

terms of an ecumenical caliphate. In neither spiritual community can one find a definitive resolution in ecumenic peace.

With Matthew, the immediate reference to the apocalyptic expectations of Daniel (24: 15ff) indicated that expectations of a new world were entirely in order. Voegelin said that Matthew's expectations amounted to "a *metastasis*, a new disposition in which there will be no problems of world-empires" (CW, 17: 151). Like all metastatic expectations, it bought its own problems when the future *ecumene* did not show up on time –or, to date, not at all. In some of the passages of Saint Paul, for example, the penetration of the *ecumene* by the Gospel was quickly to be followed by the return of Christ and the elevation of ecumenical humanity to the Kingdom of God. As these expectations faded with time, the *ecumene* tended to become more purely spiritual and signify a humanity that received the Word. In other passages the *ecumene* tended to signify the institutionalized Church that continued its worldly existence under the protection of an empire (CW, 11: 115). Such a compromise was inevitable inasmuch as metastatic faith invariably was eventually contradicted by the nonapocalyptic structure of history.

In "World Empire and the

Unity of Mankind" (1962), Voegelin summarized his enquiry as follows: first, imperial organizations as attempts to represent humanity began with the cosmological impe-

Any intramundane apocalyptic efforts to transform the *ecumene* into a world were doomed before they commenced.

rial organizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the cosmological empires, the universal order was expressed by the myth of the cosmos. The second form, the ecumenic empire, gained a new truth of human existence but imperial order tended to become ecumenically expansive and only tentatively connected to an ecumenic religion that endowed the empire with the characteristics of a world insofar as the religion evoked the participation of human order in transcendent being. Ecumenic empires, furthermore, have been succeeded by "orthodox" empires where the association of imperial power and a religious world was "understood as a necessity" and became "stabilized over long periods" (CW, 11: 154). In turn, the orthodox empires, by which were meant the Western European Latin Christian empire, the Eastern Greek Christian empire, the Islamic empire and the Far-Eastern Neo-Confucian

empire, have been succeeded by the several national empires, starting in the eleventh century in the West, leading to such splendid power organizations as the Hapsburg Empire, a French, a Dutch, and a British Empire as well as such oddities as a post-imperial empire founded by Bokassa I in the Central African Republic. In turn these imperial entities, following the “global revolution of modernity” that also originated in the West and that has derailed on the one hand into the Gnostic *libido dominandi* and on the other into an “intramundane apocalypse,” have resulted in ideological empires along the lines of liberal gradualist and revolutionary Marxist imaginary or second realities (*CW*, 33: 314).

The futility of the Gnostic enterprise like the futility of an intramundane apocalypse, which prohibited participation in the order of world-transcendent Being, was self-evident. Any intramundane apocalyptic efforts to transform the *ecumene* into a world were doomed before they commenced. “What can be achieved is only the apocalyptic concentration camp,” which was obviously not a world either (*CW*, 11: 154-5). About all that can be said of the “lethal stupidity” of such developments was that they may have a cathartic function insofar as they made abundantly clear to non-philosophers what philosophers already knew:

That mankind is more than the global collective of human beings living at the

same time. Mankind is the society of man in history, extending in time from its unknown origin toward its unknown future. Moreover, no crosscut at any time represents mankind by virtue of a common power organization. For the living can represent mankind universally only by their representative humanity; and their humanity is representative only when it is oriented toward the eschatological telos. Organization, to be sure, is necessary to the existence of man and society in this world, but no organization can organize mankind—even global ecumenicity of organization is not universality. The dream of representing universal order through the world of empire has come to its end when the meaning of universal order as the order of history under God has come into view (*CW*, 11: 155).

Voegelin’s conclusion was that a 5000-year effort at trying to represent humanity by means of a finite organization in the present was over (see also *CW*, 17: 272-3). Given the continued presence of various liberal, conservative, Marxist and Islamist intramundane apocalypses, one might conclude that Voegelin was over-sanguine. Yet even the most bloodthirst of modern intramundane apocalypses still are connected, however tenuously, to the permanent quest of human beings for peace.



Religion and Violence: how symbiotic a relationship?

Oliver Leaman

There are a variety of ways of looking at the relationship between religion and violence. One view is that the Abrahamic religions at least prioritize peace and develop ways of living and acting which promote it. Another view is that those religions are in fact very violent, if not in word but in deed, and often in both. There is also an approach which sees religion and violence as intrinsically linked and so inseparable. It is worth accepting right from the start the existence of a wide spectrum of opinions here since otherwise the fact that religions sometimes seem to challenge violence and at the same

time encourage it will be perplexing. The idea that religion is really all about either peace or violence is too simplistic to pass muster, and yet this is often stated, as though it were a discovery of immense novelty. Clearly whatever links there are must be much more complex than is generally acknowledged. When we are told “God is the name of this pure violence” (Derrida, 2002, 293) we appreciate that for many modern thinkers such as Benjamin, Derrida and Žižek, the fact that violence takes place within the rubric of religion is not an anomaly.¹

¹ Derrida, J. (2002). ‘Force of Law: The Mystical

The first aspect of the topic we must examine is what sorts of behavior count as religious. A gangster who extorts money from someone might say he is on a religious task, and he may be, but we need more than just his self-description to understand the nature of the event as religious. People involved in terrorism often have criminal backgrounds, and it is sometimes suggested that this means they cannot be religious at the same time, which is surely just wrong. Describing them blankly as criminals seems to be misleading, although it is a very popular strategy for those seeking to defend particular religions.²

There is an interesting discussion nowadays about the appropriate title for the organization that calls itself "Islamic State" with many media outlets prefacing the title with "so-called" to deny them the right to identify themselves with a religion that has many members who reject such a description. On the other hand, that is what they want to call themselves, and clearly they have close links with what they take to be a form of Islam, since they often

cite appropriate *hadith* and Qur'anic *ayat* in defense of what they do, and there is a school of thought in Islam which accepts the intellectual underpinnings for many of their actions. I remember many years ago in the German Federal Republic that when it came to naming the German Democratic Republic, East Germany, the address was to the "*sogennante Deutsche Demokratische Republik*", so called because it was neither German nor democratic in the view of many. Over the years though the qualification was dropped since the entity in the east did come to acquire in reality at least some aspects of its description. Although ultimate authority lay with the Russians, the population was German and there existed a form of representation of the public will in government. The state was a bit German and a bit democratic. Similarly, we might want to call behavior religious just because it is carried out by people who claim to share a particular religion and religious motivation for their behavior. If they use their interpretation of the religion to justify what they do, and it seems to be part at least of their motivation, it becomes more difficult to separate them from the label. One is left wondering just how much Islam has to do with the violence that is sometimes committed in its name. It often seems to be the case that radical Islam merely provides a conduit, giving legitimacy and a higher meaning to violent impulses that had their roots in the frustrations and resent-

Foundation of Authority'. In G. Anidjar (Ed.) *Acts of Religion* (pp. 228-298). New York, NY: Routledge ; Benjamin, W. (1978). Critique of violence. In E. Jephcott (Trans.), *Reflections* (pp. 277-300). New York: Schocken Books ; Žižek, S. (2008) *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, New York: Picador

2 See many of the essays in Esposito, J. (2016) *Religion and Violence* (http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/ReligionViolence) and especially the views of the editor on this topic here and in many other places.

ments and dysfunction that are so typical of life for many Muslims, and others today. On the other hand, it seems wrong to deny the actors the right to identify with a religion as their motive if they wish to do this. It is always difficult to identify precisely the causes of behavior, and surely religion is a feasible motive in some contexts.

Violence and Religions

Religions do often say very violent things, as when the Jews are told to wipe out whole communities (*Deut 20: 16-18*) and sometimes all life (*Josh 10.40*). On the other hand, in the messianic age "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation nor shall they learn war any more" (*Isaiah 2.4*). There is a Hebrew expression which is adopted as the name of many synagogues in the United States, *rodef shalom*, which means a seeker after peace but the word *rodef* actually is much more active than is implied by the English word "seeker"; it means someone who aggressively pursues an end.

Christian Europe was hardly a good example of non-violence, often destroying other Christians who were seen as having heterodox views. At various times Christians have been extraordinarily violent in their dealings with other religions. The Gospels are not fruitful places to look for justifications of violence,

though. Much of the Old Testament law was abrogated or completed, depending on one's perspective, by Jesus. "Eye for an eye" was replaced by "turn the other cheek." Totally loving God and one's neighbor became the supreme law (*Matt. 22:38-40*.) Furthermore, Jesus is generally in favor of passivity and altruism. The New Testament contains absolutely no exhortations to violence. There is the verse "I come not to bring peace but a sword."(*Matt. 10:34*) but this seems from the context to make it clear that Jesus was not commanding violence against non-Christians but rather predicting that strife will exist between Christians and those around them. The Gospels make clear that there will be conflict and violence in society and it needs to be resolved in an acceptable way, and it sets out strategies to this end. Similarly in the *Qur'an*, although there are passages that are certainly violent, this is a form of behavior that requires regulation and direction, and the Book attempts to provide it.

Where the religions tend to agree is on this point, that violence will occur and needs managing. There are always going to be situations in which violence is the right course of action. Even Jesus physically attacked those involved in commercial activities in the Temple. Although Gandhi generally adheres to a policy of *ahimsa*, no harm, he does raise the issue of what to do when a rabid dog enters a village, or a tiger a cowshed. The response

he suggests is not just to let things happen as they would naturally. In the stories of the Buddha he is said to have been confronted by a hungry tiger in the jungle who needed to eat to provide milk for her children. He offered her his arm. From the context this is probably supposed to be a supererogatory act, but it suggests

Where the religions tend to agree is on this point, that violence will occur and needs managing.

in any case that some compromise with violence needs to be struck. Religions are profoundly realistic institutions and the reason some of them have survived so long is that they often provide ideas and examples which people can use to make sense of their own lives.

Islam and Violence

In many ways this sort of realism seems to be the position of those movements in the Islamic world that are enthusiastic about the use of violence. They argue that the *Qur'an* itself points to the importance of frightening the enemy and the *sira* of the Prophet refers to many instances of violence that were apparently sanctioned by him and his followers, such as beheading and making fun of the dead body of an enemy. What is often called terrorism by its opponents is action that kills innocent

people but for a purpose that is supposed to be religiously valid. So for example the recent attack in Tunisia on foreign tourists is designed to retaliate against those fighting radical forces in other parts of the Middle East by hurting and killing their civilians. It may help motivate those countries to change their policies.

Normally it would not be thought to be right to attack innocent civilians, but if the consequences suggest it might be effective in bringing about a greater good, then it is on

the table as a legitimate action. The Shi'ite thinker Mutahhari in his account of acceptable uses of violence argues that 2: 251: "and if God had not repelled some men by others, the earth would have been corrupted," can be taken with 22:40: "for had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories would have been pulled down." Mainly concerned with the rules of initiating *jihad*, discussion of the rules of war tend to point to the major moral motives as helping the oppressed, whether or not such intervention is requested. According to Mutahhari this was the nature of most of the early Islamic wars, and another legitimate cause is the removal of political obstacles to the propagation and spread of Islam. This can be seen as fighting in favor of the people that are otherwise condemned to isolation from the call of

truth and against regimes that suppress freedom of speech. Defensive wars like the defense of life, wealth, property, and land, of independence and of principles are all legitimate. However, the defense of human rights Mutahhari places above the defense of individuals. The last of Mutahhari's legitimate causes of war goes beyond any notion of defense; he supports a policy of moral expansionism. That is, when dealing with corrupt societies, whether democratic or otherwise, the Islamic state should seek to challenge the false ideas that persist there and it may be necessary to invade them or at the very least confront them militarily in order to convey the proper principles as to how they are to live.³ Clearly such principles would legitimate extensive violence in a whole range of circumstances.

The response of those opposed to such policies is often that this contravenes such verses as those which compare killing someone to killing everyone. That means that there are absolute principles such as the proscribing of murder that can never be contravened, whatever the consequences. Shaykh Allam of al-Azhar recently produced a Qur'anic argument against ISIS and its supporters⁴. He starts by using 49:13 to

suggest that God created different communities, and so it is pointless to try to make everyone believe in the same things. The Grand Mufti of Egypt uses this passage to criticize those radical groups that kill others of a different religious background, quoting also 5: 32: "If anyone kills a person it is as if he kills all humanity, and if anyone saves a life it is as if he saves the life of all humanity." Yet he surely did not mean that Islam condemns all killing or advocates all saving of life, since there are many other passages which certainly seem to go in a very different direction. Certainly there is nothing in the *Qur'an* which suggests killing people just because they are not Muslims. On the other hand, that is not what radical groups tend to do, they find some reason for killing people and try to justify that reason in religious terms by finding appropriate and different authoritative sources. They may well be wrong and certainly casuistic in their approach to texts, but refuting them requires more than just referring to the way in which God created different communities in the world. Some Muslims believe anyway that the diversity of faith should be seen as a temporary stage of humanity, until everyone comes to accept Islam. Whatever the verse suggesting that killing one person is like destroying all of humanity means, it cannot mean that killing is completely ruled out. It would be very difficult to give the *Qur'an* a pacifist interpretation.

3 Mutahhari, Murtaza (1989). "Jihad". *Holy War of Islam and its legitimacy in the Qur'an*, trans. M. Tawhidi. Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization. See the discussion in Leaman, O. (2016) *The Qur'an, a Philosophical Guide*, London: Bloomsbury, p.76

4 Allam, Shawki. Terrorists and their Quranic Delusions, *Wall Street Journal* April 10, 2015

When we look at more sources of authority in Islam like the *hadith* and the *sira* of the Prophet, and for the Shi'a the sayings of the imams, we get yet more material advocating killing, in certain circumstances. Surely that is in principle right, there are always circumstances which look like exceptions to the rule and it then looks overly rigid to stick to the rule.

Violence and general moral principles

This suggests that we have to consider the consequences of action as the crucial determining factor in morality. There is much to support this position in Islam. Joseph Alagha shows how two very different groups of Muslims, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, use the principle of considering the consequences to countenance dancing if it is directed to the appropriate political ends.⁵ They recognize that while in itself dancing and other forms of culture that involve behavior that might be regarded as objectionable on religious grounds specifically because of its implications for modesty, it can nonetheless be provided with a positive role in promoting the message of resistance and encouraging solidarity among those in the movements concerned. Similarly, when it comes to violence the principle of *darura* or necessity is often regarded as significant, the idea

being that in particular circumstances necessity demands that things are done which otherwise would not be acceptable. This seems to accord with the principle that what is important morally are the consequences of action, not so much the action itself. How this works is quite clear. In a violent confrontation which is legitimate on religious grounds one has the ultimate aim of overcoming the enemy, and there are things one is allowed to do to achieve this end. It may be, though, that in the particular circumstances it is necessary to put aside these principles if victory is to be likely, and in that case such a suspension of the principles is permitted. This could mean treating the civilian population in a particularly harsh way, or it could even affect how one behaves oneself. There is evidence, for example, that those engaging on surreptitious violent missions are sometimes instructed to blend in by shaving off their beards, drinking alcohol, going to clubs and so on, all activities which they should avoid otherwise, but in the circumstances might find effective in realizing their goals. It might also of course be taken to be a lot of fun. Observers would assume they were "normal" and so not dangerous, and this could provide effective cover for the mission.

This view, which looks like the ethical position of those often called Islamists or extremists, could be argued to be in line what we know of the political flexibility

⁵ Alagha, Joseph, G. Banna's and A. Fadlallah's Views on Dancing, In *Sociology of Islam*, 2014, 2, pp. 60-85

of the Prophet Muhammad and also the phenomenon of abrogation. The idea that later verses can overrule and replace earlier ones is evidence of the significance of considering the role that changing circumstances have for what is required of Muslims. The methodology of *asbab al-nuzul*, of considering the context of revelation, is clearly important here, since it helps us know which verses precede which others, and in any case once we know the situation that led to a verse, its context, we are often in a position to understand it better. Also, the whole process of using the *hadith* to help work out what Muslims are to do is an exercise in flexibility, since there are so many *hadith*, and different opinions on their strengths and weaknesses as genuine reports of what was said in the past, that coming to a judgment necessarily involves a fine adjudication between a range of sources, as is the case in all religions that are based on texts. So decisions about how to act in conflict and peace cannot be based on general principles that remain inviolable throughout. The whole process of theology is based on the idea of balance, of considering a range of sources of authority and making a sophisticated judgement. Principles are certainly important and enter into the decision-making but they are not the final step after which nothing else can be said.

9: 14 suggests: "Fight them, God will torment them with your hands, humiliate them, empower

you over them, and heal the hearts of the believers." The *Qur'an* advises believers to deal harshly with the enemies of Islam. To understand the significance of this verse, as with the rest of the verses in the *Qur'an*, it is very helpful to look at the *sira* and *hadith* of the Prophet. As with a variety of religions, there are plenty of bloodthirsty accounts of the past that can be used to legitimate acting in similarly direct ways in the present and future. For example, there is the death of 'Amr bin Hisham, a pagan Arab chieftain originally known as "Abu Hakim" (Father of Wisdom) until Muhammad renamed him "Abu Jahl" (Father of Stupidity) for his determined opposition to Islam. After 'Amr was mortally wounded by a new convert to Islam during the Battle of Badr, it is reported that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, a close companion of Muhammad, saw the chieftain collapsed on the ground. He went up to him and started abusing him. Among other things, 'Abdullah grabbed and pulled 'Amr's beard and stood gloating triumphantly on the dying man's chest. This has led to a good deal of similar actions among some groups of Muslims when dealing with their enemies of cutting off their heads and humiliating their bodies, perhaps to make a reference to healing the hearts of the victors in the above *aya*. Although this may be distasteful to some, if this is the most efficient way of bringing about an end worth achieving, are there really any significant ethical objections to it?

At 8: 16 we are told: “And whoever turns his back on them, except as a strategy or to join another group, will certainly attract the wrath of God, his abode will be fire, And what a wretched destination that is.” The previous verse refers to fighting the unbelievers. There are plenty of verses which talk of the advantages of violence, but of course there are just as many and perhaps more that talk of the significance of peace and the importance of not prolonging conflict any longer than strictly necessary. The important point is that there are a variety of verses, and it is for the sophisticated follower of a religion to work out in a particular situation which really apply.

Different kinds of violence

A good example of this is the popularity nowadays for distinguishing between the greater and the lesser *jihad*, where the former is the spiritual struggle over the negative aspects of the self, while the latter is physical struggle. This serves to emphasize the defensive nature of *jihad* and tries to dissociate Islam from those aspects of the account of *jihad* in the *Qur'an* which really go in a different and rather more aggressive direction. A significant problem of representing this *hadith* as a crucial aspect of understanding *jihad* and peace is that it is often used in a very vague manner, as a corrective to the negative image of Islam as a violent religion. The *hadith* certainly

does not do justice to the practice of Muslims at war, or even their disinclination to go to war, and this is not to criticize it, but it is to question how widely it was accepted and used as a basis to behavior. In any case, to say war is the lesser *jihad* does not mean it is not important nor that the rules for pursuing it are not important. It suggests that there is more to conflict than just physical struggle and that is worth emphasizing. There is an English saying that sticks and stones may hurt my bones but words can never harm me, but the reverse is often the case. The damage due to sticks and stones may only be temporary, yet the hurt that words can cause may last a lifetime, and even lead to death. This is certainly true of cultures that are based on tribalism and shame, which according to al-Jabri is most Arab societies since the Umayyads. He refers to the phrase: Those who listen to their Lord, in *Qur'an* 42:38. He used this verse to define a political period in early Islam of shura or consultation, since it goes on to mention “consult each other in their affairs”. In the time of the Prophet the state was based on the Islamic creed or *'aqida*. Muhammad's Medinese community was a real political community and can be defined as an “Islamic state”. This was not to last long, the Umayyads distinguished in the person of their ruler the function of religious scholar (*'alim*) and leader of the state. Mu'awiya's *mulk* or kingdom was continued by his

successors, replacing *'aqida* with *qabila* or tribalism, and an authoritarian government resulted, since one tribe had to dominate the rest if stability was to be preserved.⁶ The subsequent domineering regimes were based on tribalism, and its noxious heritage, in his view, continues to this day. It also encourages the growth of a form of authoritarianism in the family, a patriarchy based on the analogy with the ruler and the ruled, and levels of physical and psychological violence to maintain those levels of authority.

At 2: 190 we read: "And with those who fight to kill you, fight in the way of God." Many early Sufi thinkers adopted esoteric interpretations of the Qur'anic verses treating conflict. The real challenge and test comes from within. The reasons why the Prophet stressed that the greater *jihad* must be against the carnal soul (*nafs*) is that physical wars against infidels are occasional but the battle against the self is frequent, indeed constant. There are ways to avoid the visible weapons of the military foe, but less chance to escape the invisible weapons of the temptations of the soul; and although we can achieve martyrdom in war with the enemy, there are no rewards if one is defeated by our inner enemy⁷. On the contrary, that defeat is the normal condition of

human beings. But before we come to the conclusion that physical warfare is not that important we need to see the next verse, 2:191: "And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitna is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers." This is a robust account of how Muslims ought to act in conflict, even in Mecca itself. The idea that Islam represents a critique of physical violence is far from the truth. There will obviously be situations where violence is necessary, and religion then sets out the rules for carrying it out.

Extremism and violence

At the beginning of this discussion the problem of how to define religious extremists who resort to violence was raised, and it was said that there are difficulties both with calling them religious and also in avoiding the label. An alternative would be to accept that they are religious but with a poor grasp of their religion. This actually is a characteristic of many such violent individuals, they have a simplistic and inaccurate view of their religion. They are inspired by a scriptural quotation or two, its interpretation by someone they respect, and then they go off and commit the evil deed. If we see religion as rather similar to

6 al-Jabri, Muhammad, *al-'Aql al-siyasi al-'arabi*, Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'arabi, 1990

7 Leaman, Oliver, *Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2009, pp. 133-7



a technique, on the Aristotelian approach advocated by some many philosophers in the Abrahamic religions, we can easily see what is wrong with this strategy. It is like driving through a green light despite the fact that a pedestrian is crossing the road in front of you. There is a simple rule that green means go, but one also has to look to see if anyone

is in the way. The Abrahamic religions all use analogies and stories, and these are very effective at connecting with an audience and making something that might otherwise seem to be abstract to become quite personal. The thing about examples is that they never entirely fit a particular case but they often more or less fit, and they do of course make

a personal connection which otherwise may be entirely lost with a much more general claim. They encourage us to be subtle in our approach to how to act since we always have to play them off against each other in order to work out what implications they have for action. Someone who adheres to a dogmatic belief is the Dajjal, the person with one eye (i.e. only one view of things) who at the end of days becomes very powerful until he is destroyed by the Mahdi. Only having one view makes life very simple and yet too simple, and that is why there is such a proliferation of stories in religions, in the aggadah and *Talmud*, in the Gospels and in the *hadith*. They are there for a purpose and that is to encourage us to think through how we should act from a variety of perspectives, not from just one, and anyone who ignores this really has a highly inaccurate view of what religion is.

It is often argued that those who see violence as an important part of the Abrahamic religions are just wrong. They have an inaccurate grasp of those systems of thought. In reality, those religions are all about peace, or perhaps some of them are by contrast with others. For example, Christianity looks like a more peaceful system than does Judaism, and it is often argued that Christianity has a similar relationship with Islam. After all, the Prophet played an important role as a military commander, in marked contrast with Jesus. Despite these observations

Christians seem to have had little compunction about finding a religious basis for violence on occasion, and it might even be argued that the relative lack of material on violence in the Gospels leaves greater scope for its followers to be violent than is the case for Jews and Muslims. The relative lack of discussion gives followers more license to do what they want. The problem with religions is that they often invite simple solutions. Yet those who claim they are carrying out divine commands are making very bold assertions indeed. The demand that we discuss what we think is the right way to act and defer before the opinions of others is an important part of being patient and thoughtful in behavior, something stressed as a virtue in all the Abrahamic religions. The majority may be wrong, but the process of being cautious and balanced in working out what to do cannot be wrong. They accept that violence exists and needs to be controlled, and suggest a variety of ways of doing so.



Islam and Peace: A Preliminary Survey on the Sources of Peace in the Islamic Tradition

Ibrahim Kalin

Peace as a Substantive Value

Peace as a substantive and positive concept entails the presence of certain conditions that make it an

enduring state of harmony, integrity, contentment, equilibrium, repose, and moderation. This can be contrasted with negative peace that denotes the absence of conflict and dis-

The following excerpts are part of *Islam and Peace: A Preliminary Survey on the Sources of Peace in the Islamic Tradition*, published by The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (2012). These excerpts are published with the permission of the author.

cord. Even though negative peace is indispensable to prevent communal violence, border disputes or international conflicts, substantive-positive peace calls for a comprehensive outlook to address the deeper causes of conflict, hate, strife, destruction, brutality, and violence. As Lee states, it also provides a genuine measure and set of values by which peace and justice can be established beyond the short-term interests of individual, communities or states.¹ This is critical for the construction of peace as a substantive value because defining peace as the privation of violence and conflict turns it into a concept that is instrumental and accidental at best, and relative and irrelevant at worst. In addition, the positive-substantive notion of peace shifts the focus from preventing conflict, violence, and strife to a willingness to generate balance, justice, cooperation, dialogue, and coexistence as the primary terms of a discourse of peace. Instead of defining peace with what it is not and force common sense logic to its limit, we may well opt for generating a philosophical ground based on the presence and endurance, rather than absence, of certain qualities and conditions that make peace a substantive reality of human life.²

Furthermore, relegating the

1 Cf. Steven Lee, "A Positive Concept of Peace" in Peter Caws (ed.), *The Causes of Quarrel: Essays on Peace, War, and Thomas Hobbes* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 183-4.

2 Gray Cox, "The Light at the End of the Tunnel and the Light in Which We May Walk: Two Concepts of Peace" in Caws, *ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

discourse of peace to social conflict and its prevention runs the risk of neglecting the individual, which is the *sine qua non* of collective and communal peace. This is where the 'spiritual individualism' of Islam versus its social collectivism enters the picture: the individual must be endowed with the necessary qualities that make peace an enduring reality not only in the public sphere but also in the private domain of the individual. The Qur'anic ideal of creating a beautiful soul that is at peace with itself and the larger reality of which it is a part brings ethics and spirituality right into the heart of the discourse of positive peace. Peace as a substantive value thus extends to the domain of both ethics and aesthetics for it is one of the conditions that bring about peace in the soul and resists the temptations of discord, restlessness, ugliness, pettiness, and vulgarity. At this point, we may remember that the key Qur'anic term *ihsan* carries the meanings of virtue, beauty, goodness, comportment, proportion, comeliness, and 'doing what is beautiful' all at once. The active particle *muhsin* denotes the person who does what is good, desired, and beautiful.³

In this regard, peace is not a mere state of passivity. On the contrary, it is being fully active against

3 The celebrated *hadith* jibril confirms the same Qur'anic usage: "*Ihsan* is to worship God as if you were to see Him; even if you see Him not, he sees you". For an extensive analysis of *ihsan* as articulated in the Islamic tradition, see Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (Paragon House, 1998), pp. 265-317

the menace of evil, destruction, and turmoil that may come from within or from without. As Collingwood points out, peace is a ‘dynamic thing’,⁴ and requires consciousness and vigilance, a constant state of awareness that one must engage in spiritual and intellectual *jihad* to ensure that differences and conflicts within and across the collective traditions do not become grounds for violence and oppression. Furthermore, positive peace involves the analysis of various forms of aggression including individual, institutional and structural violence.

Peace as a substantive concept is also based on justice (*‘adl*) for peace is predicated upon the availability of equal rights and opportunities for all to realize their goals and potentials. One of the meanings of the word justice in Arabic is to be ‘straight’ and ‘equitable’, i.e., to be straightforward, trustworthy, and fair in one’s dealings with others.⁵ Such an attitude brings about a state of balance, accord, and trust, and goes beyond the limits of formal justice dispensed by the juridical system. Defined in the broadest terms, justice encompasses a vast domain of relations and interactions from taking care of one’s body to international law. Like peace, justice is one of the Divine names and

takes on a substantive importance in view of its central role in Islamic theology as well as law. Peace can be conceived as an enduring state of harmony, trust, and coexistence only when coupled and supported with justice because it also means being secure from all that is morally evil and destructive.⁶ Thus the *Qur’an* combines justice with *ihsan* when it commands its followers to act with “justice and good manner” (*bi’l-‘adl wa’l-ihsan*) (16:90).⁷

The Spiritual-Metaphysical Context: God as Peace (*al-Salam*)

The conditions that are conducive to a state of peace mentioned above are primarily spiritual and have larger implications for the cosmos, the individual, and society. Here I shall focus on three premises that are directly relevant to our discussion. The first pertains to peace as a Divine name (*al-Salam*) (*Qur’an*,

4 R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1971), p. 334.

5 Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-‘arab*, XIII, pp. 457-8, and al-Tahanawi, *Kashshaf istilahat al-funun* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998), III, pp. 288-9.

6 Cf. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, p. 179, n. 46 commenting on the *Qur’an* 6:54: “And when those who believe in Our messages come unto thee, say: “Peace be upon you. Your Sustainer has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy so that if any of you does a bad deed out of ignorance, and thereafter repents and lives righteously, He shall be [found] much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace”.

7 On the basis of this verse, the 10th century philologist Abu Hilal al-‘Askari considers justice and *ihsan* as synonyms. Cf. his *al-Furuq allughawiyah*, p. 194, quoted in Franz Rosenthal, “Political Justice and the Just Ruler” in Joel Kraemer and Ilai Alon (eds.), *Religion and Government in the World of Islam* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1983), p. 97, n. 20.

59:23). The Quranic concept of God is founded upon a robust monotheism, and God's transcendence (*tanzih*) is emphasized in both the canonical sources and in the intellectual tradition. To this absolutely one and transcendent God belong "all the beautiful names" (*Qur'an*, 7:180, 59:24), i.e., the names of beauty (*jamal*), majesty (*jalah*), and perfection (*kamal*). It is these names that prevent God from becoming an utterly unreachable and "wholly other" deity. Divine names represent God's face turned towards the world and are the vessels of finding God in and through His creation. The names of beauty take precedence over the names of majesty because God says that "my mercy has encompassed everything" (*Qur'an*, 7: 156) and "God has written mercy upon Himself" (*Qur'an*, 6:12, 54). This is also supported by a famous *hadith* of the Prophet according to which "God is beautiful and loves beauty". In this sense, God is as much transcendent, incomparable and beyond as He is immanent, comparable (*tashbih*) and close.⁸ As the ultimate source of

peace, God transcends all opposites and tensions, is the permanent state of repose and tranquility, and calls His servants to the "abode of peace" (*dar al-salam*) (*Qur'an*, 10:25). "It is He who from high on has sent [sends] down inner peace and repose (*sakinah*) upon the hearts of the believers", says the *Qur'an* (48:4). The proper abode of peace is the hearts (*qulub*), which are "satisfied only by the remembrance of God (*dhikr Allah*)" (*Qur'an*, 13:28). By linking the heart, man's center, to God's remembrance, the *Qur'an* establishes a strong link between theology and spiritual psychology.

In addition to the Quranic exegetes, the Sufis in particular are fond of explaining the 'mystery of creation' by referring to a 'sacred saying' (*hadith qudsi*) attributed to the Prophet of Islam: "I was a hidden treasure. I wanted (lit. 'loved') to be known and created the universe (lit. 'creation'⁹). The key words 'love' (*hubb, mahabbah*) and 'know' (*ma'rifah*) underlie a fundamental aspect of the Sufi metaphysics of creation: Divine love and desire to be known is the *raison d'être* of all existence. Ibn al-'Arabi says that God's "love for His servants is identical with the origination of their engendered existence ... the relation

8 Like other Sufis, Ghazali subscribes to the notion of what Ibn al-'Arabi would later call the "possessor of the two eyes" (*dhu'l-'aynayn*), viz., seeing God with the two eyes of transcendence (*tanzih*) and immanence (*tashbih*). Cf. Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), pp. 8-10 and 51-5. For Ibn al-'Arabi's expression of the "possessor of the two eyes", see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989), pp.361-2. The Mutazilite and Ash'arite theologians have a long history of controversy over the three major views of Divine names and qualities, i.e., *tanzih*, *tashbih*, and *ta'til* ('sus-

pension'). Cf. Michel Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aṣ'ari et des ses premiers grands disciples* (Beyrouth: Editions De L'Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), pp. 354-364.

9 'Ali b.Sultan Muhammad al-Harawi al-Qari, *al-Masnu' fi Ma'rifat alhadith al-Mawdu'* (Al-Riyad: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1404 AH), 1:141.

of God's love to them is the same as the fact that He is with them wherever they are [*Qur'an*, 57:4], whether in the state of their nonexistence or the state of their wujud ... they are the objects of His knowledge. He witnesses them and loves them never-endingly".¹⁰ Commenting on the above saying, Dawud al-Qaysari, the 14th century Turkish Sufi-philosopher and the first university president of the newly established Ottoman State, says that "God has written love upon Himself. There is no doubt that the kind of love that is related to the manifestation of [His] perfections follows from the love of His Essence, which is the source of the love of [His Names and] Qualities that have become the reason for the unveiling of all existents and the connection of the species of spiritual and corporeal bodies".¹¹

The second premise is related to what traditional philosophy calls 'the great chain of being' (*da'irat al-wujud*). In the cosmic scale of things, the universe is the 'best of all possible worlds' because, first, it is actual, which implies completion and plenitude over and against potentiality, and, second, its built-in order

derives its sustenance from the Creator. The natural world is in a constant state of peace because according to the *Qur'an* it is 'muslim' (with a small m) in that it surrenders (*taslim*) itself to the will of God and thus rises above all tension and discord (3:83, 9:53, 13:15, 41:11). In its normative depiction of natural phenomena, the *Qur'an* talks about stars and

The conditions that are conducive to a state of peace ... are primarily spiritual and have larger implications for the cosmos, the individual, and society.

trees as "prostrating before God" (55:6) and says that "all that is in the heavens and on earth extols His glory" (59:24). By acknowledging God's unity and praising His name, man joins the natural world in a substantive way – a process that underscores the essential link between the anthropos and the cosmos or the microcosm and the macrocosm. The intrinsic commonality and unity between the human as 'subject' and the universe as 'object' has been called the "anthropocosmic vision".¹²

10 Quoted in William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 22.

11 Dawud al-Qaysari, *Risalah fi ma'rifat al-mahabbat al-haqiqiyah in al-Rasa'il* ed. by Mehmet Bayraktar (Kayseri: Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality, 1997), p. 138.

12 The term has first been used by Mircea Eliade and adopted by Tu Weiming to describe the philosophical outlook of the Chinese traditions. For an application of the term to Islamic thought, see William Chittick, "The Anthropocosmic Vision in Islamic Thought" in Ted Peters, Muzaffar Iqbal, Syed Nomanul Haq (eds.), *God, Life, and the Cosmos* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 125-152

The thrust of this view is that the *anthropos* and the *cosmos* cannot be disjoined from one another and that the man-versus-nature dichotomy is a false one. Moreover, the world has been given to the children of Adam as a 'trust' (*amanah*) as they are charged with the responsibility of standing witness to God's creation, mercy, and justice on earth. Conceiving nature in terms of harmony, measure, order, and balance points to a common and persistent attitude towards the non-human world in Islamic thought, and has profound implications for the construction of peace as a principle of the cosmos.¹³

The third principle pertains to man's natural state and his place within the larger context of existence. Even though the *Qur'an* occasionally describes the fallen nature of man in gruesome terms and presents man as weak, forgetful, treacherous, hasty, ignorant, ungrateful, hostile, and egotistic (cf., inter *alia*, 14:34, 17:11, 18:54, 22:66, 33:72, 43:15, and 100:6), these qualities are eventually considered deviations from man's essential nature (*fitrah*), who has been created in the "most beautiful form" (*ahsan taqwim*) (*Qur'an*, 95:4), both physically and spiritually. This metaphysical optimism defines human beings as "God's vicegerent on earth" (*khalifat Allah fi'l-ard*) as the *Qur'an* says, or, to use a metaphor from Christianity, as the "pontifex", the bridge be-

tween heaven and earth.¹⁴ The *fitrah* (*Qur'an*, 30:30), the primordial nature according to which God has created all humanity, is essentially a moral and spiritual substance drawn to the good and "God-consciousness" (*taqwa*) whereas its imperfections and "excessiveness" (*fujur*) (*Qur'an*, 91:8) are 'accidental' qualities to be subsumed under the soul's struggle to do good (*al-birr*) and transcend its subliminal desires through his intelligence and moral will.¹⁴

(...)

The Political-Legal Context: Law and Its Vicissitudes

The *Shari'ah* rules concerning war, peace, *jihad*, religious minorities, and the religio-political divisions of *dar al-islam*, *dar al-sulh/ahd*, and *dar al-harb* constitute an important component of the Islamic law of nations. Their contextual and historical interpretation presents a significant challenge to the modern scholars of Islam on the one hand, and the Muslims themselves, on the other. In analyzing the views of the jurists on these issues from the 2nd Islamic century onward, an extremely common tendency is to fixate specific

¹⁴ The classical *Quran* commentaries are almost unanimous on interpreting this '*khalifah*' as Adam, i.e., humans in the generic sense. Cf. Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1995), p. 6 and Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futuhat al-makkiyyah*, ed. by M. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mar'ashli, (Beirut: Dar Ihya'al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1997), Vol. I, p. 169.

¹³ Cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 60-63.

legal rulings by certain jurists as the 'orthodox' view of Islam applicable to all times and places. While it is granted that Islamic law is based on the ultimate authority of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the *Shari'ah* as legal code is structured in such a way as to allow considerable freedom and leeway for Muslim scholars and communities to adjust themselves to different times and circumstances. The early generations of Muslim scholars, jurists (*fuqaha*), Qur'anic commentators (*mufasssirun*), traditionists (*muhaddithun*), and historians have made extensive use of this simple fact, paving the way for the rise and flourishing of various schools of law and legal opinions in Islam. This 'adoptionist' and resilient nature of the *Shari'ah*, however, has been grossly overlooked and understated not only in Western scholarship but also in the Islamic world. In the present context, this has led

to the oft-repeated conclusion that the teachings of the *Shari'ah* and, by derivation, Islam itself do not warrant a substantive notion of peace and a culture of coexistence.¹⁵

To analyze the legal-political aspects of traditional *Shari'ah* rulings concerning war and peace, I shall limit myself to three interrelated issues. The first is the Muslim community's right to defend itself against internal or external aggression and the transition of the first Muslim community from the overt 'pacifism' of Mecca to the 'activism' of Madinah. This issue necessarily raises the question of *jihad* as an offensive or defensive war and its relation to what is called *jus ad bellum* in the Western tradition. The second is

¹⁵ This is what Tibi claims in his essentialist generalizations and oversimplifications about the Islamic *pathos* of peace and war. Cf. Bassam Tibi, "War and Peace in Islam" in *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives*, ed. by Terry Nardin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 128-145.



the political context of the legal injunctions of certain jurists, namely Imam Shafi'i (d. 820) and the Hanafi jurist Sarakhsi (d. 1090), concerning the legitimacy of the territorial expansion of Muslim states on religious grounds. Some contemporary scholars have disproportionately overstated Shafi'i's justificatory remarks about launching *jihad* against non-Muslim territories on the basis of their belief system. The third issue is the treatment of religious minorities, i.e., the *dhimmi*s under the Islamic law and its relevance for religious diversity and cultural pluralism in the Islamic tradition.

To begin with the first, a major concern of the Prophet of Islam in Mecca was to ensure the security and integrity of the nascent Muslim community as a religio-political unit. This concern eventually led to the historic migration of the Prophet and his followers to Madina in 622 after a decade of pressure, sanctions, persecution, torture, and a foiled attempt to kill the Prophet himself. During this period, the community's right to defend itself against the Meccan polytheists was mostly exercised in what we would call today pacifist and non-violent means of resistance. Even though the Prophet was in close contact with the Meccan leaders to spread his message as well as to protect his small yet highly dedicated group of followers, his tireless negotiations did not mitigate the aggressive policies of Meccans against the growing Muslim community. The

transition from the robust pacifism of Mecca to the political activism of Madina took place when the permission to fight was given with the verses 22:38-40:

Verily, God will ward off [all evil] from those who attain to faith: [and] verily, God does not love anyone who betrays his trust and is bereft of gratitude. Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged – and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them--: those who have been driven from their homelands against all right or no other reason than their saying, "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled— would surely have been destroyed" (M. Asad's translation).

This and other verses (2:190-3) define clearly the reasons for taking up arms to defend religious freedom and set the conditions of just war (*jus ad bellum*) in self-defense. That the verse, revealed in the first year of the *Hijrah*, refers to the grave wrongdoing against Muslims and their eviction from their homeland for professing the new faith confirms that the migration of the Prophet was the last stage of the forceful expulsion of the Muslim community from Mecca. This was a turning point for the attitudes and ensuing tactics of the Prophet and his followers to protect themselves against

the Meccans. The subsequent battles fought between the Meccans and the Madinans from Badr to Handak until the Prophet's triumphant return to Mecca were based on the same principles of religious freedom, collective solidarity, and political unity. In addition to enunciating the conditions of just war, the above verse defines religious freedom as a universal cause for all the three Abrahamic faiths. Like any other political unit, communities tied with a bond of faith have the right and, in fact, the responsibility of securing their existence and integrity against the threats of persecution and eventual extinction. As I shall discuss below, this ecumenical attitude towards the religious freedom of all faith communities was a major factor in the Prophet's signing of a number of treaties with the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians of the Arabian Peninsula as well as the treatment of religious minorities under the *Shari'ah*.¹⁶

The construction of *jihad* as armed struggle to expand the borders of *dar al-islam* and, by derivation, subsume all *dar al-harb* under the Islamic dominion is found in some of the jurists of the 9th and

¹⁶ Concerning the Zoroastrians and Sabians and their being part of the People of the Book, Abu Yusuf narrates a number of traditions of the Prophet to show that they should be treated with justice and equality as the other dhimmis. The inclusion of the Zoroastrians among the dhimmis is inferred from the fact that the Prophet had collected jizya from the Majus of Hajar. Cf. *Taxation in Islam: Abu Yusuf's Kitab al-kharaj*, tr. by A. Ben Shemesh (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 88-9.

10th centuries. Among those, we can mention Shafi'i and Sarakhsi who interpreted *jihad* as the duty of the Muslim ruler to fight against the lands defined as the 'territory of war'. Shafi'i formulated his expansionist theory of *jihad* as a religious duty at a time when Muslim states were engaged in prolonged military conflicts with non-Muslim territories and had become mostly successful in extending their borders. While these jurists had justified fighting against non-Muslims on account of their disbelief (*kufr*) rather than self-defense, they were also adamant on the observation of *jus in bello* norms, i.e., avoiding excessiveness, accepting truce, sparing the lives of noncombatants, women, children, etc.¹⁷ In spite of these conditions, the views of Shafi'i and his followers represent a shift from the Qur'anic notion of self-defense to armed struggle to bring about the conversion of non-Muslims. Having said that, two points need to be mentioned. First of all, the views of Shafi'i and Sarakhsi do not represent the majority, let alone the 'orthodox', stance of the jurists. The common tendency to present this particular definition of *jihad* as the mainstream position of Islam not only disregards the views of Abu Hanifah, Malik ibn Anas, Abu Yusuf, Shaybani, Awzai,

¹⁷ Some of these stipulations can be followed from Shaybani's *Siyar*; English translation by Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 75-94; also Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Lahore: S. Ashraf, 1961), pp. 205-8.

Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah¹⁸ and others but also ignores the historical and contextual nature of such juridical rulings. The same holds true for Muslim political philosophers and theologians who take a different position on the bifurcationist framework of *dar al-islam* versus *dar al-harb*.¹⁹ Moreover, these rulings were by and large the jurists' response to the *de facto* situation of the military conquests of Muslim states rather than their cause. Certain jurists begin to stress such reconciliatory terms as *dar al-'ahd* ("the land of the covenant") and *dar al-sulh* ("the land of peace") during and after the 11th and 12th centuries when the Muslim states were confronted with political realities other than unabated conquest and

resounding victories. This change in tone and emphasis, however, was not a completely novel phenomenon for the concept of *dar al-sulh* can be traced back to the treaty that the Prophet had signed with the Christian population of Najran when he was in Madina.²⁰ As I shall discuss below, this treaty, whose text has been preserved, lays the foundations of making peace with non-Muslim communities. In addition, the policy of giving *aman* (safe-conduct), i.e., contractual protection for non-Muslims residing or traveling in Muslim territories, was a common practice. Such people were known as *musta'min*, and to grant them this status was not only the prerogative of head of state or *ulama* but also individuals, both men and women.²¹

Secondly, the idea of bringing the world under the reign of *dar al-islam* by military means and territorial expansion should be seen within the context of the geo-political conditions of the classical Islamic world. The medieval imperial world order, of which Muslim states were a part, was based on the idea of continuously expanding one's borders because 'conquest' (*fath*) provided economic, political and demographic stability. In this sense, as Hitti points out, "the Islam that conquered the northern regions was not the Islamic religion but the Islamic state ... it was Arabianism and not Muhammadanism

18 Cf. "Sulh", *Encyclopedia of Islam* (EI2), IX, 845a.

19 As a representative text of the Ash'arite kalām, see Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *Sharh al-maqasid*, Vol. 5, pp. 232-320 where the long discussion of the imamate contains no references to *jihad* as conquering non-Muslim territories. See also Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, abridged by N. J. Dawood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 158-160 and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Arba'in fi usul al-din*, Vol. 2, pp. 255-270. The Muslim philosophers, especially al-Farabi, define *jihad* as just war and stress the virtues of the 'city' (*madinah*) or the human habitat. Cf. Joel L. Kraemer, "The *Jihad* of the Falasifa", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 10 (1987), p. 293 and 312. Butterworth holds the same view about al-Farabi's notion of warfare in his "Al-Farabi's Statecraft: War and the Well-Ordered Regime" in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, ed. by James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 79-100.

20 Cf. "Dar al-sulh", EI2, II, 131a.

21 Shaybani, *Siyar*, pp. 158-194; also "Aman", EI2, I, 429a.

که دانت کابن جاره کرد و پیوسته
 ازان نامداران بزخاستی می
 یکی پیشه دیدند و آمدند و
 به بخشیده دیگر همه بر سباه
 فرستاده آمدند و کشتوری
 چون کشت ازان داستان و چون
 کس آمد بر سباه ایران سباه
 پذیره شد آن شاه و کذا و...

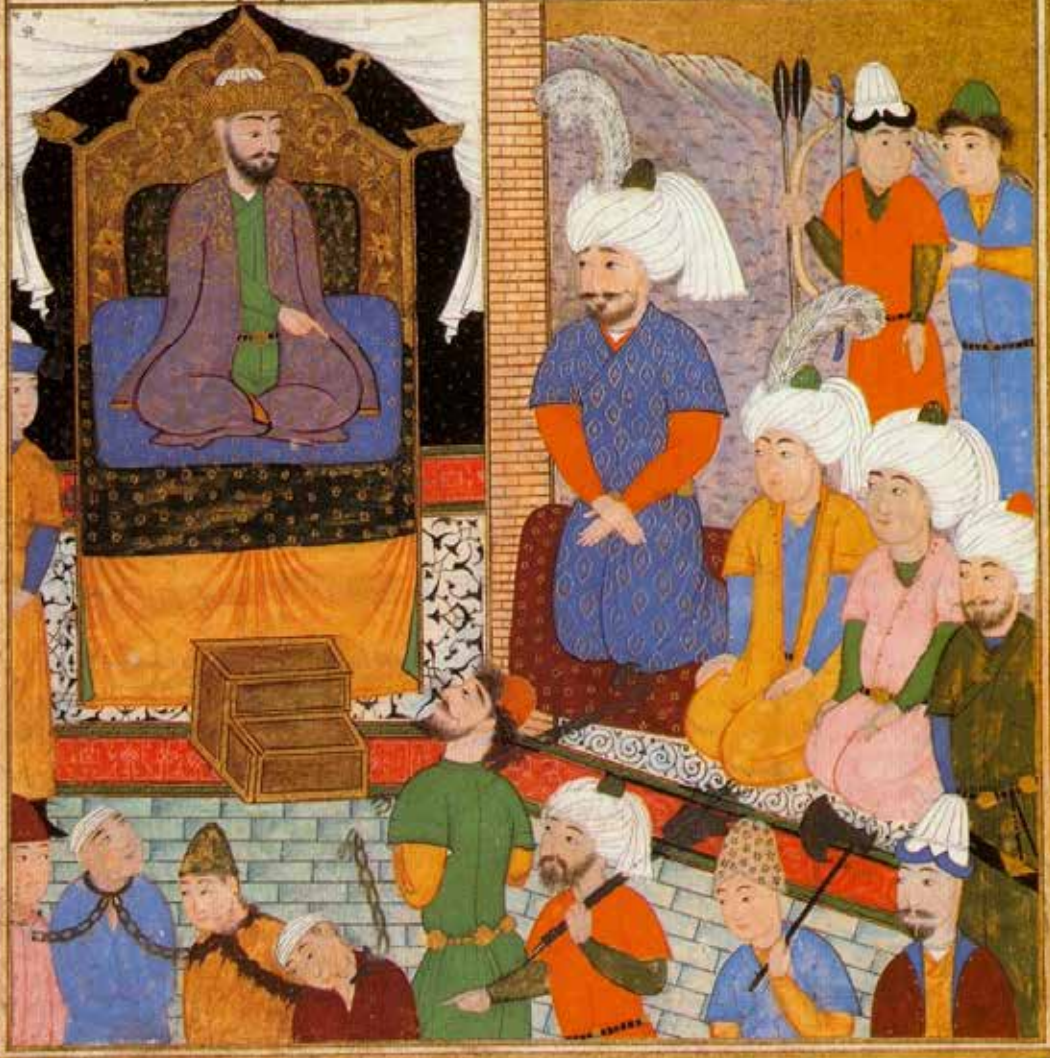
سباه ارد از جن و تلاب و
 با بر اندر آمد می گشت و کوی
 سیه شد از لشکر در دست بود
 بچسبید یک تن ازان جایگاه
 زمر نامداری و هر سروری

من اور ارجان ست پیشش گم
 دو منزل بر رفتند ازان در کاه
 مران بنیگکان از دوشاه بود
 می بود بار امش می بدست
 بسی باید و چیز و جنبین شاه

شش خاک گود سیاوش گم
 که از گشته می بود و کوی سباه
 ز سپهر زرادت کو تا بود
 یکی شاه و خرم می خسته شست
 بر دند زرد یک آن شتر یار
 ز دشت سپهر و جوی بلبل
 که آمد ز پر ز کافور بر کاه و سپهر
 سیوان و پیمان و آن ششکان

رسیدن فریزر تیزد کیخسرو

ابابوق و کوسن سپهاسی کران
 گمزد و خسر و بدان بستگان



that triumphed first”.²² In a world in which one was either a ‘conqueror’ or ‘conquered’, the triumphant Muslim states depended heavily on the expansion of their territories against both their Muslim rivals and non-Muslim enemies. The historic march of Muslim armies into territories once under non-Muslim rule was not *jihad* in the religious sense of the term but an outcome of the power struggle to which all political establishments, Muslim or non-Muslim, were subject.

This is further made clear by the fact that territorial expansion and military conquest did not always and necessarily mean conversion. Beginning with the early history of Islam, conversion through persuasion and ‘calling’ (*da’wah*) was encouraged, and a multitude of methods were put in place to facilitate the conversion of individuals and masses through peaceful means. Conversion by force, which would make Islam a proselytizing religion, however, was not imposed as a policy either by the ulama or the rulers. Furthermore, conversion was not a condition to become part of the Muslim community to gain religious freedom, receive protection, and possess property under the Is-

lamic law. The considerably protean concept of the dhimmi allowed religious minorities to maintain their traditions and resist any attempts at forceful conversion. Since Islam does not ordain a missionary establishment, the agents of conversion responsible for the enormously successful and unprecedented spread of Islam were multifarious and extended from the Arab traders and the Sufis to the development of Islamic communal institutions.²³ Otherwise we cannot explain the en masse conversion of various ethnic, religious and cultural communities to Islam by the military prowess of a handful of Muslim groups in Anatolia, Iran, Africa or India.

Paradoxically, the policies of religious tolerance secured both the rights of religious minorities and the loyalties of new converts. In a manner that was simply unimaginable in the Christian kingdoms of Europe at the time, Jews, Christians, Sabians, and Hindus had access to considerably high state posts from the time of Mu’awiyah (661-680) to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Jewish and Christian scientists, physicians, accountants, counselors and statesmen were employed at Umayyad courts. St. John the Damascene, one of the most influential

²² Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1970), p. 145. Dozy makes a similar point when he says that “the holy war is never imposed except only when the enemies of Islam are the aggressors. Otherwise, if we take into account the injunctions of the *Qur’an*, it is nothing but an interpretation of some theologians”. R. Dozy, *Essai sur l’histoire de l’Islamisme* (Leiden: Brill, 1879), p. 152.

²³ Cf. Richard Bulliet, “Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran” in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 30-51. See also the introduction by the editor, p. 9.

figures of Eastern Orthodox Church and the author of the earliest anti-Islamic polemics, and his father Ibn Mansur held positions under the caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705).²⁴ During the Buwayhid era in Persia, the vizier of the powerful Persian king Adud al-Dawlah (949-982), Nasr ibn Harun was a Christian.²⁵ We find similar cases in India and the Ottoman Empire where the vertical mobility of religious minorities in state affairs was a common phenomenon. Even the devshirme system of the Ottomans, which has been criticized and labeled as a form of forced conversion, provided religious minorities with unfettered access to the highest government positions. Three grand viziers of Suleiman the Magnificent, the most powerful Ottoman sultan, were of Christian origin: Ibrahim Pasha was a Greek and an able diplomat and commander; Rustem Pasha was a Bulgarian and had handled the treasury with utmost competence; and the celebrated Sokollu Mehmet Pasha was a Slav from Bosnia and had served in his youth as an acolyte in a Serbian church.²⁶ Among these, the case of Sokollu is probably the most interesting for it shows the extent to which the devshirme system eventually worked to the benefit of

Christian communities under the Ottoman rule. Although Sokollu embraced Islam and became one of the most powerful men of his time, he kept close contact with his brother who was an important religious figure in Bosnia and helped him with his status as the grand vizier.

In the light of these points, we have to make a distinction between *jihad* as “just war” and *jihad* as “holy war”²⁷, which brings us to our third issue. Just war refers to a community’s right to defend itself against aggression and oppression. It is defensive in nature whereas “holy war” entails converting everybody into one’s religion by force, armed struggle, territorial expansion, and other means. In the first sense, *jihad* is an extension of the *jus ad bellum* tradition and can be seen as a necessity to protect justice, freedom and order. In this regard, the position taken by the *Qur’an* and the Prophet concerning the use of force against oppression by Muslims and non-Muslims alike²⁸ is essentially a realist one and aims at putting strict conditions for

27 Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, “The Development of *jihad* in Islamic Revelation and History”, in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword*, p. 36.

28 On the question of rebellion and irregular warfare (*ahkam al-bughat*) in Islamic law, see Khaled Abou el Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a shorter synoptic account, see *ibidem*, “*Ahkam al-Bughat: Irregular Warfare and the Law of Rebellion in Islam*” in *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, ed. by James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 149-176.

24 Cf. Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The “Heresy of the Ishmaelites”* (Liedien: E. J. Brill, 1972).

25 T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1984; originally published in 1913), pp. 63-4.

26 Cf. Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1977), p. 259.



regulating war and using force. The guiding principle is that of fighting against aggression, which is “to fight in the way of God”, and not to be the aggressors: “Fight (*qatilu*, lit. “kill”) in the way of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits. Verily, God does not love aggressors” (2:190; Cf. also 4:91 and 9:36). Both the classical and modern commentators have interpreted the command not to “transgress” (*la ta’dadu*) as avoiding war and hostilities in the first place, resorting to armed struggle only to defend one’s freedom, and, once forced to fight, sparing the lives of noncombatants that include women,

children, and the elderly.²⁹

Contrary to what Khadduri claims³⁰, the global bifurcation of *dar*

²⁹ Imam Shawkani, *Fath al-qadir*, abridged by Sulayman ‘Abd Allah al- Ashqar (Kuwait: Shirkat Dhat al-Salasal, 1988), p. 37; Le Coran: “Viola le Livre...” French translation and commentary by Yahya ‘Alawi and Javad Hadidi (Qom: Centre pour la traduction du Saint Coran, 2000), pp. 318-9; Muhamad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an* (Maktaba Jawahar ul uloom: Lahore, n.d.), p.41; Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*, tr. by A. Shamis (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), pp. 18-9.

³⁰ In his *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955) Majid Khadduri goes so far as to translate *jihad* as ‘warfare’ (p. 55) and ‘permanent war’ (p. 62), and claims that “the universalism of Islam, in its all-embracing creed, is imposed on the believers as a continuous pro-

al-islam and *dar al-harb* does not translate into a “holy war” nor a ‘permanent state of war’ between Muslims and non-Muslims. No figure can illustrate this point better than Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1327) whose views have been widely distorted and exploited to lend legitimacy to extremist interpretations of the classical Islamic law of nations. Even though Ibn Taymiyyah lived through the destruction wrought upon the Islamic world by the Mongols and could have been expected to take a more belligerent stance against the ‘infidels’, he was unequivocal in stating that Muslims could wage war only against those who attacked them. The idea of initiating unprovoked war to convert people to Islam, namely to engage in ‘holy war’, belies the religion itself because, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, “if the unbeliever were to be killed unless he becomes a Muslim, such an action would constitute the greatest compulsion in religion”, which would be contrary to the Qur’anic principle that “there is no compulsion in religion” (2:256).³¹ Ibn Taymiyyah’s famous student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah reiterates the same principle when he says that “fighting (*qatl*) is permitted on account of war (*harb*), not on account

of disbelief (*kufur*)”.³²

This extended meaning of *jihad* as *jus ad bellum*, i.e., armed struggle in self-defense can also be seen in the anticolonialist resistance movements of the modern period. In the 18th and 19th centuries, calls for *jihad* were issued across the Islamic world to fight against colonialism. For the anticolonialist resistance movements of this period, *jihad* functioned, first, as the religious basis of fighting against colonialism and, second, as a powerful way of mobilizing people to join the resistance forces. Among others, the Barelvi family in India, Shaykh Shamil in Chechnya, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi in Algeria, the Mahdi family in the Sudan, Ahmad ‘Urabi in Egypt, and the *Sanusiyyah* order in Libya fought against European colonial powers.³³ It was during this period of resistance that *jihad* took a cultural tone in the sense that the fight against colonial powers was seen as both a military and religious-cultural struggle. Despite the enormous difficulties faced by Muslim scholars, leaders, merchants, and villagers in Egypt, Africa, India and other places, the *jihad* calls against the European armies did not lead to an all-out war against local non-Muslim communities. Even in cases where the Muslim population had

cess of warfare, psychological and political if not strictly military” (p. 64). This belligerent view of *jihad* is hard to justify in the light of both the legal and cultural traditions of Islam discussed below.

31 Ibn Taymiyyah, “*Qa’idah fi qital al-kuffar*”, from *Majmu’at rasa’il*, p. 123, quoted in Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations*, p. 59.

32 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimmah*, ed. by Subhi al-Salih (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li’l-alam, 1983, 3rd edition), Vol. I, p. 17.

33 Cf. John Voll, “Renewal and Reform” in John Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

to bear the full brunt of colonialism, extreme care was taken not to label local non-Muslims as the enemy because of their religious and cultural affiliation with European colonial powers. When, for instance, the *Sanusī* call for ‘*jihad* against all unbelievers’ caused a sense of urgency among the Christians in Egypt, Muslim scholars responded by saying that *jihad* in Libya was directed at the Italian aggressors, not all Westerners or Christians.³⁴

Since *jihad* as armed struggle was fought against the invasion of European powers, it was not difficult for it to take religious and cultural tones. Napoleon’s attempt to paint himself as a ‘defender of Islam’ when he invaded Egypt in 1798, for instance, was seen by the celebrated Egyptian historian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754-1825) as no more than outright lies expected only from an ‘infidel’ (*kafir*). In his letter to local Egyptian leaders, imams and scholars, Napoleon said that he “more than the Mamluks, serve[s] God – may He be praised and exalted – and revere[s] His Prophet Muhammad and the glorious *Qur’an*” and that the

“French are also faithful Muslims”.³⁵ For Jabarti and his generation, this was yet another fact confirming the necessity of launching *jihad* against the ‘*afranj*’ (the French, i.e., Europeans). This sense of *jihad* as anti-colonialist struggle has not completely disappeared from the minds of some Muslims in the postcolonial period. In fact, the modern calls for *jihad* as ‘holy war’ by such Muslim extremists as Abd al-Salam Faraj who wrote the celebrated *al-Faridat al-ghai’bah* (“The Neglected Duty”)³⁶ presumably justifying the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, and Osama bin Laden are as much the product of their strict and a-historical reading of the classical *Shari’ah* sources as the legacy of colonialism.

Lastly, I would like to turn briefly to the status of religious minorities under Islamic law. As mentioned before, the *dhimmi* status granted the religious minorities and especially Jews and Christians under Muslim rule some measure of economic and political protection, freedom of worship, right to own property, and, in some cases, access to high government positions. The religious-legal basis of the notion of the *dhimmi* goes back to the time of the Prophet. While the status of *dhimmi* was initially given to Jews,

34 Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), p. 86. Peters’ work presents an excellent survey of how *jihad* was reformulated as an anticolonialist resistance idea in the modern period. See also Allan Christelow, *Muslim Law Courts and the French Colonial State in Algeria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) for the struggle of Muslim jurists to continue the tradition of Islamic law under the French colonial system.

35 *Al-Jabarti’s Chronicle of the French Occupation*, tr. by Shmuel Moreh (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), p. 26.

36 Faraj’s treatise has been translated by Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 160-230.

Christians, Sabians and Zoroastrians, its scope was later extended to include all non-Muslims living under Islam.³⁷ A similar course of action was followed in India when Muhammad b. al-Qasim, the first Muslim commander to set foot on Indian soil in the 8th century, compared Hindus to Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians and declared them as part of the *ahl al-dhimma*.³⁸ This decision, which was later sanctioned by the Hanafi jurists, was a momentous event in the development of the Muslim attitude towards the religions of India. This politico-legal ruling could be seen as laying the foundations of the Hindu-Muslim mode of cultural coexistence, which I shall discuss below.

That the Prophet and his companions were lenient towards the People of the Book is attested not only by the communal relationships that developed between Muslims and non-Muslims in Madina but also recorded in a number of treaties signed by the Prophet. The “Madinan Constitution” (*wathiqat*

al-madina), for instance, recognizes the Jews of Banu ‘Awf, Banu al-Najar, Banu Tha’alaba and others as a distinct community with “their own religion”.³⁹ Another treatise signed with the People of the Book of Najran reads as follows:

They [People of the Book] shall have the protection of Allah and the promise of Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, that they shall be secured their lives, property, lands, creed, those absent and those present, their families, their churches, and all that they possess. No bishop or monk shall be displaced from his parish or monastery no priest shall be forced to abandon his priestly life. No hardships or humiliation shall be imposed on them nor shall their land be occupied by [our] army. Those who seek justice, shall have it: there will be no oppressors nor oppressed.⁴⁰

The privileges given to the *dhimmis* included things that were prohibited for Muslims such as breeding pork and producing alcohol, which were not outlawed for Christians. The religious tax called *jizya* was the main economic responsibility of the *dhimmis* under the *Shari’ah*. Contrary to a common

³⁷ There is a consensus on this point among the Hanafi and Maliki schools of law as well as some Hanbali scholars. For references in Arabic, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 85-86. For the inclusion of Zoroastrians among the People of the Book, see Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, pp. 72-76. Shafi’i considers the Sabians, a community mentioned in the *Qur’an*, as a Christians group. Cf. Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam*, Vol. I, p. 92.

³⁸ The incident is recorded in Baladhuri’s *Futuh al-buldan*. Cf. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, p. 85.

³⁹ The text of the Madinan treatise is preserved in Ibn Hisham’s *Sirah*. It is also published in Muhammad Hamidullah, *Documents sur la Diplomatie a l’Epoque du Prophete et des Khalifes Orthodoxes* (Paris, 1935), pp. 9-14. For an English translation, see Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 206-9.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 179. The original text of the Najran treatise is quoted in Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj* and Baladhuri, *Futuh al-buldan*.

belief, the primary goal of the *jizya* tax was not the ‘humiliation’ of the People of the Book. While many contemporary translations of the *Qur’an* translate the words *wa hum al-saghirun* as “so that they will be humiliated”, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, who has written the most extensive work on the People of the Book, understands it as securing the allegiance of the People of the Book to laws pertaining to them (*ahkam al-millah*). Instead, *wa hum al-saghirun* should be understood, says Ibn Qayyim, as making all subjects of the state obey the law and, in the case of the People of the Book, pay the *jizya*.⁴¹

According to Abu Yusuf, one of the foremost authorities of the Hanafi school of law, *jizya* was “48 *dirhams* on the wealthy, 24 on the middle class and 12 *dirhams* on the poor ploughman-peasant and manual worker. According to Shafi’i, the *jizya* is one dinar for the poor and four dinars for the rich.⁴² It is collected once a year and may be paid in kind, i.e., as “goods and similar property which is accepted according to its value”.⁴³ Those who cannot afford to pay it are not forced to do so.⁴⁴ The exempted also include women, children, the elderly and the sick.⁴⁵ To the best of our knowl-

41 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimma*, Vol. I, p. 24.

42 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimma*, Vol. I, p. 26.

43 Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 84. Cf. Shaybani, *Siyar*, in Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 143.

44 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimma*, Vol. I, p. 32ff.

45 Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkam ahl al-dhimma*, p. 42 and 49.

edge, the *jizya* tax was not a significant source of income for the state⁴⁶, and it exempted the *dhimmis* from military service. In some cases, the *jizya* was postponed or abandoned altogether by the head of the state as we see in India under the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan.⁴⁷ The *jizya* was a compensation for the protection of the *dhimmis* by the state against any type of aggression from Muslims or non-Muslims. This is attested by the fact that the poll-taxes were returned to the *dhimmis* when the Muslim state had been unable to provide the security of its non-Muslim minorities.⁴⁸ In most cases, the *jizya* was imposed not as individual tax like the *kharaj* but as collective tribute on eligible *dhimmis*.⁴⁹

While Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s famous work on the *dhimmis* contains many rulings that present a condescending view of non-Muslims and advocate policies of humilia-

46 This is not to deny that there were examples to the contrary. When one of the governors of ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Aziz asked permission to “collect huge amounts of *jizya* owed by Jews, Christians and Majus of al-Hira before they accepted Islam”, ‘Abd al-Aziz responded by saying that “God has sent the Prophet Muhammad to invite people to Islam and not as a tax collector”. This letter is quoted in Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 90.

47 Cf. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 80-1.

48 Abu Yusuf mentions the case of Abu ‘Ubaydah returning the *jizya* to the *dhimmis* of Hims when he was not able to provide protection for them against the Roman emperor Heraclius. Cf. the letter by Abu ‘Ubaydah mentioned by Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-kharaj*, p. 150.

49 Cf. Khadduri, *War and Peace*, pp. 188-9.

tion against them⁵⁰, many other jurists were insistent on treating the dhimmis with equity and justice. As people “under the protection of the Prophet”, Jews, Christians and other religious minorities were not to be forced to pay more than they could afford nor to be intimidated and oppressed because of their religious affiliations. Advising Harun al-Rashid (d. 803), the famous Abbasid caliph, on the treatment of the *dhimmis*, Abu Yusuf exhorts him to “treat with leniency those under the protection of our Prophet Muhammad, and not allow that more than what is due to be taken from them or more that they are able to pay, and that nothing should be confiscated from their properties without legal justification”.⁵¹ In making this strong advice to the Caliph, Abu Yusuf narrates a tradition of the Prophet in which the Prophet says that “he who robs a *dhimmi* or imposes on him more than he can bear will have me as his opponent”. Another well-known case is the execution on the order of the Prophet of a Muslim who had killed a *dhimmi*. In re-

sponse to this incident, the Prophet has said that “it is most appropriate that I live up fully to my (promise of) protection”.⁵²

These and other rules concerning the *dhimmis* show that Islam accepts the reality of the ‘religious other’ in terms of a *de jure* reality rather than as a matter of political exigency. The underlying principle behind this attitude of accommodation is that the interests of human beings are served better in peace than in conflict.

⁵⁰These include some restrictive rulings on what the People of the Book could wear and what religious symbols they could display. Cf. A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), Chapters VII and VIII. As Tritton notes, however, such rulings were not implemented strictly and displayed considerable variety across the Islamic world. A case in point, which Tritton mentions (p. 121), is Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi who had some Christian officers working for him without following any strict dress code.

⁵¹ Khadduri, *War and Peace*, p. 85.

⁵² Quoted in Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, p. 40.



Photo courtesy of Bernard Gagnon

La paix passe-t-elle par une ère messianique ?

Eric Geoffroy

Since 9/11 and the Second Iraq War, the Muslim Middle East has witnessed an outburst of millenarian expectations. Prof. Eric Geoffroy analyzes how contemporary fundamentalist movements are distorting traditional Islamic eschatology in order to fuel sectarian violence and regional conflicts. (Managing-Editor)

Pour un nombre croissant d'humains ou de groupes humains, il n'y aura de paix possible sur terre, à l'échelle collective, que dans la grande Paix messianique annoncée

par de nombreux textes des différentes religions, en particulier les religions monothéistes. Face au constat d'un manque de projet pour la civilisation humaine présente et à ve-

nir, face aux désordres et déséquilibres globaux, beaucoup considèrent que l'humanité va devoir traverser une période de bouleversements majeurs avant de connaître l'ère où « le loup habitera avec l'agneau » (Ésaïe 11:6). Certains tentent même d'accentuer le chaos ambiant pour précipiter la survenue de cette ère. Du nihilisme contemporain et de la confusion généralisée sortirait donc la véritable et définitive paix. C'est la logique jusqu'au-boutiste suivie par les chrétiens évangélistes américains *new born*, dont l'ex-président des Etats-Unis George W. Bush, par un nombre croissant d'Israéliens qui préparent matériellement le troisième Temple qui devrait prendre place sur l'Esplanade des Mosquées de Jérusalem, et même par des juifs qui ont rejoint *Daesh*, parce que cette entité, à leurs yeux, précipite précisément le chaos qui va faire venir le Messiah...

Logiquement, le personnage attendu, devrait être le même pour tous les humains, ce qui susciterait une tension positive et unifiante vers la paix : le bouddha Maitreya, le Messie chrétien, le Messiah juif, Jésus ('Aïsâ) pour l'islam, etc. Mais pour l'instant il n'en est rien. Un maître soufi qui participait au congrès mondial imams-rabbins de Séville en 2006 me disait que les uns et les autres étaient très pessimistes face à l'échéance d'une troisième guerre mondiale. Ce cheikh leur a alors dit que la tension eschatologique qu'ils sentaient devait être transmuée de

façon positive, dans une perspective messianique radieuse...

L'essence eschatologique de l'islam

Nous savons que la propagande des gens de *Daesh* prospère sur la confusion psychologique et morale qui touche nos villes et nos campagnes. Pour recruter, ils creusent en effet les sillons du nihilisme, ce vide que produirait notre civilisation, alors qu'eux proposeraient du "sens", en jouant du désir/angoisse de la fin des temps. Ils le font d'autant plus facilement que la tradition islamique est très riche en enseignements eschatologiques.

L'islam, en effet, se présente comme le dernier message divin pour cette humanité, le message ultime qui doit récapituler et synthétiser ce qui a été dit au premier homme et premier prophète, Adam. Message ultime pour cette humanité, en fait, car même si l'expression arabe dit fin du temps, on voit très bien, à la lecture des textes islamiques, qu'il s'agit de la fin d'une humanité. Le Prophète ne disait-il pas à ses compagnons que cent mille Adam se sont succédé, chiffre assurément symbolique ? Mais ce chiffre suggère la succession de différentes modalités de la présence humaine dans le cosmos. D'après une autre parole du Prophète, cette humanité aura connu 124000 prophètes, donc seulement 27 sont mentionnés dans le *Coran*... Il y a eu autant

de prophètes parce qu'à chaque fois les hommes ont dévié. Les sources scripturaires de l'islam délivrent ainsi indéniablement un enseignement eschatologique, et la « science de la fin des temps » constitue une science islamique à part entière.

- *Dans le Coran :*

Il y a eu deux grandes périodes dans la révélation islamique, laquelle s'étend sur vingt-trois ans: celle de la Mecque et celle de Médine. La tension eschatologique est patente dans les premières révélations mecquoises, lesquelles ont visiblement pour but de secouer et avertir l'humanité. Ces sourates, les plus courtes, sont proférées dans un style très fulgurant. En témoigne par exemple la sourate *al-Qamar* (« la Lune », n° 54). On y lit à plusieurs reprises ce verset, qui revient de manière lancinante : « Oui, Nous avons facilité la compréhension du *Coran* en vue du rappel. Mais y a-t-il quelqu'un pour s'en souvenir ? ». La crise écologique que nous vivons actuellement serait annoncée notamment par la sourate n° 99, *al-Zalzala*, « Le tremblement de terre » : « Lorsque la Terre sera secouée par son tremblement, lorsque la Terre rejettera ses fardeaux, lorsque l'homme demandera : "que lui arrive-t-il, à la terre ?", ce jour-là, elle racontera sa propre histoire d'après ce que son Seigneur lui aura révélé ! »

Citons encore la sourate 81, *al-Takwîr*, « L'enroulement » : « Lorsque le soleil sera enroulé [ou bien

déroulé], les étoiles obscurcies, lorsque les montagnes se mettront en marche... lorsque les mers seront en ébullition... ». A propos du passage où le soleil s'enroule, l'orientaliste français Louis Massignon (m. 1962) faisait le lien avec les apparitions de la Vierge en 1917 à Fatima, au Portugal, où les gens ont vu le soleil faire des circonvolutions dans le ciel.

Dans la très courte et elliptique sourate 103, *al-Asr*, la dégénérescence du temps est annoncée : « Par l'époque ! Oui, l'homme est en perdition, à l'exception de ceux qui croient et font le bien... ». L'humanité chemine : elles a un début et une fin.

- *Dans les paroles du Prophète (hadîth) :*

De tout temps, une des fonctions de la prophétie a été de prédire mais – René Guénon le formule bien dans *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* – il ne s'agit pas pour autant de divination : lorsque le Prophète évoque des événements à venir, ce n'est pas par catastrophisme, mais sur le mode de l'enseignement préventif, en quelque sorte.

On trouve dans le *hadîth* beaucoup de paroles apocalyptiques, même si certaines sont visiblement apocryphes : quatre cents environ chez les sunnites, et six mille si on additionne les traditions sunnites et chiites. Le Prophète disait : « J'ai été envoyé comme prophète, alors que le moment qui nous sépare de l'Heure est comparable à l'espace qui sé-



pare ces deux doigts », et il montrait l'index et le majeur. Entre autres paroles sur ce sujet, il disait clairement à ses compagnons : « Nous sommes une communauté de la fin ».

De façon schématique, trois types de signes apparaissent dans la bouche du Prophète, et ils sont parfois extrêmement explicites et précis :

- *Les prédictions qui se sont déjà réalisées*, telles que les invasions des Mongols au XIII^e siècle, la fin de la domination politique arabe et l'avènement de celle des Turcs, la prise de Constantinople par les Ottomans en 1453, etc.

Ensuite, il y a les signes intermédiaires, plus connus sous le nom

de « signes mineurs ».

- *Les « signes mineurs » :*

Parmi ces signes, figurent les désordres cosmiques, et en particulier la contraction du temps ou du moins de notre perception du temps. Beaucoup de *hadîths* en parlent clairement. Ainsi cette parole du Prophète : « L'heure n'aura pas lieu tant que le temps ne se sera pas contracté, au point que l'année passera comme un mois, le mois comme une semaine, la semaine comme un jour, le jour comme une heure, et l'heure s'écoulera aussi vite qu'un tison enflammé met de temps à se consumer ». René Guénon affirme qu'au fur et à mesure qu'on approche de la fin du cycle, cette accélération du



Photo courtesy of Jean-Pierre Dalbéra

temps est comparable à celle des corps physiques qui chutent, tel un mobile lancé sur une pente et qui va d'autant plus vite qu'il s'approche du bas.¹

Un autre de ces signes serait la multiplication des tremblements de terre et des phénomènes sismiques en général. Selon un *hadith*, les musulmans seraient éprouvés en fin de cycle par les tremblements de

terre – et c'est vrai qu'il y en a eu beaucoup ces dernières années en Algérie, Iran, Indonésie, Turquie, etc. Des *hadiths* mentionnent également l'augmentation des tempêtes et des cyclones, un dérèglement climatique qui produirait des « saisons trompeuses ».

Qu'en est-il, maintenant, du désordre social ? Le ton général indique une inversion totale des valeurs. Une parole connue mentionne comme un des signes de l'Heure : « Quand tu verras la servante engendrer sa maîtresse... ». D'autres *hadiths* évoquent clairement, dans l'esprit des musulmans, la destinée des États-Unis d'Amérique : « Lorsque tu verras les va-nu-

pieds, les miséreux et les bergers rivaliser dans la construction de maisons de plus en plus hautes », et surtout : « Lorsque tu verras les gardiens de bestiaux rivaliser dans la construction de maisons hautes ». Les « gardiens de bestiaux » ont bien sûr été identifiés aux *cow-boys*...

Sur le plan des mœurs, les *hadiths* réfèrent à une indifférenciation de plus en plus prononcée entre les hommes et les femmes, lesquels se ressembleront au point qu'on ne pourra parfois plus distinguer entre

¹ *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, Paris, 1945, p. 64.

l'un et l'autre sexes. Ils mentionnent également le développement de l'homosexualité, surtout féminine. La licence sexuelle sera totale : « Lorsque les gens copuleront au bord des routes... » ; « Parmi les signes de l'Heure, figure la généralisation de l'adultère ». À cela s'ajouterait un déséquilibre numérique entre les hommes et les femmes, lesquelles devraient être beaucoup plus nombreuses en fin de cycle.

Dans le domaine géopolitique, le désordre est également décrit comme généralisé. Les guerres feront beaucoup de morts, mais il semble qu'il ne s'agisse pas tant de guerres armées que de massacres, ce qui peut être interprété dans le sens de génocides. L'accent est mis sur le grand nombre de morts. On peut bien sûr penser aux deux guerres mondiales du XXe siècle, aux victimes du nazisme, du fascisme et du soviétisme.

- Les « signes majeurs » :

Selon beaucoup de savants et soufis musulmans, nous aurions déjà pénétré dans les « signes majeurs », lesquels dressent un véritable scénario où la guerre et la paix s'entremêlent. Les acteurs seraient schématiquement les suivants :

a) l'Antéchrist : al-Dajjâl, terme qui signifie en arabe « l'Imposteur » : il va séduire les croy-

ants les plus solides, en accomplissant des prodiges et des miracles. S'agit-il d'un personnage, de plusieurs personnes, d'une entité collective, d'un état d'esprit qu'il se répandrait dans le monde ? Des auteurs parlent à cet égard de *tadjîl*, terme issu de la même racine arabe que Dajjâl : il désigne la subversion, l'inversion séditeuse des valeurs. Diverses interprétations, bien sûr, en sont faites : puisqu'il est décrit par le Prophète comme étant « borgne », certains y voient l'écran d'Internet par exemple, ou la vision unidimensionnelle, matérialiste, dans laquelle

Jusqu'à ces dernières années, et en tout cas avant le 11 septembre 2001, la doctrine messianique de l'islam prenait la forme d'un enseignement ésotérique, restreint à quelques milieux. Désormais, c'est devenu un état d'esprit assez généralisé.

vit l'humanité actuelle, etc. Ce qui est sûr, c'est qu'il va personnifier, cristalliser, la contre-initiation. Certains avancent que la mouvance *New Age*, très syncrétiste, un peu naïve, mais aussi parfois manipulée par certaines instances, véhicule déjà cette contre-initiation. Ainsi, cette mouvance vous fait croire que la spiritualité c'est tout beau et tout doux, alors que dans toutes les traditions spirituelles la spiritualité passe par



l'épreuve et la purification. Pour autant, René Guénon assure qu'en fait l'Antéchrist sera le plus illusionné de tous, face à la seule et vraie Réalité. C'est ce qu'il appelle la « grande parodie ».²

b) le Mahdī, le « bien-guidé » : c'est un descendant du Prophète et il lui ressemblera physiquement. Pour beaucoup, il est déjà vivant et, selon une parole du Prophète, il ne connaîtra sa mission que du jour au lendemain. Sa mission est ou sera de lutter contre l'Antéchrist afin de préparer le retour sur terre de Jésus.

c) Jésus-Christ : rappelons

ici que Jésus, selon l'islam, n'est pas mort sur la croix ; il est aux cieux et va redescendre physiquement sur terre à Damas... Dans l'économie religieuse de l'islam, Jésus a donc un rôle eschatologique majeur, et il est désigné dans le soufisme comme le « sceau universel de la sainteté ». Pour certains, son esprit serait déjà 'descendu', mais il resterait invisible au commun des hommes. Qu'il s'agisse du Mahdī ou de Jésus, toutes les traditions convergent vers le fait que le scénario déterminant se jouera au Proche-Orient. De nombreuses paroles du Prophète évoquent de fait la Syrie comme terre des événements messianiques. Selon les sources, la

² *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, op. cit., p. 370.

fonction terrestre de Jésus passera au moins un moment par les armes, et il est permis de faire le lien avec la situation géopolitique actuelle et à venir du Proche-Orient.

La fonction eschatologique de Jésus est exprimée ici sur un ton prophétique par l'émir Abdelkader en 1852, dans un texte qui a été traduit en français sous le nom de Lettre aux Français :

« Si les musulmans et les chrétiens m'avaient écouté, j'aurais fait cesser leurs querelles : ils seraient alors devenus, extérieurement et intérieurement, des frères. Mais ils n'ont pas prêté attention à mes avertissements : la sagesse divine a décidé qu'ils ne seraient pas réunis en une même foi. Ne fera cesser leurs divergences que le Messie lorsqu'il reviendra. Mais il ne les réunira pas seulement par la parole, bien qu'il ressuscite les morts et guérisse l'aveugle et le lépreux. Il les réunira par l'épée et le meurtre... ».³

S'agit-il bien ici du Christ, Jésus, ou du Mahdî ? Une seule parole du Prophète identifie les deux personnages ; dans les autres, ils constituent des entités bien distinguées.

La tension messianique de l'islam contemporain, et son dévoiement

L'islam peut ainsi être présenté comme une communauté messia-

nique, partant de la vie terrestre de Muhammad jusqu'au retour – également terrestre - de Jésus. Cependant, jusqu'à ces dernières années, et en tout cas avant le 11 septembre 2001, la doctrine messianique de l'islam prenait la forme d'un enseignement ésotérique, restreint à quelques milieux. Désormais, c'est devenu un état d'esprit assez généralisé. Il avait déjà envahi des milieux musulmans aussi divers que Nation of Islam, aux USA, et les wahhabites littéralistes. Ben Laden a d'évidence agi dans une perspective messianique, et les événements du 11-09-2001 ont suscité un traumatisme dans la conscience américaine. Comme on le sait, celle-ci a répondu par une équipe dirigée par le *new-born* George W. Bush – deux fois président des États-Unis d'Amérique. Se joue donc d'ores et déjà une guerre messianique qui a été engagée à cette période, même si elle ne dit pas son nom : en effet, elle ne signifie quasiment rien pour la conscience européenne, par trop sécularisée. Guerre messianique à la fois en interne entre les prétendus sunnites de Daesh et les chiites, et en externe entre les messianistes des trois religions abrahamiques.

Chaque courant au sein de l'islam a sa propre version des faits. Sommairement, les soufis vivent l'attente messianique comme une façon de spiritualiser l'islam afin de mieux accueillir Jésus, prophète spirituel par excellence. Cette orientation peut s'accompagner de la tentation de voir éclore une reli-

³ *Lettre aux Français*, édition bilingue de l'ANEP, Alger, 2005, p. 46 du texte arabe.

gion universelle, ou au moins d'une volonté d'ouverture aux autres religions. Chez les salafistes, le messianisme se présente plutôt comme un processus apocalyptique devant aboutir à l'instauration sur terre des principes moraux de l'islam, en prenant comme références les mentors du wahhabisme saoudien, tels qu'Ibn Baz (m. 1999).

Si, traditionnellement, l'attente du Mahdî n'était pas au centre de la foi sunnite, les chiïtes, quant à eux, ont toujours identifié le Mahdî à leur douzième imâm, dont Jésus-Christ sera l'auxiliaire lors du jihâd final contre les forces de l'Imposteur. Depuis la grande occultation de l'imâm, en 941, l'attente de son retour comme Sauveur eschatologique est au cœur de la foi chiïte.

La guerre messianique se cristallise bien souvent dans une guerre d'interprétation, et d'assignation entre parties opposées, des *hadiths* du Prophète. Certains hadiths décrivent de façon très négative jusqu'à l'allure physique, et bien sûr morale, des gens de *Daesh*. D'autres sont asservis par ces même gens en étant retournés à leur avantage : parmi eux se trouverait le Mahdî, ou le calife de la fin des temps... On voit donc que les données scripturaires peuvent aisément être travesties et exploitées pour devenir un moyen de pression psychologique et même une inversion préméditée des enseignements de l'islam. Accentuer le chaos qui va susciter la venue du Mahdî et préparer le re-

tour de Jésus sur terre signifie pour les djihadistes : précipiter le conflit entre l'Occident et le monde musulman. Ils profitent de la confusion ambiante pour attiser les haines, et ainsi provoquer un choc des civilisations qui n'existe pas. Le soi-disant État Islamique constitue à cet égard une formidable caisse de résonance de la théorie de Samuel Huntington. Le produit qui nous est présenté actuellement – *Daesh* – ne constitue à cet égard qu'un des symptômes, un des abcès, du nihilisme global, et des grandes incertitudes et menaces qui pèsent sur l'avenir de l'humanité.

La quête de la paix ne vise pas seulement les membres de l'humanité actuelle, mais à préparer éventuellement l'avènement d'une nouvelle humanité, une sorte de « développement durable » en quelque sorte. Le Prophète disait en ce sens : « Lorsque l'Heure arrivera, si l'un d'entre vous a dans sa main une bouture, qu'il la plante autant que possible ! »



L'État islamique, entre tradition réinventée et utopie politico-religieuse

Myriam Benraad

In 2014, many saw in the establishment of the Islamic State over parts of Iraq and Syria and in the subsequent "restoration" of the Caliphate by Emir Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi a "return" to the foundations of Islam as well as the fulfilment of the dream of an Islamic "renewal". The Islamic State was thus depicted by its supporters as a political entity that was supposed to have existed since the beginning of Islamic political history and as being an intrinsic part of traditional Islamic jurisprudence. In fact, however, the Islamic State belongs largely to an "invented tradition" and is better interpreted as a politico-religious utopia, with little connection to the past.

Introduction

Depuis son auto-proclamation dans la ville irakienne de Mossoul à l'aube de l'été 2014, l'État islamique a fait l'objet d'une exceptionnelle somme de commentaires médiatiques et d'analyses à chaud dont le caractère immédiat, certes éclairé par une actualité toujours aussi brûlante, n'a souvent eu d'égal que son indigence interprétative et historique. Certains ont pu entrevoir dans l'établissement de cet « État islamique » et la supposée « restauration » du califat par son émir Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi un « retour » aux fondements de l'Islam, ainsi que l'apogée des tentatives modernes d'un « renouveau » islamique. Dans cet ordre d'idées, l'État islamique a été dépeint comme une entité poli-

tique supposée, à un instant déterminé, avoir parcouru l'histoire politique des sociétés musulmanes et, par extension, comme une théorie politique propre à l'Islam. Indiscutablement, cette perception s'est vue renforcée par l'invocation réitérée par une majorité de mouvements et de partis islamistes des textes sacrés et de la jurisprudence (*fiqh*), mais aussi des structures pré-modernes de gouvernance dans la région, pour appuyer la notion d'inévitabilité de l'État islamique, voire son caractère impératif à la restitution d'une « grandeur de l'Islam » en large part fantasmée.

Il importe, au regard de l'attrait toujours aussi considérable exercé par l'État islamique parmi des pans entiers du monde sunnite, de se pencher sur les origi-

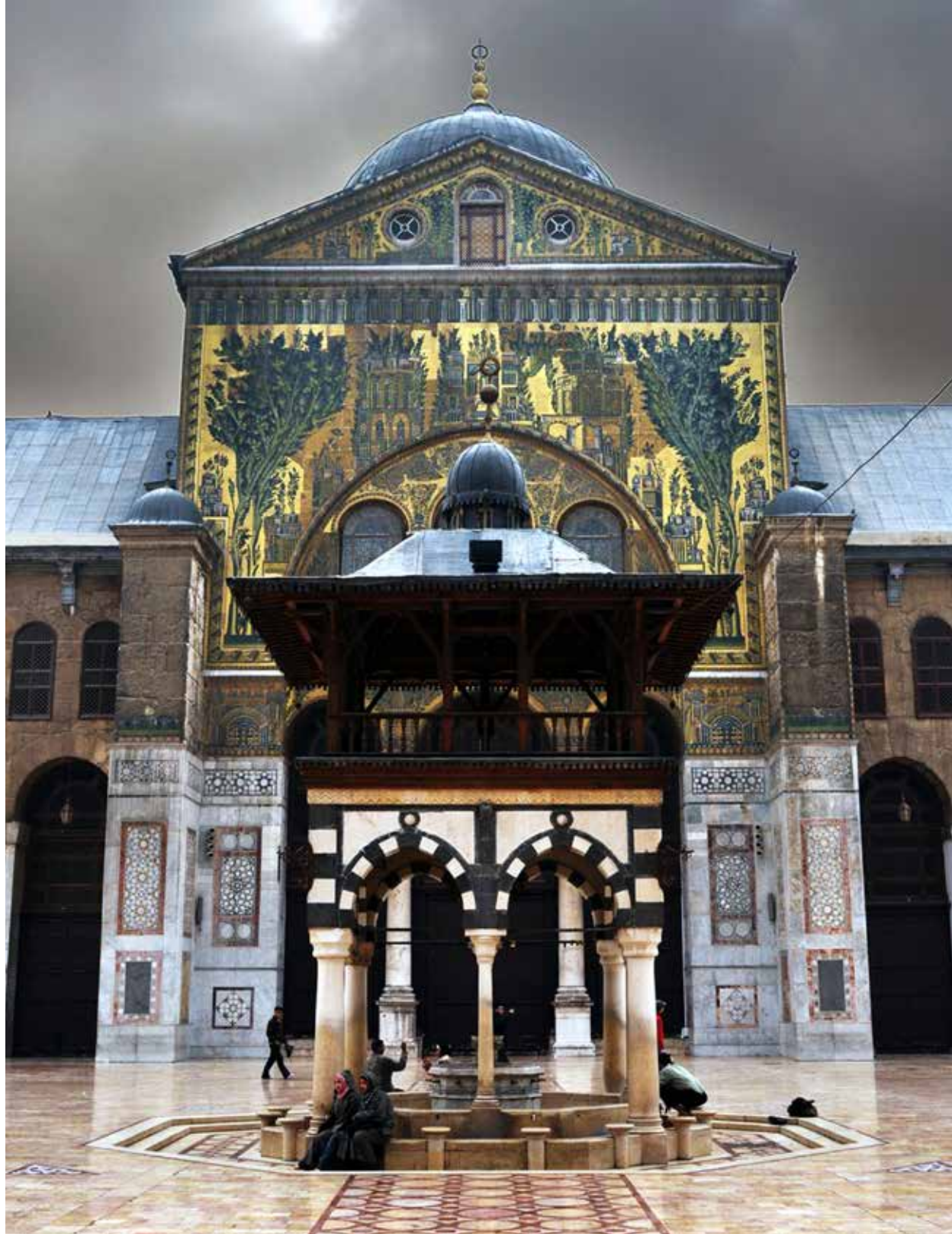


Photo courtesy of James Gordon

nes de cet argumentaire, ainsi que ses précédents et soubassements conceptuels. En effet, un tel exercice permet de jeter la lumière sur le fait que l'État islamique, et plus largement l'islam dit « politique », ne forment en rien un « retour en arrière », une situation passée qui aurait en quelque sorte préexisté ; ils incarnent une « réinvention » de la tradition, une subversion, et sont par conséquent porteurs d'une utopie politico-religieuse moderne incarnée, entre autres, par l'État islamique. Certes, le lien coutumier établi entre les champs politique et religieux, a été conservé par les islamistes et jihadistes, mais son caractère traditionnellement formel et symbolique s'est vu transformé en assise réelle. De surcroît, l'État islamique renverse la relation entre ces deux champs, de telle manière à assujettir le premier au second, et non l'opposé comme cela fut le cas à travers l'Histoire.

Une tradition réinventée

Au-delà du discours brandi par l'État islamique, rappelons de prime abord que les sources islamiques originelles – le *Coran* aussi bien que les *hadiths*¹ – n'abordent en fait que très peu les affaires politiques. Or, la première problématique qui s'est imposée à la communauté des croyants (*umma*) au lendemain de la

mort du prophète Mahomet en 632 fut précisément celle de l'État. Les premiers musulmans durent, à ce titre, innover et improviser quant à la forme et à la nature de leur gouvernement ; sans surprise, c'est aussi le politique qui se trouva au cœur de leurs premiers désaccords théologiques et de leurs scissions idéologiques (entre sunnites et chiites notamment). L'appréhension formalisée de la chose politique fut néanmoins tardive, la théorie islamique en la matière s'étant façonnée alors que les institutions sur lesquelles celle-ci se penchait entraient dans une phase de déclin². La théorisation du califat dans la tradition sunnite ne remonte ainsi qu'à la période de son délitement, sous la dynastie abbasside, et à l'apparition d'autres dirigeants musulmans dans d'autres contrées. Elle consista plus en une réfutation des dissidences montantes, à l'époque, qu'en une description « positive » ; elle fut davantage une quête d'idéal qu'une restitution objective des réalités³.

Ajoutons que la majeure partie de cette jurisprudence fut produite « à l'ombre de l'État », par une élite officiellement mandatée, phénomène ayant sanctionné des règles méthodologiques fondées sur

1 Ensemble des traditions orales relatives aux actes et paroles de Mahomet et de ses compagnons. Elles sont considérées comme des principes de conduite personnelle et collective.

2 Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge, Presses universitaires de Cambridge, 1958 ; Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964.

3 Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists*, Oxford, Presses universitaires d'Oxford, 1981.



l'explicitation linguistique (*bayan*), le consensus (*ijma'*) et le raisonnement par analogie (*qiyas*). En résultat un corpus écrit à la fois élégant et élaboré, ainsi qu'une théorie califale qui, par effets de monopole et de répétition, s'ancre dans les esprits durablement et résista à l'œuvre du temps. Au fil des générations, cette dernière allait rendre laborieuse toute différenciation entre « description » et « prescription ». Ce corpus s'est donc vu élevé au rang de quasi loi islamique (*chari'a*), con-

duisant plus tard les courants les plus rigoristes (salafistes notamment) à se réclamer finalement davantage de la jurisprudence que du *Coran* lui-même, ce dans un environnement où cette même jurisprudence fut systématiquement extraite de son cadre historique et politique, et par conséquent « essentialisée ».

Absorbés par leur entreprise tantôt idéologique, tantôt médiatique, nombreux sont ceux qui semblent donc avoir oublié que la jurisprudence islamique des premiers siècles n'était, en premier lieu, qu'une improvisation « humaine » visant à répondre aux enjeux de son temps et relevant d'une fonction

politique de légitimation d'un gouvernement qui s'était très souvent imposé par la force ou l'intrigue, et ne répondait que peu, dans sa pratique du pouvoir, à un idéal proprement musulman.

En réalité, les mouvements et partis « islamistes » ont induit des changements non seulement inédits mais aussi radicaux dans l'appréhension de cette tradition politique. Ainsi, alors qu'ils entendaient préserver un rapport étroit

entre les sphères politique et religieuse, tel qu'énoncé par la jurisprudence classique, ils n'ont fait, en définitive, qu'inverser l'ordre de ce dernier. De fait, les savants musulmans sunnites avaient forgé ce rapport afin d'assurer une légitimité religieuse au pouvoir. Les islamistes, pour leur part, maintiennent que politique et religion ne peuvent être séparés. Or, placés dans une position de résistance à l'État arabe moderne, et non de légitimation, ils n'ont fait que « politiser » une certaine acception de l'Islam. Pour atteindre leurs objectifs, ils se sont d'ailleurs révélés plus innovateurs encore et moins « littéraux » dans leur lecture des textes, invoquant certes le *Coran* à la source, mais de façon spectaculairement sélective.

Aussi la « précédence » politique n'est-elle d'aucun intérêt véritable à leurs yeux, de même que le corpus jurisprudentiel pris dans son entier⁴, à l'exception de références qui leur sont chères comme Ibn Taymiyya, théologien et juriconsulte hanbalite du XIII^e siècle. Quelles sont ainsi les causes de cette fusion opérée, à travers l'Histoire, entre Islam et État, et qui a accouché de l'idée d'État islamique ? Une réponse couramment apportée à cette question consiste à affirmer que

⁴ Tout en se revendiquant d'un Islam « des origines », islamistes et jihadistes n'ont aucun mal à emprunter des concepts et pratiques à d'autres dogmes, y compris chiite – comme sur la problématique de la *taqiyya*, par exemple, qui signifie la « prudence » et désigne la dissimulation de sa foi sous la contrainte et/ou dans un milieu hostile.

l'Islam est, par essence, une religion « politique », assertion admise à la fois dans un certain nombre de milieux musulmans – où la croyance, islamiste, en l'Islam comme « religion et État » (*din wa dawla*) a fait son chemin – et non-musulmans – qui eux alimentent la vision d'un Islam ontologiquement militariste. Pareille représentation traduit à l'évidence un profond et double écueil « fondamentaliste » et « orientaliste » dont les dangers ne sont malheureusement plus à démontrer.

Quel « État islamique » ?

Si l'Islam est fermement ancré dans l'idée d'une morale collective, il ne prête en revanche que peu d'attention au politique, comme l'illustrent ses sources qui n'explicitent aucune des modalités de formation d'un État ou de conduite d'un gouvernement. Certes, les premiers califes commandaient spirituellement leur communauté, mais pas parce que la religion en elle-même l'exigeait. C'est même plutôt le contraire : l'Islam s'est propagé dans des régions déjà dotées d'une tradition étatique, perse et byzantine en particulier, dont il a hérité. Le seul fait d'être un musulman dans les territoires conquis était très valorisant sur le plan politique, assurant aux fidèles des positions administratives et militaires de premier choix. Ce n'est qu'avec l'afflux rapide et massif de musulmans en provenance d'Arabie que les frustra-

tions s'accrurent et qu'émergèrent des courants d'opposition à l'État, à l'instar des Khawarij, secte de dissidents attachés à une pratique puritaine et rigoriste de l'Islam auxquels les membres de l'État islamique sont aujourd'hui comparés.

Dans ces moments de remise en cause de la légitimité du pouvoir politique en place sur des fondements religieux, la jurisprudence officielle s'employa à théoriser l'État de manière plus « rationnelle » (*dawlat al-'aql*) pour contrer ces dissidences et sauvegarder un gouvernement à la fois centralisé et unitaire. La théorie se devait de justifier et de légitimer, dans des termes religieux, les nécessités de l'exercice du pouvoir dans l'ensemble de ses aspects, y compris en matière d'imposition des populations. La convergence historique entre les sphères religieuse et politique s'effectua à cet instant. Il s'agissait d'une réponse dans l'urgence à une crise qui devenait des plus menaçantes. Islam et État furent ainsi « reliés » sur le plan des idées par une appropriation du premier par le second, aux antipodes de l'expérience européenne où l'Église, quant à elle, s'immisça directement dans la *res publica*.

Certes, ce processus fut aisé dans la mesure où l'Islam était dorénavant institutionnalisé et le sécularisme de l'État moderne « émulé ». Cette spécificité a enveloppé l'islam contemporain : dans la mesure où l'État arabe postcolonial se réclamait de la laïcité, la voie était ou-

verte aux courants islamistes pour s'approprier l'Islam comme arme politique. L'État n'embrassant pas l'Islam (sauf comme instrument de défense à l'égard du monde extérieur), il lui était difficile de qualifier ses opposants d'hérétiques comme les gouvernements musulmans traditionnels l'avaient fait par le passé. En renversant la dynamique historique évoquée ci-dessus et en se réclamant d'une religion « purifiée », l'islamisme laissa à l'État la tâche ardue de qualifier et de justifier sa propre lecture de l'Islam au niveau politique.

Quels sont, de ce point de vue, les aspects historiques, théoriques et pratiques susceptibles d'éclairer l'idée d'État islamique ? Soulignons, de nouveau, que le *Coran* ne précise pas de forme particulière pour l'État ou le gouvernement, que le Prophète n'a nommé aucun successeur, et qu'il s'agissait cependant d'éléments fondamentaux sur lesquels la société arabo-musulmane a dû se pencher tardivement. L'Islam s'épanouit dans une société tribale « sans État », que Mahomet réforma en communauté politico-religieuse fondée sur la foi comme critère d'appartenance et soumise à son autorité. Aucune correspondance relative à l'ère prophétique n'a été enregistrée, la seule littérature politique existante étant la fameuse « Constitution de Médine », tirée du livre d'Ibn Ishaq et qui, à l'époque de l'Hégire (*hijra*), évoque déjà l'umma comme la communauté chargée d'agir pour le respect de

l'ordre, de la sécurité et la protection des musulmans face à leurs ennemis.

Contrairement à l'actuel État islamique, tourné vers une uniformisation dans la violence la plus extrême, la première communauté de Médine était à la fois islamique et diverse : elle regroupait tribus, associations et autres communautés religieuses (*milal*) ; c'est elle qui a inspiré la tradition des siècles à venir, fondée sur une construction « pragmatique » de l'État sous les califes « bien guidés » (*al-khulafa ar-rashidun*), puis sous les dynasties omeyyade, abbasside et ottomane. Il ne s'agissait pas d'un État au sens moderne et occidental du terme, rendant caduques nombre de tentatives comparatistes. La pensée islamique pré-moderne est très riche du point de vue de la réflexion politique ; abordée avec minutie, elle nous apporte une vision claire de la manière dont la jurisprudence classique a appréhendé l'État comme catégorie pratique et conceptuelle.

L'État ne peut être dissocié, en Europe, des concepts d'individualisme, de liberté et de loi ; au contraire, l'idée islamique de « corps politique » ne peut être comprise isolément des concepts de groupe (*jama'a*), justice (*'adala*) et commandement (*imama*). Lorsque les intellectuels contemporains, musulmans ou non, s'intéressèrent à la théorie islamique de l'État, beaucoup se concentrèrent davantage sur la question du gouvernement et de sa conduite que sur celle de l'État

comme tel, entendu à la fois comme réalité et abstraction. Ceci s'explique par le fait que la chose politique, dans la tradition, repose sur une classification des hommes d'État et non sur une typologie des formes d'État. Le premier essai de classification de ces dernières n'est apparu qu'au XIXe siècle et succinctement dans les écrits de Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Le thème prit plus de poids au XXe siècle.

Ordinairement, la théorie islamique de l'État, s'est articulée autour de deux propositions. Celle de la légitimité, d'une part, dont l'importance avait été soulignée par les deux premiers califes Abou Bakr and Omar, et associée au principe tripartite et nomadique de consultation (*shura*), contrat (*'aqd*) et allégeance (*bay'a*). Ce dernier fut graduellement abandonné par les Omeyyades – qui soutenaient la notion de volonté divine pour se légitimer – puis se délita sous le poids des rivalités entre dynasties concurrentes. Celle du commandement, d'autre part, dont la centralité fut contrainte par le développement et l'institutionnalisation du phénomène étatique. Le calife Omar avait ainsi déclaré : « Ô Arabes : il n'est d'Islam sans groupe, et de groupe sans commandement, et de commandement sans obéissance »⁵. Dès lors, l'autorité spirituelle était transposée en autorité politique (*mulk*) pure et entièrement per-

⁵ Ahmad K. Khalil, *Al-Arab wa al-qiya-da* [Les Arabes et le commandement], Beyrouth, Dar al-Hadatha, 1985, p. 51.

sonnalisée dans le califat, et l'idée d'unification (*tawhid*) transmuée en pouvoir unique et suprême.

Conclusion

L'appréhension islamique de l'État émergea en temps de crise politique et fut toute entière absorbée par l'enjeu de sauver l'*umma* d'un destin funeste ; ce faisant, elle surinvestit son caractère religieux. En incorporant artificiellement la notion d'État au cœur de la *chari'a*, la jurisprudence envisagea une utopie et non une réalité. Distillée, pour ne pas dire systématisée au fil des siècles, cette fiction s'est « solidifiée » comme aspiration transmise de génération en génération, plus particulièrement après la pénétration coloniale européenne qui reste

assimilée par beaucoup au moment d'affaiblissement et d'humiliation absolus du monde musulman.

Les événements les plus récents, de même que le soutien toujours aussi significatif d'un grand nombre de fidèles sunnites au groupe État islamique démontrent, envers et malgré tout, que la survivance de cet idéal-type est bien réelle, même sous une forme virulente. Toutefois, le plus intéressant ici reste sans doute le souffle que les élaborations jurisprudentielles des premiers clercs de l'Islam, extraites de leur cadre sociohistorique, ont pu fournir aux islamistes et aux jihadistes, nostalgiques d'un « âge d'or » politique mythifié dont la quête acharnée n'a d'égal que l'inexistence saisissante.





Peace as inner transformation: a Buddhist perspective

John Paraskevopoulos

Overcome anger by peacefulness; overcome evil by good. Overcome the mean by generosity; and the person who lies by truth.

*The Dhammapada*¹

In considering peace from a Buddhist perspective, it is important to remember that it is, primarily, an inner disposition prior to its effective embodiment in the world as a particular course of action. Even before

this can be made possible, it must initially become the fruit of spiritual realisation. This means that, in effect, any talk of peace ought to be grounded in a vision of the spirit marked by wisdom, compassion and equanimity.

Our original Buddha-nature is ... omnipresent, silent and pure; it is a glorious and mysteriously peaceful joy.

Huang Po²

¹ Juan Mascaro (tr.) *The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection*, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 68.

² John Blofeld (tr.) *The Zen teaching of Huang Po* (New York: Grove Press, 1959). p.35.

This, in turn, naturally entails the recognition and practice of *ahimsa*, a notion common to the Jains, Hindus and Buddhists which prohibits the harming of sentient beings. This has always been regarded as the cornerstone of any attempts to establish peace in the world among these traditions. Without such a foundation, any practical initiatives aimed at curtailing violence and upheaval in the world will waver, in keeping with the fickle and unstable nature of unregenerate humanity. Of course, it may be objected that it is perfectly possible to aim for peace on self-evident and purely humanitarian grounds without having recourse to religious justifications. Indeed there are numerous worthy secular endeavours that seek to restore peace in our world, albeit with limited success. Many such initiatives often involve a mix of political strategies or appeals to self-interest in order to curtail the suffering that is wrought on countless lives through the absence of peaceful solutions to conflicts around the globe.

Peace on such terms is sure to be precarious if insufficiently informed by deeper principles that involve metanoia, or a radical change of heart. Now this is very difficult to achieve, even for those who profess to be adherents of religion (itself the cause of many bitter conflicts) which demonstrates, precisely, why peace is so elusive in our world. This difficulty also points to our troubled constitution as human beings and

the myriad 'blind passions' that afflict it; passions that are corrosive and inimical to any genuinely communal welfare:

'Blind passion' is a comprehensive term descriptive of all the forces, conscious and unconscious, that propel the unenlightened person to think, feel, act and speak in such a way as to cause uneasiness, frustration, torment and pain (mentally, emotionally, spiritually and even physically) for themselves and others. While Buddhism makes a detailed and subtle analysis of blind passion, employing such terms as craving, anger, delusion, arrogance, doubt and wrong views, fundamentally it is rooted in the fierce, stubborn clinging to the ... self that constitutes the basis of our existence. When we realise the full implications of this truth about ourselves, we see that the human condition is itself nothing but blind passion. Thus, just to live, or wanting to live, as an unenlightened being is to manifest blind passion at all times, regardless of what we may appear to be. One comes to know this, however, only through the illumination of great compassion.³

Considering the matter from Buddhist first principles, it is evident enough that true peace must reflect the serenity of *Nirvāna* as true reality, devoid of anger, hatred and ignorance.

Nirvāna is called extinction of passions,

³ *The Collected Works of Shinran*, tr. Dennis Hirota, Hisao Inagaki, Michio Tokunaga and Ryushin Uryuzu (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), Vol.II, p.172

the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality ... Oneness and Buddha-nature ... it fills the hearts and minds of all beings.⁴

Shinran

It might seem an inordinate expectation to have peace in the world be contingent on the realization of such an exalted state but,

True peace must reflect the serenity of *Nirvāna* as true reality, devoid of anger, hatred and ignorance.

should this be a universal possibility for us, then the lasting peace which we so ardently seek would be secured by mere virtue of having attained perfect enlightenment which conquers all opposition, division and conflict. However, in an age when Buddhism sees humanity as being subject to defilement and corruption, it must seem that the prospects for lasting peace look very bleak. 'Everything is burning' said the Buddha, 'burning with the fire of greed, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion' (*Samyutta Nikāya*). The quenching of this fire is only possible through a profound spiritual transformation involving the irruption of wisdom and compassion into our lives – not through mere social service or political activism but by

⁴ *The Collected Works of Shinran*, tr. Dennis Hirota, Hisao Inagaki, Michio Tokunaga and Ryushin Uryuzu (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997), Vol.I, p.461

means of a far-reaching revolution in our ordinary consciousness that comes about when we encounter the light of the Buddha.

In this day and age, when attaining Buddhahood is considered largely impossible for ordinary people, it is left to us to simply take refuge in the *Dharma* and allow its liberating graces to lessen the hold that 'blind passions' have over us in our lives. This does not, of course, lead to any kind of personal perfection but it can attenuate the grip of illusion and discontent that are so often the harbinger of disorder in the world.

Because they are deeply troubled and confused, people indulge their passions. Everyone is restlessly busy, having nothing on which to rely ... They entertain venomous thoughts, creating a widespread and dismal atmosphere of malevolence ... People are deluded by their passionate attachments, unaware of the Way, misguided and trapped by anger and enmity, and intent on gaining wealth and gratifying their desires like wolves.

Sūtra on the Buddha of Infinite Life.⁵

The transcendent perspective afforded by our contact with nirvanic reality can, through contemplation and faith, steep us in the Buddhist virtues. This is none other than our encounter with the Absolute:

⁵ Hisao Inagaki (tr.), *The Three Pure Land Sūtras* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 2000), p.286.

We are told that *Nirvana* is permanent, stable, imperishable, immovable, ageless, deathless and unborn; that it is power, bliss and happiness, the secure refuge, the shelter and the place of unassailable safety; that it is the real Truth and the supreme Reality; that it is the Good, the supreme goal and the one and only consummation of our life — the eternal, hidden and incomprehensible Peace.

Edward Conze⁶

In a sense, we need to become channels for this spiritual force in order that our hearts may be transformed. Without this, no lasting peace of any kind is possible seeing as the outer world of human affairs can only be a reflection of what is taking place within us.

In the absence of a revealed religious law in Buddhism — such as we find in some of the Semitic traditions — the *Mahāyāna*, for example, advocates observance of the ‘Six Perfections’, or *pāramitās*, as the basis of spiritual and ethical endeavour. These comprise: *dāna* (generosity, giving of oneself); *śīla* (virtue, morality, discipline, proper conduct); *kṣānti* (patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance); *vīrya* (energy, diligence, vigour, effort); *dhyāna* (contemplation, concentration) and; *prajñā* (wisdom, insight).

Many of those who adhere to a religiously fundamentalist mind-

set appear to lack an adequate understanding of the basic tenets of their faith or willfully ignore them for ideological reasons. This can only be addressed effectively by a proper presentation of the teachings in a balanced and nuanced manner. The contradictions and betrayals one often finds in fundamentalist thought often reflect a lack of intellectual depth and sophistication or an insistence on simplistic solutions in the face of complex problems. This might be understandable if the motive was compassion or ahimsa but, almost always, these aberrations are impelled by a disturbed religious psyche and therefore quite pernicious.

The Buddhist faith has sometimes been criticised for being too flexible when it comes to its doctrinal pronouncements; a fact which has seemed to spawn a plethora of different schools and teachings which often appear to contradict each other. While this bewildering variety of perspectives can seem confusing to newcomers, it may also be considered as one of its hidden strengths and the reason why Buddhism has largely avoided religious conflicts on the scale seen in some other traditions.⁷ Traditionally, the Buddha is

6 Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p.40.

7 Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the serious episodes of violent behaviour that have afflicted Buddhism throughout its history. Recent examples include the attacks against Muslims undertaken at the behest of nationalist monks in Thailand (2004), Burma (2013) and Sri Lanka (2014). In 1998, thousands of monks of the Chogye Buddhist order in South Korea fought each other in protracted pitched

said to have given '84,000' different teachings in response to the almost limitless variety of human needs, temperaments and understanding yet with always the same objective in mind:

The Buddha aspires to benefit sentient beings by giving them ... a great realm of ultimate purity, peace and sustenance.

Zonkaku⁸

This diversity does not suggest that there is no 'bedrock' in its teachings but, rather, that there are a core set of key insights which subtly tie together the variegated threads of the *Dharma*. Adherence to them is not necessarily insisted upon as a dogmatic requirement but is a natural outcome of reflecting on the truths of human existence. This latitude in belief acts as a foil to fundamentalism in that it points to the incompleteness or relativity of any single doctrinal viewpoint, while stressing that each one is perfectly

battles, vying for control of the order's considerable wealth and property. In the 1970s, ethnic Lao Buddhist monks actively supported militant violence directed against the country's communists. One can also point to the support given by a number of prominent Buddhist authorities for Japan's militarisation during the second world war as well as the assassination plot, known as 'The League of Blood' incident in 1932, which was led by a Buddhist monk. Numerous violent episodes have also been documented in the history of Tibetan Buddhism where competing sects have engaged in brutal clashes and summary executions over hundreds of years.

8 Alfred Bloom (ed.), *The Shin Buddhist Classical Tradition: A Reader in Pure Land Teaching* (Volume 1) (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2013), p.119.

adequate as a vehicle for emancipation. In this way, the range of teachings available in Buddhism can be viewed as complementary rather than competing, thus removing the sclerotic tendency to form fixed and definitive views on spiritual matters – a major source of religious conflict.

This means that we ought to acknowledge that any doctrinal formulation is only an approximation of a reality that transcends it and which must always remain an ineffable experience of the spirit. Doing so does not belittle the teachings as being only 'half-true', so to speak, such as to vitiate their efficacy. On the contrary, this is assured by their having emerged from the realm of truth and light which were revealed to the Buddha in his enlightenment experience.

The Buddha regards universal existence with detached Wisdom and impartial Compassion. The aim of his teaching and method is liberation from all partial and illusory viewpoints, coloured by desire and aversion, into a state of peace and well-being.

Harold Stewart⁹

When awakened to *Nirvāna*, the Buddha recognised the truth of human existence coupled with a liberating awareness granted by such truth. Any articulation of this sublime vision is, inevitably, a de-

9 Harold Stewart, *By the Old Walls of Kyoto: A Year's Cycle of Landscape Poems with Prose Commentaries* (New York: Weatherhill, 1981), p.152.



scent from a perfect apprehension of a non-verbal wholeness to a more fragmentary and imperfect recourse to everyday language; language which, nevertheless, points to the source of its meaning and – if rightly apprehended – to the same unitive experience that forms the fount of all doctrine.

Accordingly, the Buddhist solution to the problem of fundamentalism, from which other traditions may gain a useful perspective, is to see dogma as supple and diapha-

nous; something that still captures the profoundest insights of a spiritual tradition but which, nonetheless, does not fix them into a rigid or inflexible posture. This enables us to see the symbolic and allegorical nature of sacred texts rather than being bound by a suffocating literalism that confuses truth with a ‘dead letter’. Such an approach admittedly contains risks for those to whom such a balance is either too elusive or an outright threat to ‘black and white’ doctrinairism. This, in turn,

can provoke either an arrogant and overly self-assured fundamentalism that is fatal to the spiritual life or to a type of vague sentimentalism lacking in both insight and rigour; both of which may lead to a loss of belief altogether through having been starved of genuine contact with the living sources of religion.

Given the irreconcilable positions of the secular and religious outlooks, it is difficult to effect any kind of harmony at a spiritual level. However, there are insights furnished by some Eastern traditions that ought to lend themselves to universal acceptance; for example, the notion of *ahimsa*, as has already been mentioned. Non-believers would argue that religions do not have a monopoly on this concept (which, indeed, they have often flouted) but, nevertheless, it is an important point of convergence given that the most egregious manifestations of religious intolerance have been widespread violence and harm done to others. Both from a secular point of view and a spiritual one, it is difficult to dispute the primacy of *ahimsa* as a preliminary step in securing a united response against the destructive forces of terrorism and nihilism.

It is important to explain why the truth of *ahimsa* goes to the heart of the difference between a sacred and a profane attitude to reality. In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism (and of course one sees this in other traditions as well), the empirical world around us, and the sentient beings that form a

central part of it, are a manifestation of the highest reality considered as either *Nirvāna* or the *Dharma-Body*.

In light of the above, this reality and the world must stand in a relationship of non-duality. As a further consequence, this entails that each manifested entity (natural, animal or human) is strictly interdependent with all others, regardless of how evident this may be to our ordinary perception. Therefore, in causing harm to others, we injure ourselves as we are thereby inflicting pain and suffering on the whole which then recoils upon us as an integral part of that whole. Similarly – though less obviously – any harm we do to ourselves can also be correspondingly detrimental to other beings. Such a scission in the fabric of the world – while unavoidable given its imperfection and impermanence – can deny us the beneficent influence of *Nirvāna* which aims to unify all beings and save them from the acute perils of pain and ignorance.

May I, and other aspirants, behold the Buddha, acquire the eye of non-defilement, be born in the Land of Peace and Bliss, and realise the supreme enlightenment.

Shan-tao¹⁰

This account of the metaphysical basis for compassion and the accompanying attitude of *ahim-*

¹⁰ Alfred Bloom (ed.), *The Shin Buddhist Classical Tradition: A Reader in Pure Land Teaching (Volume 2)* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2014), p.24.

sa, to which it gives rise, is evidently a deeper explanation than what a merely secular view is able to provide. This does not mean that the latter cannot be deeply felt and passionately defended but it does suggest that a more profound understanding of why *ahimsa* must be true is usually absent. To be fair, however, many religious defenders of this perspective themselves often fail to comprehend it properly or, worse, pervert it for less than spiritual motives.

That said, common ground is still possible based on a shared understanding of *ahimsa* as an indispensable principle of peace-building in our broken world. While the reasons for accepting the imperative to avoid harming others may not always be the same, a unanimous agreement as to the necessity of such a principle is surely possible among people of good will, discernment and sensitivity, regardless of religious belief.

It remains a challenge for religions to be a catalyst in the promotion of peace and harmony when they have often been responsible for much hatred and conflict. Yet, as already mentioned, concepts such as the harmony of all beings in the Absolute and the interconnectedness of reality can serve as a means to have traditional spirituality and ethics contribute to a deeper grasp of our existential plight. They also suggest ways in which the many horrors of fundamentalist violence can

be attenuated through a penetrating awareness of the twin Buddhist virtues of wisdom and compassion - the only true and enduring remedy for conflict borne of 'blind passion'.

In suggesting the above, one must not be carried away by a false sense of optimism. While some of these suggested solutions are correct in principle, their effective realisation appears to be an objective well out of reach. Many religions prescribe to the idea that we are living in a period of spiritual degradation the likes of which are arguably unprecedented. For the Hindus, we are in the midst of the 'Age of Kali' and many Buddhists consider that we find ourselves in the 'Decadent Age of the *Dharma*':

At the horrible time of the end, men will be malevolent, false, wicked and obtuse and they will imagine that they have reached perfection when it will be nothing of the sort.

*Lotus Sutra*¹¹

Conflict and turmoil are seen as an inherent aspect of such an age and, as distressing as such developments are, they are to be expected and one ought not to anticipate dramatic improvements any time soon. While our ability to collectively redress this crisis may be seriously limited, we can at least aim at working on our own inner spiritual disposition (and helping others to do so)

11 John Paraskevopoulos (ed.) *The Fragrance of Light: A Journey Into Buddhist Wisdom* (Sophia Perennis, 2015), p.32.



without which nothing positive can emerge in world affairs. The state of disorder that we see around us everywhere is a refection of a toxic or damaged consciousness which only a spiritual form of awakening can ameliorate. Failing such a possibility in this life, Buddhism and other faiths exhort us to seek solace in the prospect of an eschatological resolution to the evils that can never be fully overcome in our fractured existence.

This world is a place full of disagreeable affairs, stealing, war, anger, hunger, desire. But the other shore is *Nirvāna*, beyond karma; it is true peace, freedom and happiness so, naturally, we look for the Other Shore ... In this world, we cannot obtain true freedom — there are always obstructions. Our life is temporary, not permanent, and we do not have true peace.

Hozen Seki¹²

While the secular world may not accept this diagnosis, it needs to keep an open mind as to the validity of this truth, especially given the worsening deterioration in our moral and social ambience. The solution to this impasse can never be a political one alone – ultimately, it must be buttressed by a spiritual dimension. Politics can certainly deliver on compromises or half-measures but the underlying impetus has to be an ethical orientation that is illumined through an encounter with a transcendent order of reality, on which every genuine value is based. Even at this level, sectarian differences should not preclude the attempt to seek an essential shared understanding. It is therefore important to look beyond certain doctrinal differences to a vision that is truly communal and to which all the

York: American Buddhist Academy, 1976), p.73.

12 Hozen Seki, *The Great Natural Way* (New

great faiths can assent – a joint attempt to affirm peace in the world that is none other than a peace that reflects, for Buddhists at least, the beatitude of *Nirvāna* that lies at the heart of reality and which seeks to bring all beings to the highest good.

Whether we can ascend to such an exalted realisation remains highly uncertain. If we prove that we are unable to do so, what can be assured is the slow but inevitable disintegration of human dignity and the abandonment of its most noble ideals.

Wherever the Buddha comes to stay, there is no state, town or village that is not blessed by his virtues. The whole country reposes in peace and harmony. The sun and the moon shine with pure brilliance; winds rise and rains fall at the right time. There is no calamity or epidemic and so the country becomes wealthy, and its people enjoy peace. Soldiers and weapons become useless; and people esteem virtue, practice benevolence and diligently cultivate courteous modesty' . . . The Buddha continued, 'But after I have departed from this world, my teaching will gradually decline and people will fall prey to flattery and deceit, and commit various evils.'

*Sūtra on the Buddha of Immeasurable
Life*¹³

¹³ Hisao Inagaki (tr.), *The Three Pure Land Sūtras* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 2000), p.304.



Buddhist Perspective on Conflict Resolution

Daisaku Ikeda

Arnold J. Toynbee, one of the most highly respected historians of the twentieth century, once observed that “glimpses of the real world are gleanings of priceless value.”¹

When we review the record of human history from the ancient past to the present, although it is true that all too many of the events on the timeline involve conflict and war, at the same time we cannot overlook

the creative dynamism generated by the encounter of different civilizations, something that was the focus of Prof. Toynbee’s attention. There are many instances, in different ages and settings, where we can sense the ethos and wisdom that support and make possible such peaceful interactions and coexistence.

It was more than forty years ago that Prof. Toynbee and I engaged in an extended dialogue through which we reflected on such historical realities while exploring the prospects for the human future.

¹ Toynbee, Arnold. 1958. *East to West: A Journey Round the World*. New York and London: Oxford University Press. 221.

Even as he expressed his opinion that war was “one of the congenital diseases of civilization,”² Prof. Toynbee rejected, in the light of historical experience, the proposition that war is a part of the fate of human nature. I can never forget the firmness with which he expressed this view.

Our dialogue was undertaken at a time of intense Cold War tensions. People’s attention was focused on how to prevent a repetition of the horrors of world war. During the two years of 1972–73, I met with Prof. Toynbee for a total of forty hours. In 1974, I visited both the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union for the first time and in 1975 traveled to the United States. In these travels, I met with the top leadership of these countries and sought to hear and understand their respective concerns in order to pave the way to a reduction of tensions. I was motivated throughout by the determination to make every effort to forestall the possibility of global conflict.

Buddhism teaches that human beings are endowed with the ability to resist the lures and pull of hatred and violence and to work with others to advance the horizons of peace. Over the past nearly half-century of engaging in dialogue and fostering friendship with political and intellectual leaders from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, I

have embraced a deepening sense of this inherent human capacity.

This is not, of course, to suggest that there are simple solutions to any of the problems facing our world: from the unprecedented number of refugees driven from their homes by armed conflict—the highest level since the aftermath of World War II—to acts of terrorism and xenophobia.

But, as demonstrated by the restoration last summer of diplomatic ties between the United States and Cuba—long frozen in a stance of Cold War confrontation—no aspect of human history is truly inevitable.

In September last year, the United Nations, which was marking its seventieth anniversary, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets out the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the Preamble, the principle that permeates all the goals is expressed as the commitment to “ensure that no one will be left behind.”

The overarching challenge that confronts us today is how to break free from the cycles of violence and hatred that have become entrenched in societies around the world; how to build momentum for the realization of a more peaceful, humane world in which no one is left behind. This challenge is not limited to a rethinking of international political relations or diplomatic policy, but is deeply intertwined with such quintessentially human questions as how we engage with people who

² Toynbee, Arnold and Ikeda, Daisaku. 2008. *Choose Life: A Dialogue*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris. 196.

differ from us, people who we may regard as “other.”

In this paper, I wish to explore these themes and offer a Buddhist perspective on how we can contribute to peace in a world of conflict.

Empathetic engagement

The first point I would like to stress is the importance of empathetic engagement with others.

While we as humans may be adept at understanding the feelings of those with whom we have a close relationship, geographical and cultural distances can result in psychological distancing. The accelerating processes of globalization seem to exacerbate this, with modern means of communication sometimes acting to amplify the impulse to stereotyping and hatred. As a result, people end up avoiding interaction with those who are different, including even those living in the same community, instead viewing individuals and groups through the lens of stereotypes. We appear to be losing our capacity to appreciate others as they are and for who they are.

In particular, xenophobia seems to be becoming increasingly virulent, taking the form of hate speech and hate crimes targeting people of specific ethnic or religious identities. Most recently, this has been directed at refugees, people who have fled the flames of war in search of safety. Acts such as this, which harm or incite people to harm

others, must be recognized, regardless of their target, as impermissible violations of human rights.

When such aggression is directed at groups other than those to which one belongs, many people—even if they don’t actively support this—are quick to decide that there is some fault on the part of the victims that justifies such treatment. Such passivity and disengagement often has the effect of only making the situation worse.

When I consider, from a Buddhist perspective, the dangers of this kind of collective consciousness, the phrase “an invisible arrow” comes to mind.

Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, lived in an era of Indian history marked by frequent conflicts such as intercommunal struggles for access to water or power struggles between states. Once, when Shakyamuni was asked to mediate such a dispute, he explained the essence of the issue in this way: “I perceived a single, invisible arrow piercing the hearts of the people.”³ This “arrow” could be termed the arrow of a discriminatory consciousness, an unreasoning emphasis on difference, that penetrates deeply into people’s hearts, poisoning them without their being aware of it.

As he continued his efforts at mediation, Shakyamuni characterized the two groups, armed and confronting each other, as being “like

³ Trans. from Nakamura, Hajime. 1984. *Buddha no kotoba [Words of the Buddha]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 203.

fish, writhing in shallow water.”⁴ One of these groups was the one to which he had belonged prior to entering a religious way of life, but Shakyamuni was not caught up in the logic of ethnic identity. Rather, he focused his attention and directed his words at the suffering that afflicts all human beings.

Their minds clouded by excessive attachment to difference, members of each group were unable to recognize in the other the experience of suffering and pain—that they also were struggling with inadequate water supplies or the fear of being invaded and overwhelmed by neighboring states.

Becoming aware of the “invisible arrow” that pierces and poisons our consciousness, and then making the effort to remove it, is a task of great difficulty. But it is not impossible. This is because the key to doing this is also to be found in the human heart. As Shakyamuni expressed it: “All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.”⁵

The key here is the spirit of empathy expressed in the words, “Putting oneself in the place of another.” We all find the wounds of discrimination or violence unendurably painful. Likewise, our lives, the path in life we have followed to this mo-

ment, are equally dear to us all. This natural, immovable sense, rooted in life itself, can form the basis for the realization that these sentiments, which we experience with such reality, must likewise be felt with similar intensity by others.

If we can develop the habit of putting ourselves in the place of others, we can learn to feel and sense their pain. This can further help clear the obscuring clouds that arise in our minds from an excessive attachment to difference. This was the way of life that Shakyamuni encouraged humankind to adopt.

How to counter the cycles of violence and hatred that arise from and are aggravated by the logic of collective identity—this remains one of the most pressing challenges of our times.

It is, of course, crucial to strengthen international legal frameworks for the prevention of conflict and the protection of human rights. But at the same time, situations of conflict and tension must be met with an effort to see the world through others’ eyes, to appreciate the fact that the concerns and threats that we feel may also be felt by our opponents. Such efforts can contain and defuse conflicts in their early stages, before they escalate uncontrollably.

When I traveled to the Soviet Union in 1974, I met with then premier Alexei Kosygin. I took the opportunity to share with him what I had seen several months previ-

4 *Saddhatissa*, trans. 1994. *The Sutta-nipāta*. Richmond: Curzon Press. 4:2:936.

5 *Buddharakkhita*, trans. 1996. *The Dhammapada: The Buddha’s Path of Wisdom*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society. 10:130:2.

ously in Beijing—large numbers of ordinary Chinese citizens working to build air raid shelters against the eventuality of a Soviet military strike—and the deep impression this had made on me.

I then asked him: “Does the Soviet Union intend to attack China?”

He stated clearly that the Soviet Union had no such intention.

When I followed this up by asking if I could communicate this to the Chinese leadership, he responded without hesitation that I could.

Soon after, I had another opportunity to visit China, where I conveyed Premier Kosygin’s words to Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. Over the course of repeated visits to both countries, I continued to appeal for both sides to work for the improvement of relations.

That both sides were in the end able to find a path to resolving their differences while avoiding the worst-case scenario of full-scale conflict was of course of immeasurable value for the cause of world peace. As someone who was engaged in deepening exchanges with the people of both countries, I recall the great sense of relief with which I welcomed this outcome.

The contemporary challenges of prolonged conflict and intensified xenophobia are epitomized in the refugee crisis, something that makes it all the more urgent to view people who have become refugees not in terms of their ethnicity or religion

but as our fellow humans, people bearing painful burdens and in need of support.

In ways that parallel the situation of people who have been driven from their long-accustomed communities by natural disaster, the victims of conflict and war have been uprooted and stripped of all sense of hope. Further, we must never forget that children continue to constitute more than half of all refugees.

The displaced people now seeking refuge in unprecedented numbers have been met with a range of reactions. But more than a few people in the receiving countries have been moved by the irresistible impulse of humanity to extend the hand of help. Such empathy, which exists independent of any codified norms of human rights, is the light of humanity that any of us can cause to shine, illuminating the path forward for those who struggle and suffer.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to undertake a dialogue with Prof. Tu Weiming of Harvard University. At one point, our conversation turned to the report *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, by a panel of eminent persons on which Prof. Tu served. This report was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly just two months after the terror attacks of September 2001.

The report included a description of an incident that had taken place on the shores of Lake Tiberias the year before. Two families were



relaxing at the beach when a child from one of the families went for a swim in the sea. The child started to have difficulty swimming and was on the verge of drowning when the father from the other family leapt to the rescue. While he succeeded in saving the child, he ended up drowning as he was trying to swim back to shore.

As it turned out, the family of the child that nearly drowned was Jewish and the family whose father rescued him/her was Muslim. But such differences were entirely irrelevant in the face of the pressing imperative to save a drowning child.

The report is careful to avoid the language of “ought to be” or

“must,” searching instead for the more spiritual aspect of human coexistence. The more difficult the challenge, the more vital it becomes that we attend to the cry of the human spirit contained in incidents such as this, for its significance outweighs that of externally determined rules or ethics.

The Buddhist scriptures describe an episode involving the demoness Kishimojin (Skt. Hariti) who stole other mothers’ children in order to feed them to her own. Shakyamuni, having heard the anguished tales of the mothers whose children had fallen victim to her predations, came up with a plan to make her stop this evil behavior. He took one



of Kishimojin's children and hid him from her sight.

Kishimojin searched desperately for her child. Finally, at her wits' end, having heard rumors about Shakyamuni's success in showing people ways to resolving their various problems, she asked for his help. Shakyamuni responded to her pleas by saying, "How do you think the pain you now feel compares to

the pain you have caused so many other mothers?" Hearing his words, Kishimojin realized how much suffering she had caused. She not only pledged never to repeat her evil acts but vowed to work to protect all children. As a result, she was able to be reunited with her child.

Whatever differences in ethnicity or religion might exist between people, the anguish felt by

mothers and fathers when something befalls their child is the same.

I believe that the most effective means of breaking the cycles of violence and hatred—the problems of truly grave and challenging conditions—can be found in establishing throughout human society the ethos of viewing things in the light of empathy. This is the foundation on which to build a society in which true and meaningful solidarity is extended to people suffering as a result of armed conflict, human rights abuses and discrimination.

The will to coexistence

The second point I would like to explore is the will to coexistence and shared flourishing.

Last year, global warming and resultant climate change were a major focus of attention. A series of natural disasters, in the course of just one year, impacted the lives of more than 100 million people. Of these, almost 90 percent were climate-related disasters such as floods or violent storms. Against the backdrop of concern about extreme weather events and the other varied impacts of continued global warming, in December last year the Paris Agreement was reached, giving form to a new international consensus on how to combat global warming.

This framework, in which 195 countries participate, has set the long-term goal of reducing net emissions of greenhouse gases to zero by

the end of the twenty-first century—including through the contributions of forests and other natural carbon sinks. If this agreement fosters a robust, shared awareness that climate change is an unacceptable threat to all societies, it will serve as an effective basis for solidarity and joint action.

The wars and violent upheaval of the twentieth century have been followed in this century by continuing military and economic competition. International politics continues to be marked by conflict, with governments focused on gaining the upper hand over other governments or opposing forces. In recent years, however, as more governments have become conscious of the grave threat posed by climate change and other global problems, we see signs of the emergence of a new approach to security issues.

Traditional conceptualizations of security have led to what is known as the security dilemma, in which the strengthening of armaments by one country is perceived as a threat by other countries, which respond with their own countermeasures, generating a cycle of escalation that leaves all countries experiencing lessened security and increased tension.

In contrast, as more countries come to see the damage wrought by extreme weather events and other natural disasters as threats to security (understood in the broadest sense), they will also see that efforts

to strengthen disaster risk reduction regimes not only present no threat to other countries but in fact indirectly support similar efforts by neighboring countries, enhancing the resilience of the region as a whole.

Efforts to strengthen regional communication have already been initiated. China, Japan, North and South Korea—countries whose political relations are marked by various tensions—all participate in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), in which disaster responses are iden-

Peace and happiness are never something we alone enjoy ... misery and suffering are never things that afflict only others.

tified as a priority security concern. In addition to a framework for regular deliberation on cooperation, joint training exercises have been conducted.

In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mentioned at the outset of this paper, responding to climate change is listed along with eliminating poverty as one of humanity's greatest challenges.

It seems possible that efforts to achieve the SDGs and carry out the Paris Agreement have the potential to encourage a shift in the focus of international politics and security thinking from the pursuit of dominance in conflictual relations to solidarity in meeting shared threats.

Alongside such a shift in state-to-state relations, expanding people-to-people solidarity and providing more opportunities for people to harmonize their actions is also crucial. For herein lies the key to realizing the ideal set out in the SDGs—to leave no one behind—and to disrupting entrenched patterns of violence and hatred.

Buddhism views the world as a web of relationality in which nothing that exists or occurs can be completely disassociated from anything else. Moment by moment, the world is formed and shaped through this mutual relatedness. The way of life that this worldview encourages us to pursue can be expressed as the idea that peace and happiness are never something we alone enjoy; that misery and suffering are never things that afflict only others.

Earlier, I discussed the importance of empathy. Pain and anguish, however, are not the only things we as humans can share. We are equally capable of sharing the joys felt in living; these can serve as a bridge that links us across our differences. Buddhism suggests that this is how we can bring forth the luster of our inherent dignity as we help society move in a more positive direction.

The *Lotus Sutra*, which contains the essence of Shakyamuni's teachings, offers a dramatic portrayal of large numbers of people breaking free from the deep-rooted human



impulse to remain satisfied with just one's own happiness. Instead, they commit themselves to acting and working for a larger vision of happiness—one that includes others.

The wellspring for this vow and the action to fulfill it is the palpably felt realization that an ultimately worthy and dignified aspect of life exists within us, and equally within all others as well. This realization produces an overwhelming, infectious outpouring of joy. As Nichiren (1222–82), the Buddhist priest who developed this interpretation of Buddhism in thirteenth-century Japan, states in his exegesis of the *Lo-*

tus Sutra: “Joy means delight shared by oneself and others. Wisdom and compassion shared with others is what is meant by joy.”⁶

This can be understood as the assertion that the work of expanding the shared bonds of joy in life can bring to blossom the unlimited possibilities existing within each individual, opening the way to a world in which all can live and flourish in conditions of peace and dignity.

In another scripture of *Mahayana* Buddhism, the *Vimalakirti*

⁶ Trans. from Nichiren. 1952. *Nichiren Daishonin goshu zenshu [The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin]*. Ed. by Nichiko Hori. Tokyo: Soka Gakkai. 761.

Sutra, there is a scene describing five hundred youths who had gathered around Shakyamuni, each holding their own beautifully adorned parasol. In the instant when these youths pledge themselves to creating a society in which all people can live in happiness, the individual parasols held by each of them join together, creating a magnificent jeweled canopy that covers and protects the entire world. No matter how gorgeous each of their individual parasols might be, it can only offer protection from the strong wind and burning sun to the individual holding it; the many people without parasols themselves remain without protection. But when these young people, each having followed a unique path in life, rise above their differences in a single shared determination, this brings a vast protective canopy into being. I see this as a beautiful symbol of the limitless possibilities that can be realized when people join their efforts together with a shared determination.

Humanitarian competition

The grassroots activities of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) in the fields of peace, culture and education that support the efforts of the United Nations to resolve global issues are based on this Buddhist worldview.

Writing in 1903, at a time when the forces of imperialism and colonialism were at their height, the

founder of the organization from which the present-day SGI grew, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), called for a transformation in the nature of competition in international relations. He urged a shift from the prevailing forms of competition, in which the strong preyed upon the weak and countries sought their security and prosperity at the expense of others, to one in which “one benefits others while benefiting oneself,”⁷ or what he termed “humanitarian competition.”

This can be seen in the following words of Nichiren, which illustrate the social dynamism that seeks happiness shared with others: “If you light a lantern for another, it will also brighten your own way.”⁸

The inevitable endpoint of military competition that seeks peace only for one’s own state can be seen in the more than 15,000 nuclear warheads that continue to threaten our world. The inevitable endpoint of economic competition that seeks prosperity only for one’s own society can be seen in the severity of the damage wrought to the global ecology, epitomized in climate change. While such zero-sum modes of competition may appear to produce desirable results for one’s own society, we have only to consider the effect that any use of nuclear weapons would have—or that unchecked

7 Trans. from Makiguchi, Tsunesaburo. 1996. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo zenshu [The Complete Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi]*. Vol. 2. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha. 399.

8 Trans. from Nichiren. *Nichiren Daishonin gosho zenshu*. 1598.

global warming is almost certain to have—to realize that such an approach ends up undermining the basis for not only the continued survival of one’s own country, but of humanity as a whole.

The vision embodied in Maki-guchi’s call for humanitarian competition is, rather, one in which efforts to overcome such shared global threats as environmental degradation and natural disaster—in which societies vie with and spur each other to make the maximum contribution—function to create the shared benefit of conditions desirable for

the present and future citizens of each society.

As a movement, the SGI is committed to dialogue that focuses energies on overcoming shared challenges—that shines a light on the rich spiritual traditions fostered within each of the world’s civilizations and religions in order to clarify the kinds of ethics and norms required to actualize solutions. The goal of such dialogue is to move beyond the sharing of concern to expanding the solidarity of action.

The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which



I founded, has as its *motto*, “dialogue of civilizations for global citizenship.” To date, it has organized conferences on such shared human challenges as: strengthening the United Nations, the abolition of nuclear weapons, disarmament, conflict resolution, human security, multiculturalism, food security and climate change. One of the unique features of the Toda Institute’s work is that it seeks to form networks of research collaboration around each of these challenges, thus bringing the world’s finest wisdom to bear on them.

This past February, to commemorate its twentieth anniversary, the Institute organized a conference, with the participation of researchers from different religious backgrounds—Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism—to consider the role of the world’s religions in contributing to peace.

The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Sihem Bensedrine, president of the Truth and Dignity Commission of Tunisia. In a separate interview, she shared the following thoughts: “When different religions gather to consider the same issues, because they seek to respond to the kinds of needs that are common to all human beings, they are required to become humble. And this humility is the opposite of absolutism.”⁹

At nearly the same time, the

Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue sponsored their 12th Doha Interfaith Conference. I understand that the discussion focused on such critical issues as protecting young people from the influence of extremism and strengthening the power of the spirit and intellect in support of social coexistence.

If we are to unravel the intertwined crises that afflict our world today, the kind of interfaith dialogue engaged in by the Doha International Center will only increase in its value and importance. I wish to take this opportunity to express my deepest respect for the work you have undertaken. Through the Toda Institute we look forward to deepening exchanges with your Center to expand the fields of dialogue between faith traditions as well as between different civilizations, in order to open new horizons in human history.

⁹ Trans. from Seikyo Shimbun. 2016. “*Bunmeikan taiwa ninau chi no kyoten*” [Intellectual hub for dialogue of civilizations]. February 19, 3.

New Reality: Peace and Universal Responsibility, according to the Dalai Lama

Sofia Stril-Rever

All forms of violence, especially war, are totally unacceptable as means to settle disputes between and among nations, groups and persons.

Today, in such an interdependent world, the concept of war seems anachronistic, stemming from outmoded attitudes. Many traditions from the past are no longer adapted to the present and are even counterproductive and have thus been relegated to the dustbins of history.

War should also be consigned to the dustbins of history.

The 14th Dalai Lama

Winning peace

“Vague talks of peace can only disturb some pigeons” – such are the words of the 14th Dalai Lama, and he adds that external disarmament will not happen, unless we commit ourselves to internal disarmament.

The 80 year old spiritual leader of Tibet, who issued this statement in a recent column of the *Washington Post*,¹ was enthroned in

1939. At the age of 4, he ascended the golden throne of Lhasa, the holy city of the Roof of the world that was then a venerable shrine for the last great theocracy of the 20th century. In 1959, he went into exile in India, and on December 10, 1989, he became the world's Dalai Lama in receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. The Norwegian Nobel Committee granted him this distinction for his tireless efforts on behalf of human rights and world peace.

His status as a distinguished spiritual guide has not, however, restricted the scope of the 14th Dalai Lama's reflection to the Buddhist religion, and he has ventured far beyond the traditional area of scholarship held by his line of reincarnation. From the very beginning of his exile in India, he has been anxious to meet Western scientists, and in 1990, he initiated the *Mind & Life* dialogues that have gathered scholars of international renown, in fields such as neurosciences, quantum physics, or the protection of the environment. His understanding of the world is thus particularly original, and innovative, insofar as it

¹ « Why I'm hopeful about the world's future », *The Washington Post*, Opinions, 13 June 2016.

combines the deep study of the mysteries of classical Buddhist philosophy, in the *Nalanda*² tradition, with knowledge in high tech fields of contemporary thought.

As a spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama never ceases to hammer out that praying is not enough to face the violence caused by war. Since human action is the cause, asking God to intervene makes no sense. Supporting a pragmatic realism, the leader of the Tibetans analyzes the widespread brainwashing that leads us to accept a martial logic in the name of the State. And he appeals to us to closely examine the reality of war in order to understand why wars are perpetuated, as if we had not learnt from our failures in the past.

Most of us have been conditioned to regard military combat as exciting and glamorous – an opportunity for men to prove their competence and courage. Since armies are legal, we feel that war is acceptable; in general, nobody feels that war is criminal or that accepting it is criminal attitude. In fact, we have

2 Located in central India, Nalanda was one of the world's first residential and most famous universities, established by the Gupta emperors around 450 CE. An architectural masterpiece, it could accommodate up to 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers. The library, located in a nine storied building, attracted students and scholars from Korea, Japan, China, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia and Turkey. The philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism stems from this ancient university and Nalanda teachers, of the 9th to 12th century, were invited by the Dharma kings of Tibet to teach in their country the basis of what would be known later as Vajrayana Buddhism.

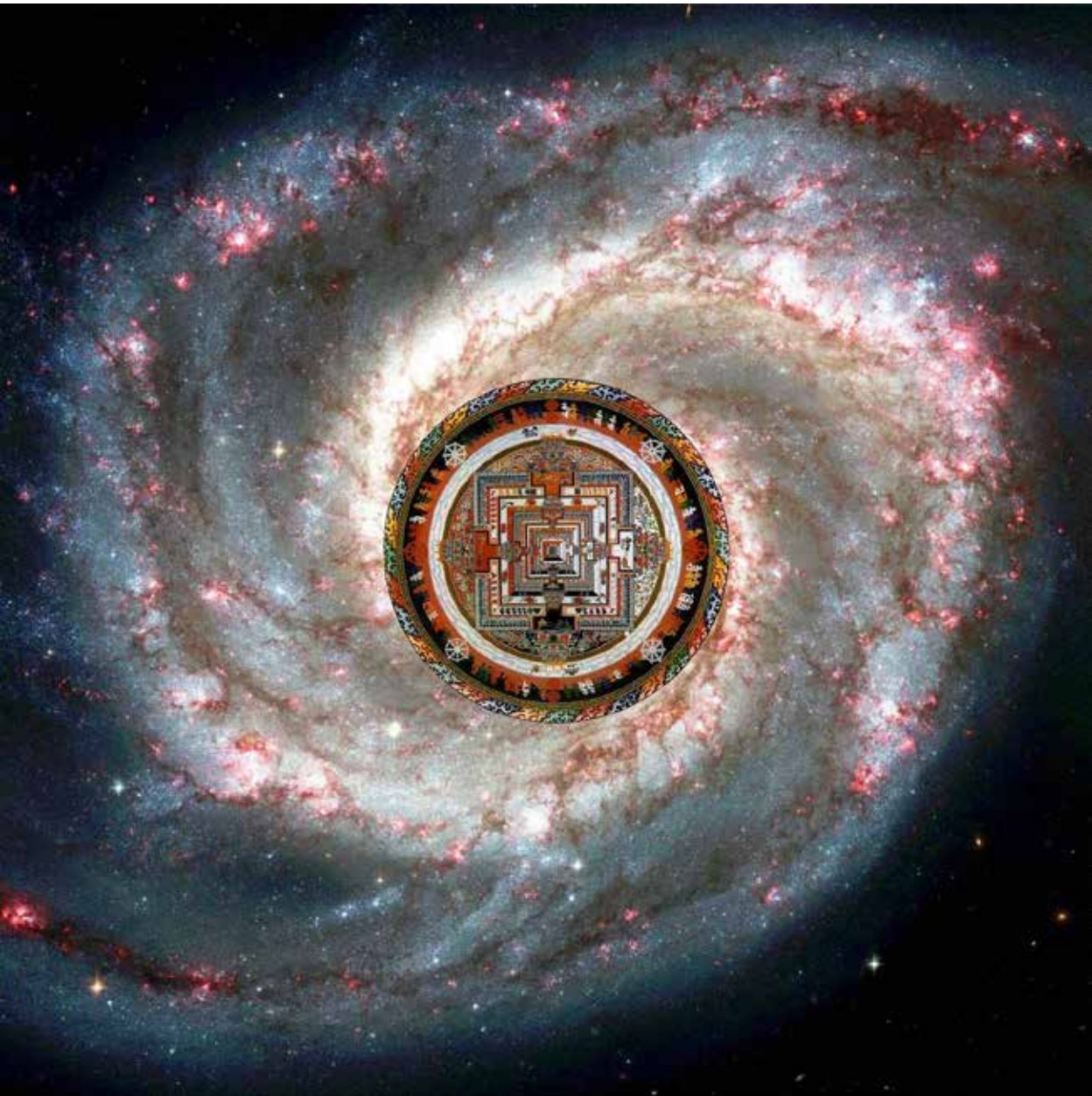
been brainwashed. War is neither glamorous nor attractive. It is monstrous. Its very nature is one of tragedy and suffering.

War is like a fire in the human community, one whose fuel is living beings. I find this analogy especially appropriate and useful. Modern warfare waged primarily with different forms of fire, but we are so conditioned to see it as thrilling that we talk about this or that marvelous weapon as a remarkable piece of technology without remembering that, if it is actually used, it will burn living people. War also strongly resembles a fire in the way it spreads. If one area gets weak, the commanding officer sends in reinforcements.

This is throwing live people onto a fire. But because we have been brainwashed to think this way, we do not consider the suffering of individual soldiers. No soldiers want to be wounded or die. None of his loved ones wants any harm to come to him. If one soldier is killed, or maimed for life, at least another five or ten people – his relatives and friends – suffer as well. We should all be horrified by the extent of this tragedy, but we are too confused.³

These words do not match mainstream media reports nor history textbooks that carry on the antagonism of victory versus defeat, of wars *won* versus *lost* – whereas the outcome of an armed confrontation always corresponds to a failure of

3 « The Reality of War » 5 December 2015: <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace/the-reality-of-war>



The *Kalachakra Mandala* is the essential teaching of the Dalai Lamas' lineage. The *mandala* symbolizes the interdependence and mutual reliance between all beings, human and non human, in the web of existence. Its meditation, based on inner peace and compassion, is an experience of being one with the universal life.

both sides. This is how one conflict comes after another, so much so that a war that is won has never meant the end of war. It is quite the contrary. The confrontation is carried on from generation to generation, those who surrendered yesterday long to become the victors of tomorrow.

The Dalai Lama goes so far as to say that “the notion of absolute victory for one side and defeat of another is thoroughly outdated,” adding that, “in some situations, following conflict, suffering arises from a state that cannot be described as either war or peace. Violence inevitably incurs further violence. Indeed, history has shown that non-violent resistance ushers in more durable and peaceful democracies and is more successful in removing authoritarian regimes than violent struggle.”⁴

The Dalai Lama's commitment is precisely to put an end to this cycle of conflicts. “Through violence, you may *solve* one problem, but you sow the seeds for another”, he tirelessly reminds us. From this point of view, the almost sixty years that have gone by since the invasion of his country by China wind up being a victory over war. Admittedly, Tibet is still occupied, without giving a single thought to the Tibetan people's self-determination, and fundamental freedom. But the Dalai Lama has won peace; he has won the victory of peace.

⁴ « Why I'm hopeful about the world's future », *The Washington Post*, Opinions, 13 June 2016

This victory has not made the headlines, and the world has not triumphantly hailed the man who won such a battle. The struggle waged by the Dalai Lama cannot be seen in the same way as the thousands of bombs that fall onto habitants taken as hostages in the logical process of confrontation between states. This battle cannot be heard like the explosions that resound in what is commonly known as the *theater* of military operations. Yet, a battle has been, and continues to be waged, by the spiritual leader of the Tibetans, according to a non-violence strategy, with a never-failing perseverance.

In such a fight, the enemy is not the one we expect. The Dalai Lama is not fighting against the Chinese. Besides, could we say that the Chinese are his enemies? When he mentions them, he calls them his *brothers and sisters*. As the apostle of inner and outer disarmament, he moves forward bare-fisted, in the forefront of the international stage. No terrorist, no bomb attack, no kamikaze gives his name as a reference. To the young generation of Tibetans who would want to battle with Chinese occupation, he keeps on advocating the way of non-violence he has never diverged from.

'Become the change you want for the world!'

When he left Tibet in 1959, the Dalai Lama was not able to bring any of his belongings with him. It

was the price he had to pay for succeeding in his flight to reach beyond the Himalayas. But he was not deprived. Lacking material goods, he had within him treasures of wisdom, love, and compassion, nurtured since childhood. In the Potala lamasery, he had practiced handling weapons that dismantle all weapons, weapons that prepare for the victory of peace.

The military occupation of Tibet – to the benefit of the Chinese nation –, the violation of human rights, the plundering of natural resources, the forced sinicization of the inhabitants, and demographic attacks are painful and unbearable. The Dalai Lama has not ceased denouncing them, for more than fifty years, to the community of nations. But though the International Commission of Jurists has acknowledged the Tibetan genocide on three occasions, in 1959, 1961 and 1965,⁵ no serious measure has been taken against China who is part of the Security Council of the UN. And if the Dalai Lama has succeeded in mobilizing consciences, he has not been supported by the states that could have put an end to the drama experienced by his people.

Would that mean that democratic values and human rights are helpless in front of the economic power, and the massive strike force, of the Chinese state whose army – the most numerous in the world – is

over equipped and well trained? At first sight, it would seem so, and we could be ironical on the idealism of the 'Tibetans' religious leader. But another interpretation can be detected.

For more than half a century, the Dalai Lama has been constantly appealing to the consciousness of the world. For, in an era of worldwide civilization and global history, when human rights are scorned in Tibet, the humanity within us is violated. Furthermore, a victory of peace over a dictatorship that does not respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can only be the victory of all. The Dalai Lama's appeal to the world is therefore legitimate, and his exemplary non-violent struggle calls for questioning.

What if, to transform the world, we first had to transform ourselves? The Mahatma Gandhi advised us to: "Become the change you want for the world". And the Persian mystic Rumi remarked that: 'Yesterday, I was intelligent, and I wanted to change the world. Today, I am wise, and I am changing myself.'

What if, with the Dalai Lama, we were destined to become 'architects of peace' in order to leave future generations a more human and fraternal world? Becoming aware of our power too, wherever we are, makes non-violence triumph, and gains peace.

⁵ Cf. *My Appeal to The World*, the Dalai Lama and Sofia Stril-Rever, Hay House International, 2015, part I, pp. 19-46

Peace, the fruit of compassion

But it is still another matter to create the causes of peace in order to gain peace. It is very enlightening to listen to the speeches successively made by President George W. Bush and the Dalai Lama on October 17, 2007, just when the spiritual guide of Tibet was receiving the Gold Medal of the American Congress.

The president of the United States moved his audience when he evoked the Dalai Lama as a little boy, who “kept a small copy of the Statue of Liberty on his bedside table at the Potala. Years later, during his first trip to the United States, he visited Battery Park in New York City, curious to see the original one”. And the American leader went on discussing liberty, recalling that his New World ancestors had to conquer their independence with arms and that “Jefferson considered freedom of belief as one of the greatest blessings of America”. Yet, according to the leader of the White House, “this freedom does not belong to a nation, it belongs to the whole world”.

The American president was speaking in the name of State, justifying resorting to armed forces to maintain a peace inspired by the balance of terror. The Dalai Lama, however, was expressing himself as a human being, advocating a peaceful path towards peace:

Peace is not decreed, nor is it imposed by force. As a fruit of compassion, it ripens in human hearts, and radiates on the

world. There is a magnificent passage in the Bible that urges us to transform swords into plowshares. I love this image of a weapon made into a tool in the service of fundamental human needs. It symbolizes an attitude of inner and of outer disarmament. In the spirit of this ancestral message, it seems important to me today to emphasize the urgency of a long-overdue policy in order to demilitarize the entire planet.⁶

The distance between a negative definition of peace – reduced to absence of war – and seeking a non-violent path towards peace, can be measured. For all that, though deeply opposed to war, the Dalai Lama does not advocate artificial peace, and he even acknowledges the need to fight:

I want to make it clear, that although I am deeply opposed to war, I am not advocating appeasement. It is often necessary to take a strong stand to counter unjust aggression. For instance, it is plain to all of us that the Second World War was entirely justified. It “saved civilization” from the tyranny of Nazi Germany, as Winston Churchill so aptly put it. In my view, the Korean War was also just, since it gave South Korea the chance of gradually developing democracy. But we can only judge whether or not a conflict was vindicated on moral grounds with hindsight. For example, we can now see that during the Cold War, the principle of nuclear deterrence had a certain value. Nevertheless,

⁶ *My Spiritual Journey, The Dalai Lama and Sofia Stril-Rever, Harper One, 2010*

it is very difficult to assess such matters with any degree of accuracy. War is violence and violence is unpredictable. Therefore, it is better to avoid it if possible, and never to presume that we know beforehand whether the outcome of a particular war will be beneficial or not.

For instance, in the case of the Cold War, though deterrence may have helped promote stability, it did not create genuine peace. The last forty years in Europe have seen merely the absence of war, which has not been real peace but a facsimile. At best, building arms to maintain peace serves only as a temporary measure. As long as adversaries do not trust each other, any number of factors can upset the balance of power. Lasting peace can assure secured only on the basis of genuine trust.⁷

In recent statements moreover, the Dalai Lama asserts that armed confrontation has become obsolete in the 21st century, for in the context of globalization, the defeat and the ruin of a country is a loss, and a ruin for all others. Dialogue and non-violence must therefore prevail. Even if the situation, for example in the Middle East, could make us doubt of humanity's capacity to live in peace, the leader of the Tibetans affirms that in this early 21st century, we must show realism and optimism.

New Reality and Universal Responsibility

The Dalai Lama thus declares in June 2016:

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the 21st century does not repeat the pain and bloodshed of the past. Because human nature is basically compassionate. I believe it is possible that decades from now we will see an era of peace — but we must work together as global citizens of a shared planet.⁸

These words express a belief that the Dalai Lama shares with scientists involved in a dialogue with him on the subject of interdependence, a notion at the core of the representation of reality in Buddhist wisdom, and a paradigm of quantic physics which describes it as an entanglement.

The Buddhist account of interdependence is to be understood at three levels. First of all, that of causal interdependence. Nothing that actually exists has within it the cause of its existence. It depends on cause and external conditions, like a tree for example, which comes from a seed, from the earth, from light and water. The second level of interdependence is that of the parts and the whole, since each phenomenon depends necessarily on a series of parts and characteristics. And at last, we can distinguish a cognitive or reciprocal interdependence, for

⁷ Statement of December 5, 2015, *ibid*.

⁸ « Why I'm hopeful about the world's future », *The Washington Post*, Opinions, 13 June 2016

an object can only be defined as existing if the consciousness of an observer identifies it.

Understanding those three levels of interdependence is not only an intellectual task. For it challenges the whole range of our relations to the world, and to others. The more progress we make in experiencing interdependence, the clearer it becomes that we cannot just perceive external phenomenon as self-sufficient entities endowed with intrinsic characteristics, separated from the subject. From a *self* that, through contact with external objects, would develop powerful dualistic reflexes of appropriation and rejection, we move on to a self that engages in a flowing interaction with others and our environment.

Understanding interdependence progressively abolishes dualistic apprehension, and destroys the barriers that we set up around us, in an erroneous understanding of reality. We then gain access to fundamental benevolence, since in this relation of interdependence to all forms of life, we feel directly concerned by their wellness and their suffering.

A correct realization of interdependence correlates with the idea that caring for others, also means caring for oneself. General interest, and personal interest merge and amplify in the context of widespread globalization we are witnessing, in which each local event has a worldwide repercussion. The conflicts that

still tear certain regions to pieces, signals the persistent anachronistic ways of thinking that are meant to disappear. Such is the *new reality* of our times.

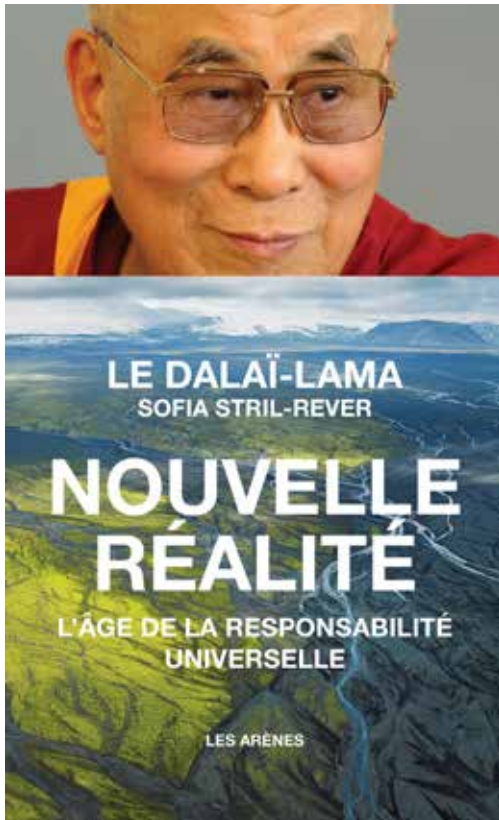
It was in an interview at Oxford University, to which he had invited me on September 15, 2015, that the Dalai Lama insisted on the importance of this *new reality*:

With the global warming that concerns all of us, that affects all of the countries in the world, and not only a few any more, time has come to think in a systematic manner, on the scale of the planet. Besides, if we think about it on a global level, the specific interests of different nations are also taken into account.

We are in the 21st century, and time is constantly flying by. New times entail a new reality. We must accept this new reality. Faced with this new reality, our perceptions are conditioned by patterns of anachronistic thinking. Many useless problems are caused by that. That is why we must act in accordance with the new reality. Otherwise, there is a gap between our perceptions and reality, between reality and our perceptions. And then all of our efforts become unrealistic.⁹

The Dalai Lama laments the fact that we emphasize too much secondary matters such as nationality, religious belief, or caste. Focusing on a few non-lasting benefits at

⁹ *Nouvelle Réalité: L'Âge de la responsabilité universelle*, Les Arènes, 2016, p. 40.



a secondary level, we forget the fundamental human level:

It is our responsibility to share our efforts so that we all understand that we are the same, all human beings. Our first priority should be fundamental human rights. The preoccupations of different nations, and of the various religious communities, are secondary. We must consider that we are 7 billion human beings now on this planet, and that we form a one and only entity, that of the great human family. I believe we really need to become aware of that.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 43.

'The 21st century will be secular, or will not be'

Convinced that the future of the world requires us to accept the unity of humanity, the Dalai Lama has admitted being shocked on several occasions seeing religion used for political purposes:

How can someone kill in the name of God? It's unbelievable! Unbelievable! As a Buddhist, if I ended up quarreling with the follower of another religion, I would fear being scolded by the Buddha, and that would stop me short.¹¹

In front of the increase of fundamentalism, and a new outbreak of barbaric fanaticism, the Dalai Lama says he is dumbfounded. Though all religions preach compassion, love, forgiveness, and tolerance, he does not understand how the people in charge of religious worship can lead their followers into so-called holy wars:

Religions are not bad in essence. The problem is the idea that believers have of the supremacy of their God. They visualize him as the one and only God, the real God, the only God that can bring salvation to humans. This outdated belief, centuries old, endures.

It is true that, on an individual basis, we must consider our religion to be the best in the sense that it is the best for us. Being convinced of that will help us nurture all the good qualities of our religious practice. But at the collective

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 23.

level of human community, it makes no sense. It is utterly unrealistic to want to gather all believers around a single truth, a single faith. We have to acknowledge that there are several truths in several belief systems, all beneficial to a greater number of people. Nowadays, there are approximately a billion Muslims, and a little more than a billion Christians. Hindus number roughly 600 million people, and Buddhists between 800 and 900 million.

It would be unrealistic to eliminate one religion in favor of another. On the contrary, it would be better to rejoice in knowing there are other religions, to study them, and to appreciate them. It is unacceptable to use a religion to justify the massacre of believers of another faith ... It's terrible ... really terrible.¹²

The news on the war in the Middle East overwhelms the Dalai Lama with grief. Facing the increase of religious fundamentalism, he came to consider that, for the future of humanity, religion must become secondary to human values common to all.

And the Dalai Lama's commitment in the interfaith dialogue aims at promoting what could be called a *religious essentialism* – or a base of values common to all religions, love, compassion, benevolence, tolerance, and forgiveness for instance, that transcend doctrinal particularisms.

In this matter, the title of his book published in 2011, *Beyond*

Religion,¹³ could not be clearer. He acknowledges that religion alone cannot be the base of a code of ethics adapted to the reality of our world nowadays, in which more than one third of people are agnostic. A system of moral values that contradicts no religion, and relies on none, has to be defined. This is the basis of a secular code of ethics for a united world as suggested by the Dalai Lama. For, in the context of the new reality, there is the need to take on a universal responsibility, and a common human destiny. The argumentation in favor of this code of ethics is supported by the conclusions drawn from different research protocols in neurosciences, rather than by reference to Buddhist philosophy. The 21st century will be secular, or will not be could be the Dalai Lama's motto. And according to him, secular should be understood in the Indian usage. In India, far from implying antagonism toward religion or toward people of faith, secularity actually has a universal scope and implies a profound respect for and tolerance toward all religions.

The Charter of Universal Responsibility

It is by listening to the Dalai Lama speaking about the new reality that I realized we have indeed changed worlds.

We have changed worlds, and it is not the title of a science-fiction

¹³*Beyond Religion : Ethics for a Whole World*, the Dalai Lama, Mariner, 2011.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 24.

novel, or of a futuristic film. It is not, either, the story of some Earthmen sailing in interstellar space on board a spaceship, at the end of a disaster, in search of a new planet to colonize. We had frightened ourselves with scenarios of aliens crushing us in the surge of an apocalyptic terror! Undoubtedly saturated with these imaginary dangers, we have not noticed the ongoing transformation. We were expecting something spectacular. How could we have predicted that we would change worlds in such an imperceptible way, with no brutal rupture? And the future we had not summoned has become part of our present – with an air of normality – to the point where we have not recognized it. Defying all conjectures, it did not wait for the next generation, nor did it wait for 2050, or for the end of our century. This world resembles the former one, but it is not the same. And a new reality is dawning.

This new reality covers various parameters. Admittedly, there is the collapse of the biosphere, global warming, and the 6th extinction of species. But the new reality cannot be summarized by environmental catastrophe, which, moreover, is not a fatality. The new reality is also the emergence of a planetary consciousness taking on and unifying all the human legacies of all wisdoms and traditions, of human and non-human worlds. Such is the new paradigm, based on interdependence and the principle of universality.

The state of the planet nowadays urges us to shift as quickly as possible from patterns of individualistic consciousness, based on performance, power and competition, to patterns of collective consciousness, inspired by the understanding of our interdependence, our potentials, and our accountabilities. At such a critical time on Earth, we need to become aware that all our deeds, words and thoughts, moment to moment, impact our global surroundings. Universal responsibility is the key to our survival, insists the Dalai Lama. It is the best foundation for worldwide peace, the principle that guides us in the use of our natural resources, and environmental protection for future generations.

The mutation, we are experiencing, calls for a philosophy based on the experience of the subject, no longer considered as an individual separated from others, but defined by his multiple interactions. Such is the meaning of the *Charter of Universal Responsibility*, a set of commitments inviting each one of us to embody the indivisible community of life by integrating non only humanity, but also all of the biosphere into the realm of our consciousness and living compassion.

Are we too deprived to recognize this new world? Yes, as long as we look for it outside of us only. The specificity, and the strength of the Dalai Lama's thought, invites us to become aware of the shared reality of life, and of our inner humanity,

to be understood as the values that gather us in a community of destiny. This approach results in an applied ethics consisting less of normative rules to be obeyed than of principles for inner self-regulation, to promote those aspects of our nature conducive to our own well-being and that of others. For the Dalai Lama does not subscribe to ideologies that distance individuals from the awareness necessary to assume their humanity fully. The freshness of his position consists in centering the resolution of problems on the individual.

By failing to acknowledge that it is by transforming oneself that we can transform the world, none of the great democratic or social ideals that have been proclaimed for centuries, has really succeeded in bringing the promised peace, social justice, and brotherhood. A merely external system of thought will not suffice, and it is to an inner revolution that the *Charter of Universal Responsibility*¹⁴ calls for. By setting at the heart of our lives fundamental and altruistic human values, we re-enchant hope and trust in the shared destiny of humanity.

Excerpt from the *Charter of Universal Responsibility*¹⁵

I was born on this Earth, a child of life,
in the bosom of the cosmos.

The messages of the universe are incorporated in my genetic codes. I am connected with all living beings in our shared reality of life.

I become aware of the fact that the well-being of all living beings depends on the balance of ecosystems, themselves dependent on the peace in the hearts of men, and the spirit of justice in human societies where no one must be rejected, disabled by hunger, poverty, and destitution. In a spirit of equanimity, free from bias, attachment and hatred, I contribute to maintaining, and restoring, harmony in life.

Living peace and inner healing in each one of my actions, devoted to the well-being of all lives, human and non-human, is a great appeal to being alive, in the joy of universal love which is the life of life.

¹⁴ Released in the book *Nouvelle Réalité*, *op. cit.*
¹⁵ *New Reality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 - 10



Jerusalem, City of Peace

Louis Massignon

If I have come back, eight weeks ago, to Jerusalem, it is because, as a Christian, I felt obliged, at any risk, to situate and consecrate my prayer there where "heaven has visited the earth"; Charles de Foucauld has in fact left me as a legacy this rule of true "Nazarean" that one cannot perfect one's national vocation but through expatriation, sometimes in the Holy Land, in order to meditate on it.

Hardly out of the olive-tree

grove at Gethsemani, strewn with violets, I fell back into the Judeo-Arab gunfire, greeting on the way the Novomeysky trucks of potassium heading back from the Dead Sea.

Yesterday it was the taking of Haifa by the *Haganah*¹ and the perspective of being expelled for many Christian Arab families, adding to the exile of the 20,000 Christian inhabitants of Haifa who have already

¹ A Jewish paramilitary organization during the British Mandate of Palestine (1921-48).

Translated by Patrick Laude. This article first appeared in its original French version in *Témoignage chrétien* on April 30, 1948.

been evacuated by force into Lebanon since 1947.

We are blasé with respect to deportations! Many diplomats place the salvation of the world in a systematic "resettlement" of inconvenient minorities, as a generalization of concentration camps on a global scale, final uprooting of "displaced persons", metamorphosis of the pilgrims of *Eretz Israël* into pioneers of a technological colonization that re-expediate Arabs to the desert.

God knows, however, the rising, inexorable hatred that one hears rising against these methods that the USSR borrowed from Nazism, the clamor for justice from exiled Galician, Baltic, Romanian, Crimean and Cherkess people.

No sensible human being should found the return of Israël to its original land on the exile of a Christian Arab minority, nor a fortiori on that of a Muslim Arab majority of 12,000,000 souls who is kin by language and religion to all the bordering Eastern states. There has always been, in Palestine, nomadic, in small transhumance and sedentary Arabs and among them, always — every Christian should remember it— more than one-twelfth Christians, i.e., 100,000 souls, many more than the number of Hebrews who remained in 1917.

As I announced it in this very

place, alone in the press of Paris, last December 12, it was not only lacking in good politics, but impious, to consider a "partition" of Palestine, following a "partition" of India under the pretext of total pacification. International salvation lies elsewhere.

We Christians, as Pius XI put it, are and must become more "spiritually Semites."

This is not in order to poison a territorial duel between two Semitic people who are brothers in Abraham, the Jews and the Arabs. But it is in order to quicken within ourselves the meditation of the Holy Scriptures which they have received, in order to engage ourselves, we ill-evangelized

Israel should help Islam to defend this poverty of the believer in the true God of Abraham, the pure cult of His transcendent jealousy, instead of inviting it to blaspheme as it does by making of the Holy Land the stakes of a duel among oil tankers.

people who have relapsed into the idolatry of gold and flesh divinized by the liturgy of our stock exchanges and our theatres, to commit to the true vocation of baptized nations, that from which the Crusades have quickly deviated, pushing the love of gain to the criminal ransack of Constantinople in 1204.

And it is what was reaffirmed to me on the spot, on Al-Fassy Street, on February 26, by the man who defends, almost alone, Israel's honor in Palestine, J.-L. Magnes, president of this Hebrew University, to which I had contributed by having the Arabist library of our dear master Goldziher bequeathed in 1922, being convinced that only the Jewish University could give back its place to Israel in Palestine by taking Arabic as its second language, a language of civilization, as did Saadia, Baya and Maimonides.

I was very moved to hear Magnes reaffirm to me that the only true peril that threatens Israel in Zionism, is that it betrays the more than international, supranational vocation that God, who is without repent, assigned to it here-below.

Every time Israel has betrayed this vocation, Magnes told me God has punished it by catastrophes, *kherbān*, announced by its prophets, commemorated in an incredible penitential liturgy, Israel is devoted to break down all the idols made with human hands, and God, who forbids it to worship them, cannot but punish those who prostitute the faith of Israel to the perverted techniques of contemporary machiavelism.

Before the skeptical abulia of a tepid Christendom, where the cult of wealth increasingly prevails, where the vow of individual poverty is more and more amalgamated among the "perfect" with a concern for collective and privileged mo-

nopolies, Israel should help Islam to defend this poverty of the believer in the true God of Abraham, the pure cult of His transcendent jealousy, instead of inviting it to blaspheme as it does by making of the Holy Land the stakes of a duel among oil tankers, in which one competes in committing crimes against humans, in a sacrilege against God.

Any attempt at sharing the Holy Land among rivals, and even any attempt at abandoning this unique symbol of future human Union to Israel only, by excluding Christendom or Islam, is unrealizable.

Even of the twelve millions Jews of the earth could gather in Palestine, Palestine could not be an independent nation, for the "time of nations" has passed, as that of colonizing nationalisms, even Hebrew nationalism.

Israel has no temporal independence to hope for anymore given today's geopolitics. The only independence it must safeguard is the originality of the Semitic tradition of thought, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem will only be able to safeguard it by relying on Arabic, a sister language, a language of civilization. A human thought is worth more than the power of all robots.

Statisticians say that Palestine is a small country, that the Soviet iron wall will remain, fortunately, impermeable to the clamors of the duelists, which will die out without one's having to risk the life, on the spot, of any president of the UN in

uniform.

And still, if the said president, from the very beginning of the sacrilegious conflict, had understood, he would have come by plane, with his dictaphone and his secretaries, to Jerusalem, he would have taken abode in a house, mined or not, to "preside", reconcile or die. And had he been killed, like Gandhi, he would have, by a powerful death, broken the impetus of hatred toward partition.

The Arabs, one can feel it, would accept the exiles of "Exodus", if this gesture were not to re-open an immigration that overwhelms them; Machiavelism, when it is revealed in the light of day, is no more profitable; could not one try to love one another, in a charity that would not be commiseration, nor hypocritical, nor tactical, between Christians, Jews and Muslims, agreeing in theory on this first commandment of the law?

The fear of the hour alone, to which we come closer every day, the fear of a general reckoning, the sessions of which will take lace precisely in Jerusalem, could persuade us.

The Palestinian problem is a key test, the British political ruses have broken their teeth upon it by evading for twenty-five years the International Commission on the Holy Sites decided in San Remo (article 13-14 of the mandate). This Commission must not only rule on the dusting turns of the sacred thresholds, for religions are not archeological ruins, but living stones in front

of which an at least decent behavior is required, if "democracies" want to pacify Palestine.

The salvation of the world depends more and more on Israel, of the character that it impresses upon the return to the homeland; it can only remain here if it accepts, under a supreme international control, to live in it in equal terms, with the Muslims (for whom Jerusalem is the first and the last *qibla*) and with the Christians who are all born natives of Nazareth, through the Marian *fiat* of the Annunciation.



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Human Diversity in the Mirror of Religious Pluralism

Samuel Bendeck Sotillos

"It is the one truth, which *jnānins* call by different names."

Rigveda 1:164:46

return all together, and He will inform you of that wherein you differ...

Qur'ān 5:48¹

For each among you We have appointed a [different] law and a way. And had God willed, He would have made you one community, but [He willed otherwise], that He might try you in that which He has given you. So vie with one another in good deeds. Unto God shall be your

The many faces of xenophobia threaten not only the national secu-

¹ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2015).

rity of a particular country, state or region, but the stability of the entire world and fundamentally undermine the possibility of enduring peace for all people. The rise of xenophobia, analogous to the violence and chaos that have become normalized today are a symptom or a projection of the imbalance and lack of peace found within the contemporary *psyche*. Given that very little positive news is covered in the mainstream media on religion, it will appear to be counter-intuitive and even paradoxical to assert the need to return to religion for an answer to the numerous persistent and escalating problems of the day, as religion is all-too-often assumed to be the primary cause of these conflicts. Even though it goes against the current mindset, religion could be the only way out of this predicament. Yet what is radically needed is to re-envision what religion is and to clarify what it is not because misinformation dominates the mass media which does little to present the merits of religion.

Because of the interconnected nature of the human and the Divine, there is a sacred origin of human diversity which is seldom recognized or understood in today's secular world. The assertion that there is an essential connection between them could be viewed with trepidation given the prevalence of secularism and its desacralized outlook. In this context, the perennial question of—

“Who am I?”—like religion itself, is reduced to socially constructed phenomena devoid of any transcendent criteria. For some the mention of religion itself provokes a negative reaction, which is a reflection of present-day and how estranged we have become from religion and the transcendent norms that were associated with it that inform what it means to be integrally human.

How can religion contribute to peace when it appears to be the leading culprit of a world in crisis? This question can be answered directly and has been answered by

“Truth does not deny forms from the outside, but transcends them from within.”

saints and sages across the cultures who have repeatedly instructed this: It is through returning to the original meaning of religion, especially its spiritual or inner dimension and living in accordance with these teachings, that right relationship can be established throughout the web of life. What is urgently needed is to increase spiritual literacy on a mass scale in order to foster genuine interfaith dialogue which can establish peace. Yet how can this be accomplished given the myriad issues and magnitude of today's problems?

One way to do this would be to return to the perennial philosophy, the essential truths found at the heart of all of the world's religions,

including the First Peoples and their Shamanic traditions. The timeless and universal message which captures the essence of how peace can be established in these topsy-turvy times is expressed here: “[P]eace... comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Tanka [the Great Mystery or Great Spirit], and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.”² Defined slightly differently, “[P]eace...is ultimately nothing else but order, equilibrium, or harmony...denoting...the reflection of unity in multiplicity.”³

It is imperative to recall that the etymological root of the English word “religion” is from the Latin *re-ligare*, meaning to “to re-bind” or “to bind back” by implication to the Divine or a transcendent Reality. Across the traditional civilizations, the human state was considered to be inherently connected with the transpersonal and could be said to be *Homo religiosus* or *Homo spir-*



itualis. “The man of the traditional societies [and civilizations] is admittedly a *homo religiosus*”.⁴ The connection between the human and the transpersonal was known since earliest times, “In one manner or another all life is seen to participate in the sacred, all cultural forms express the sacred, so that inevitably within this context the lives of those peoples who live close to their sacred traditions may be called religious, and they are thus beings who are religiously human.”⁵ Yet deprived of the transcendent, true human identity is disfigured and unintelligible. It is a precondition that being human requires what is beyond the human state, what is transpersonal, in

2 Black Elk, quoted in Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. 115.

3 René Guénon, “War and Peace,” in *The Symbolism of the Cross*, trans. Angus Macnab (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis et Universalis, 1996), p. 43.

4 Mircea Eliade, “Introduction,” to *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 15.

5 Joseph Epes Brown, “On Being Human,” in *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian: Commemorative Edition with Letters While Living with Black Elk*, eds. Marina Brown Weatherly, Elenita Brown and Michael Oren Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 93.

order to make it human.

In the same way that human diversity requires a metaphysical framework to accurately situate the dialectic between differences and similarities, and what unifies them at their innermost core, the same is true for religious pluralism. This is made evident in the following: "Truth does not deny forms from the outside, but transcends them from within."⁶ What is critically needed is not a shallow or docile tolerance toward understanding the diverse human collectivities and religions, rather a quality of receptivity and way of seeing that recognizes the necessity of these differences and what is beyond them. "That which is lacking in the present world is a profound knowledge of the nature of things; the fundamental truths are always there, but they do not impose themselves because they cannot impose themselves on those unwilling to listen."⁷ Due to the imbalance that dominates this era, the religions themselves are not impermeable to these conflicts as they too are facing myriad challenges from within. With this said, there is a certain shortsightedness or spiritual illiteracy with regards to those who identify themselves as being religious, while well intended, they often do not adequately understand what this means: "[E]ven those who

6 Frithjof Schuon, "The Vedanta," in *Language of the Self* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1999), p. 40.

7 Frithjof Schuon, "No Activity Without Truth," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Autumn 1969), p. 195.

sincerely believe themselves to be religious have for the most part a greatly diminished idea of religion: it has hardly any effective influence on their thoughts or actions and is as if separated from the rest of their life. Practically, believers and unbelievers alike act in almost the same way"⁸.

An essential stumbling block in comprehending human diversity, not unlike religious pluralism, is due to the prevailing *weltanschauung* of modernism and postmodernism and its entrenched assumptions about the nature of reality. "[M]odern man has desacralized his world and assumed a profane existence."⁹ So diametrically opposed is the worldview of secularism with that of the sapiential traditions that the following needs to be kept in mind: "[N]onreligious man has been formed by opposing his predecessor, by attempting to 'empty' himself of all religion and all transhuman meaning."¹⁰ It is in this context that we can better understand the psychological mechanisms underlying the attack waged on religion: "'Religion has failed' say its critics. They do not understand

8 René Guénon, "The Reform of the Modern Mentality," in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, trans. Henry D. Fohr, ed. Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 2.

9 Mircea Eliade, "Introduction," to *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 13.

10 Mircea Eliade, "Human Existence and Sanctified Life," in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 204.



that it is not religion but those who analyze, criticize, and neglect it who have failed in the first duty of humanity which is precisely to be religious (since no other creature can be) and that humanity has through its fault lost its sense of direction.”¹¹ In order to understand the more nuanced aspects of diversity, it is required an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary West and its development, “The truth is that there are many civilizations, developing along very different lines, and that, among these, that of the modern West is strangely exceptional, as some of

its characteristics show.”¹² Without analyzing these underlying assumptions or rather fundamental biases, we are limited to a surface level of understanding of human diversity and religious pluralism. “When we use the term “modern” we mean neither contemporary nor up-to-date.... Rather, for us “modern” means that which is cut off from the transcendent, from the immutable principles which in reality govern all things”.¹³

Approaches such as multiculturalism, cultural diversity, cultural awareness, cultural competence, race relations and so on attempt to guide contemporaries through the murky waters of this pluralistic age,

11 Lord Nothbourne, “The Ineluctable Alternative: A Letter to My Descendants” in *Of the Land and the Spirit: The Essential Lord Northbourne on Ecology and Religion*, eds. Christopher James, the 5th Lord Northbourne and Joseph A. Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008), p. 220.

12 René Guénon, “Preface,” to *East and West*, trans. Martin Lings (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 2.

13 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Reflections on Islam and Modern Thought,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 15, Nos. 3 & 4 (Summer-Autumn 1983), p. 164.

where one encounters the “other” or individuals from different cultures, races, ethnicities and religions distinct from one’s own on a regular basis. Even though these approaches deem to rectify the apparatuses of oppression that began with colonialism and the horrors of slavery, they do not contain the substance to address the complexity of human diversity including its connection to religious pluralism. Addressing human diversity and its relationship with religious pluralism is one of the most vital responsibilities of our times, one that cannot be postponed or ignored as human existence on earth is in increasingly in jeopardy. Contemporary approaches generally tend to assert a polarized portrayal of human diversity, one that either affirms or denies it, rarely taking into account the deeper dimensions. Multiculturalism is a generic term that is not easily defined because it has different meanings in different contexts. In general, terms such as multiculturalism assert the co-existence of diverse populations and challenge the “melting pot” theory that ultimately assimilates individuals into the dominant culture. The “melting pot” or “salad bowl” theory does not foster human diversity, but will inevitably destroy all diversity. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, emphasizes equality of each distinct group within society and celebrates these differences.

While multiculturalism attempts to honor human differenc-

es in a way that is true to all races and ethnicities, the phenomenon of color-blindness allegedly overlooks human differences or ignores the relevance of race and ethnicity. In emphasizing the uniqueness of each distinct human group, multiculturalism tends to lose sight of what is beyond human differences. In the same way, the color-blind approach emphasizes similarity overlooking what is beyond human similarities. To solely emphasize one of these positions leads to a polarized portrayal of what is truly human and misses the mark in comprehending the necessary facets of human uniqueness and similarity.

Before the popularization of the term multiculturalism, we recall the well-known verse by Rudyard Kipling published in 1889 that illustrates a widely held belief in a polarized vision of human identity, “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”.¹⁴ This outlook culminates in the now famous phrase, yet a false thesis of the so-called “Clash of Civilizations”¹⁵ which appropriately has been debunked as the “Clash of Ignorance”.¹⁶

¹⁴ Rudyard Kipling, “The Ballad of East and West,” in *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (Leipzig, Germany: Heinemann and Balestier, 1892), p. 85.

¹⁵ Bernard Lewis coined the term “clash of civilizations” before Samuel P. Huntington, see Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 47-60; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.

¹⁶ See Edward W. Said, “The Clash of Ignorance,” *The Nation*, Vol. 273, No. 12 (October 22,



The “clash” is in many ways polarized by the extremism of anti-religious secularism and religious fundamentalism. When considered in a larger context, the rise of modernism that gave birth to secularism has created a void in the human collectivity heavily impacting the religions themselves. This vacuum has created an imbalance which religious fundamentalism, and New Age spirituality for that matter, attempt to fill. Although religious fundamentalism emerged to defend itself from the threats of anti-religious secularism, it has totally lost sight of what religion is and has become in fact a betrayal to religion.¹⁷

2001), pp. 11-14.

¹⁷ See Joseph E.B. Lombard (ed.), *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition: Essays by Western Muslim Scholars* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2009).

Nonetheless, beyond these divergent portrayals is an entire way of seeing and perceiving human identity, which the modern secular mindset has discarded in cutting itself off from the sacred. It is in rediscovering the perennial psychology found within the world’s religions that we can understand both diversity and similarity and what bridges them. Apart from this approach we are left in a precarious and very limited, if not dehumanizing portrayal of what it means to be human. It is essential to recall anew, especially in a globalizing world, “So long as Westerners imagine that there only exists a single type of humanity, that there is only one ‘civilization,’ at different stages of development, no mutual understanding will be possible.”¹⁸ It

¹⁸ René Guénon, “Preface,” to *East and West*,

was not that the existence of diverse peoples or other religions was unknown in earlier times, but it was not existentially threatening to the practitioners of other faiths as it has become today.

An unprecedented phenomenon has emerged today where diverse beliefs now find themselves living beside one another, unlike any other time before, which is indicative of the urgent need for a deeper religious pluralism with better delineated bridges between faiths. This is epitomized by the ensuing: “[T]he outward and readily exaggerated incompatibility of the different religious forms greatly discredits, in the minds of most of our contemporaries, all religion”.¹⁹ A natural outcome of religious pluralism is reflected in the similarities and differences with regard to their faith traditions. “The multiplicity of races, nations, and tribes necessitates the diversity of revelations.”²⁰ It is insufficient to know that people have different faiths and differ among themselves; one must know why they differ and simultaneously what unifies them at their metaphysical roots.

In surveying traditional cosmology and psychology we can glean many insights about the way

time impacts the human *psyche* and its relationship to Spirit. The nature of time across the cultures is understood to be cyclical moving progressively from wholeness to greater degrees of fragmentation. This process has a tremendous influence on how human beings understand themselves and their relationship to the whole of life. “Originally man saw the diverse in the One, then the One in the diverse. Man must infer the One from the diverse, and to the extent that he grasps the One, know the diverse through the One and dissolve the diverse in Unity.”²¹ There are two identifiable poles of the Primordial Tradition that manifested at the inception of this temporal cycle, one is the First Peoples and the Shamanic traditions and the other is Hinduism, also known as the *sanātana dharma* or “the eternal and universal code of conduct” which is said to have existed everywhere. According to the Hindu *dharma*, the initial temporal cycle known as the *Krita-Yuga* or *Satya-Yuga* (Golden Age) was described in the following manner: “O child, that *Yuga* is called *Krita* when the one eternal religion was extant. And in that best of *Yugas*, every one had religious perfection, and, therefore, there was no need of religious acts.”²² In the descriptions

trans. Martin Lings (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 2.

19 Frithjof Schuon, “Preface,” to *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1993), pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

20 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “One God, Many Prophets,” in *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 16.

21 Frithjof Schuon, “Fourth Collection,” in *Primordial Meditation: Contemplating the Real*, trans. Gillian Harris and Angela Schwartz (London, UK: Matheson Trust, 2015), p. 143.

22 “*Tirtha-yātrā Parva*,” in *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa Translated Into English Prose*, trans. Kisari Mohan Ganguli (Calcutta: Bharata Press, 1884), p. 446.

provided by the Primordial Tradition we have examples of the earliest human collectivities living in peace, harmony and in remembrance of the Divine. “And during that [*Krita-*] *Yuga*, there was neither disease, nor decay of the senses. And there was neither malice, nor pride, nor hypocrisy, nor discord, nor ill-will, nor cunning, nor fear, nor misery, nor envy, nor covetousness. And for this, that prime refuge of *Yogis*, even the Supreme *Brahma*, was attainable to all.”²³ Another account reads, “I have created these First People... ..gave them speech, a different language to each color, with respect for each other’s difference.”²⁴ We can also find insinuations of this unity in the Abrahamic monotheisms, such as Judaism: “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.” (*Genesis* 11:1)

The early peoples that inhabited the earth were given clear instructions about how to live in right relationship with the whole of creation, which continues to this day: “There is only one thing I ask you. To respect the Creator at all times.”²⁵ The consequences of not adhering to this Divine injunction ruptured the Unity among the human collectivity and the repercussions were as follows: “[T]he Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scat-

²³ *Ibid.* p. 446.

²⁴ Hopi Elders, quoted in Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi: The First Revelation of the Hopi’s Historical and Religious Worldview of Life* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 7.

ter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” (*Genesis* 11:9) From the beginning of the temporal cycle until its close with the revelation of Islam, we see clear examples of the relationship of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Human diversity has been reflected in religious pluralism in distinct ways since time immemorial. It was also known that through the dissociation from the sacred human beings become estranged from their own nature as beings created “in God’s image,” and from their common spiritual heritage. This is illustrated here:

[H]uman unity, initially traditional, by raising such a revolt against the divine Unity, compelled the latter to break it into ethnic fragments, dispersed over the entire earth and henceforth opposed one to another; and this through a lack of understanding caused by the confusion, or more precisely by the differentiation of their ‘language’ or single tradition into several ‘languages’ or divergent traditions, but with a foundation that remains unanimous thanks to its divine essence.²⁶

It is in returning to what is unanimous across the faiths of all times and places that we can properly situate the theme of religious pluralism and human diversity. Prior to the modern and postmodern world and the emergence of secularism, the linkage between religion and the

²⁶ Leo Schaya, “Some Universal Aspects of Judaism,” in *Universal Aspects of the Kabbalah and Judaism*, ed. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2014), p. 10.

human collectivities was more explicit due to their isolation from one another, which sharply contrasts with the scenario that we find today. A common misnomer is that race suggests uniformity within a specific cultural or ethnic group. Nevertheless, race itself does not automatically imply psychological homogeneity within a human collectivity, for race allows for certain psychological dissimilarities to also exist. To indiscriminately lump different races and ethnicities together assuming that they are all the same is to do them a grave injustice.

For thousands of years already, humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches, which constitute so many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves ... [T]his is not always a question of race, but more often of human groups, very diverse perhaps, but none the less subject to mental conditions which, taken as a whole, make of them sufficiently homogeneous spiritual recipients.²⁷

At its core we must realize that the “other” or “otherness” is an encounter with both the mystery of human existence and the Divine. “Otherness” is a veil over our eyes woven by our own imagination. Neither we ourselves nor the things we perceive outside of ourselves are truly other than God.”²⁸ In solely



identifying with our horizontal or relative identity, this mystery is obscured, yet through the Intellect or the Eye of the Heart, both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human identity in divinis, the “other” or “otherness” can be understood. “[T]he mystery is a mystery

²⁷ Frithjof Schuon, “Diversity of Revelation,” in *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer (Bedfont, Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1990), p. 25.

²⁸ Rūmī, quoted in William C. Chittick, *The Sufi*

Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 304.

solely for the reason that there is 'otherness'; it is this, the creature, which hides the divine unity and asks the question: 'who' and 'what' am I? Without this 'otherness' there is neither 'who' nor 'what', neither search nor mystery: there is nothing but the only reality in its non-dual and absolute selfness."²⁹ By taking an integral approach informed by the spiritual hermeneutics of the perennial philosophy we can view the interrelatedness of all sentient beings past, present and future: "There is not a single being in samsara, this immense ocean of suffering, who in the course of time without beginning has never been our father or mother."³⁰ Thus, the "other" or "otherness" is our disowned integral nature that cannot be reclaimed devoid of a transpersonal dimension, "[A] man of another race...is like a forgotten aspect of ourselves and thus also like a rediscovered mirror of God."³¹

The completion of the human identity as viewed unanimously, in all times and places, is its reintegration with the Supreme Identity and this is the human birthright accessible to all regardless of sex, race,

ethnicity or religion. The *Qur'ān* informs us that, "He created you [humanity] from a single soul" (39:6), which reflects the spiritual message of the First Peoples, "We are all one in nature."³² While human individuals have a common origin, this does not undermine their uniqueness in the Divine: "No two individuals are identical."³³ —analogously no two individuals occupy the "same stage of development."³⁴ The many ways to the Divine belong to the diversity of human types, "Infinite are the *sādhanās*...."³⁵ Likewise, the Sufi adage points out, "[T]here are as many paths to God as there are human souls."³⁶ According to a well-known *ḥadīth* human similarity is affirmed: "People are as equal as the teeth of a comb." And yet according to a Qur'ānic verse, human diversity is also emphasized: "And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the [diversity] variation in your tongues and colors.

29 Leo Schaya, "Contemplation of the Divine Aspects," in *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Secaucus, NJ: University Books, 1971), p. 57.

30 Patrul Rinpoche, "The difficulty of finding the freedoms and advantages," in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), p. 7.

31 Frithjof Schuon, "The Meaning of Race," in *Castes and Races*, trans. Marco Pallis and D.M. Matheson (Bedfont, Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1982), p. 60.

32 Luther Standing Bear, "Hunter, Scout, Warrior," in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p. 45.

33 Alain Daniélou, "Hinduism and Human Behavior," in *India, A Civilization of Differences: The Ancient Tradition of Universal Tolerance*, trans. Kenneth Hurry, ed. Jean-Louis Gabin (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005), p. 9.

34 Alain Daniélou, "Introduction," to *Yoga: Mastering the Secrets of Matter and the Universe* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1991), p. 6.

35 Ānandamayī Mā, quoted in *The Essential Śrī Ānandamayī Mā: Life and Teachings of a 20th Century Indian Saint*, trans. Ātmānanda, ed. Joseph A. Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 62.

36 Quoted in Frithjof Schuon, *The Eye of the Heart: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Spiritual Life* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1997), p. 121.

Truly in that are signs for those who know.” (30:22) Additionally, important is the role of knowledge and its connection to different human types, “[T]here are as many ways of understanding as there are human knowers.”³⁷

Integral metaphysics provides a way of conceptualizing the divine Unity underlying the human condition which is at the same time the origin of human diversity. “The single origin of humanity implies the profound unity within diversity of human nature”.³⁸ This becomes apparent in the relationship between the uncolored light and the spectrum of colors comprising of the rainbow. “The rainbow owes its beauty to the variety of its shades and colors. In the same way, we consider the voices of various believers that rise up from all parts of the earth as a symphony of praises addressing God, Who alone can be Unique.”³⁹ And expressed similarly in: “All light is one but colors a thousandfold.”⁴⁰ The source of each distinct color belongs

to what is beyond all color: “If my eye is to see color, it must be free of all color.”⁴¹ Metaphysically speaking, the uncolored light represents the pure Unity and the rainbow represents manifestation in the phenomenal world. To solely acknowledge the rainbow of human diversity is to lose sight of the singular source of the uncolored light, which gives birth to the rainbow itself:

Whatever a man’s race might be, when the Spirit crystallizes in him due to the effect of his worshipping God, his soul becomes like a mystical diamond. The skin color or the circumstances of the birth of such a man have no influence on the quality of his spiritual illumination. Whatever his social standing or the disadvantages of his birth might be, if he has reached this state, no outer element will be powerful enough to make this state slip away from him.⁴²

This integral perspective on human diversity as it is found across the cultures is regrettably absent from contemporary multicultural discourse and interfaith dialogue. Without turning to this transpersonal dimension of human identity we cannot understand the deep roots of diversity. “[We take our] color from God; and who is better

37 Meister Eckhart, quoted in C.F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (Cobb, CA: Dharmacafé Books, 2009), p. 190.

38 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “One God, Many Prophets,” in *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 16.

39 Tierno Bokar, quoted in *Amadou Hampâté Bâ, A Spirit of Tolerance: The Inspiring Life of Tierno Bokar*, trans. Jane Casewit, ed. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008), p. 126.

40 Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī, “Flash XI,” in *Fakhruddin ‘Iraqi: Divine Flashes*, trans. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 94.

41 Meister Eckhart, “Sermon 12,” in *Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 270.

42 Tierno Bokar, quoted in *Amadou Hampâté Bâ, A Spirit of Tolerance: The Inspiring Life of Tierno Bokar*, trans. Jane Casewit, ed. Roger Gaetani (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008), p. 131.

than God at coloring? And we worship Him.” (*Qur’ān* 2:138) Similarly without this metaphysical perspective we cannot understand religious pluralism: “Religions are like lamps of colored glass.... [I]f it is true that without a given colored lamp one would see nothing, it is quite as true that visibility cannot be identified with any one color.”⁴³ The correlation between human diversity and religious pluralism is made evident in the perennial psychology: “[W]hat determines the difference among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles.”⁴⁴ And correspondingly the necessity of diverse revelations: “For every community there is a messenger”. (*Qur’ān* 10:48)

What is evident is that we can no longer turn our backs to the urgent need for more integral and deeper forms of religious pluralism. The consequences of not doing so are made apparent by the incessant media soundbites broadcasting horrific events transpiring throughout the globe in the name of religion. Furthermore, religious pluralism also requires that we not gloss over its connection to human diversity, as they are at their metaphysical root derivatives of the same divine

43 Frithjof Schuon, “The Idea of ‘The Best’ in Religions,” in *Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenicism*, trans. Gustavo Polit (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1985), p. 152.

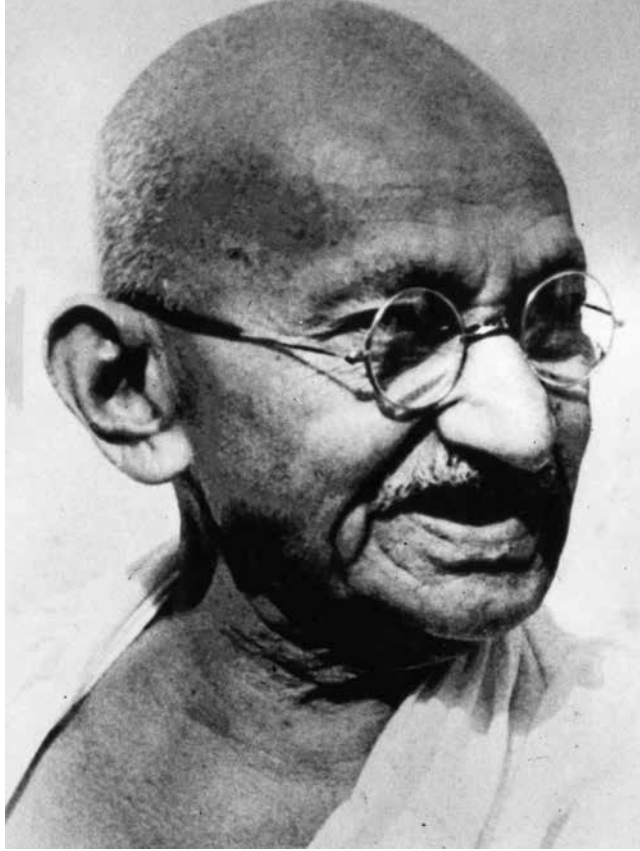
44 Frithjof Schuon, “Diversity of Revelation,” in *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer (Bedfont, Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1990), p. 25.

Unity. Although there are no ready-made panaceas, a definitive remedy to the challenges of our day requires increasing spiritual literacy to go beyond the surface level understanding of the world’s religions and their relation to the diverse human collectivities. The gift of all of the rich diversity that exists in the human and transpersonal domain can be understood and embraced through the divine Unity found in all times and places.

The attempt to forge a viable model of human diversity on the principle of diversity as do contemporary multicultural discourse or interfaith dialogue for that matter is not only questionable, but improbable for multiplicity cannot establish a true unity without an agency higher than itself. “[I]t must be authentically a unity, not merely something elaborated into unity and so in reality no more than unity’s counterfeit”.⁴⁵ The very existence of the diversity of human individuals and the religions does not contradict or negate Unity. At the same time, Unity does not contradict or negate diversity and this is an essential point that secular approaches to human diversity and the religions do not appear to grasp. The principle of diversity is contingent on what is higher than itself, a vertical dimension, to fuse and balance the domain of manifestation. Even though contemporary multicultural

45 Plotinus, “How the Secondaries rise from The First; and on The One,” in *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 387.

approaches to human diversity recognize the uniqueness and importance of the many colors of the rainbow, they overlook the most vital facet, the uncolored light prior to its refraction which is the source of the distinctive varieties of human beings and their faith traditions. By restoring human diversity to its sacred origins we can authentically recognize and celebrate the indwelling Spirit found in all of the unique human beings and their corresponding religions. The timeless wisdom reminds us that if the human microcosm is at peace, it will reverberate into the macrocosm. We conclude with a traditional Hindu *mantra* for invoking peace throughout all levels of Reality since the beginning of this temporal cycle: *Om, Shānti, Shānti, Shānti* and correspondingly a verse from the Islamic revelation at the end of the cycle, “O you who believe! Invoke blessings upon him, and greetings of peace!” (*Qur’ān* 33:56)



The Greatest Binding Force

Mahatma Gandhi

Prayer is the greatest binding force, making for the solidarity and oneness of the human family. If a person realizes his unity with God through prayer, he will look upon everybody as himself. There will be no high, no low, no narrow provincialism or petty rivalries in the matter of language between an Andhra and a Tamilian, a Kanarese and a Malayalee. There will be no invidious distinction between a touchable and untouchable, a Hindu and

a Musalman, a Parsi, a Christian or a Sikh. Similarly, there would be no scramble for personal gain or power between various groups or between different members within a group.

The outer must reflect the inner. If we are in tune with God, no matter how big a gathering, perfect quiet and order would prevail and even the weakest would enjoy perfect protection. Above all, realization of God must mean freedom from all earthly fear.

Harijan, 3-3-'46, p. 29, quoted in "The Discipline of Prayer" by Pyarelal Nayyar.



Hope for Peace in a Broken World: *1 Chronicles, Exile and Building Walls*

Grace Ji-Sun Kim

The world abounds in clash of cultures, religions and beliefs today, as it has for millennia. In such contexts, how do we try to live peaceably with those who have differing opinions on how to live, worship, and believe. Such situations, in addition to the more mundane reasons based on wealth and land, often lead to wars, destroying each other's religions and building walls to sepa-

rate one another. We see this in the division of Korea into North and South Korea and the devastating consequences for a divided country. Today, our American context of immigration is resulting in a clash of cultures between various world religions as well as the difference in relations between religions and state, where, in Jewish and Muslim societies, the two are intertwined, while

in American Christian societies, the two are, in principle, separated. This article will examine the Book of 1 *Chronicles* to see how people in exile experienced sojourning, settlement, return and rebuilding and what its implications are for us are today. This paper will work towards how different religions, cultures and societies can peacefully coexist.

The Old Testament book of *Chronicles* is an example of Diaspora literature which was edited into its final form during the fifth-century Persian domination of all lands from the Indus to Cyrene and Macedonia. *Chronicles* is written to explain how a people who lived through a catastrophic event managed to survive, endure, and find freedom and hope to rebuild their lives. They were not content to let their oppressors have the last word or define their history as they searched to find meaning in their past and tried to move forward with their lives into a new future. The power to fight back, persevere and reestablish one's heritage is a strong message for us today.

Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 BC. In Judah, key aspects of Israel's past were suppressed and co-opted to fit the ideological requirements of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Part of that cultural suppression was the exile of Judean elite to locations in and around the

capital, Babylon, where much of the Old Testament was put to parchment. As with any event in which people are displaced, the exile had the consequence of effacing some of the crucial particularities of Israelite identity and silencing the subjects who constituted it, such as the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin, the Davidic dynasty, the Levites, the Jerusalem temple, the priesthood, and the Judean cult. This experience of the exile is still felt by Jews today. Many have similar experiences of being exiled during WWII from their homes in central Europe and in other parts of the world such as Asia where armed conflict and genocide caused many peoples to be exiled from their homes.

Living with Different Peoples

When exiles return home, their priorities and their sense of identity may not be the same as those of their parents. For the returning Israelites, the initial excitement and desire to rebuild the temple had worn off. The hope for the emergence of a new king, perhaps Zerubbabel² had also worn off. What remained was the grim reality of reestablishing a daily life in Judah. It is in this context that the Chronicler³ rewrote Israel's history. It was

1 Renita J. Weems, '1-2 *Chronicles*' in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora* Hugh R. Page Jr: General Editor, p. 286-290 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 287, 288.

2 A governor of the Persian Province of Yehud Medinata (*Haggai* 1:1) and the grandson of Jehoiachin, penultimate king of Judah.

3 Because the author of this material is unknown, he has been designated 'the Chronicler.' Most scholars believe that 1 and 2 *Chronicles* originated in priestly circles and

written to the displaced people that there is hope for them and God is still with them. They are not a forgotten people, but a people whom God has chosen and loves. It becomes a compassionate book giving them a solid direction of how they are to proceed with their life as they return to their homeland dispossessed and damaged by the exile. The chronicler retells its history to remind the people where they have come from and how God has been with them throughout their history.

For the Israelites, to rebuild the community after the exile is a huge undertaking, which needs to be celebrated. As displaced people return home it becomes difficult or even torturous to pick up where one has left off. Nothing remains the same as all things are in a state of flux and old property rights may not be honored. Changes have occurred and foreign influences have taken root in Judah to give one the sense of loss of identity and history. People are intermarrying with foreign neighbors and there is an intermixing of history, culture and religions. A lot of anxiety can be experienced by those who have returned home and realize that it is not the way they had left it or remembered it to be. The returnees were forced not only to adjust to their new reality but

consequently they presume male authorship. Alice L. Laffey, "1 and 2 Chronicles" in *The Women's Bible Commentary* p. 110-115 edited by Carol A. Newsom & Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 110.

also to rediscover God's purpose for them under new circumstances.

Chronicles contains stories of people struggling to preserve their cultural identity, reclaim their historical memories, and find language to characterize their own identity.⁴ Those who remained and those returning need to negotiate how they will live together in peace and harmony. This identity crisis pervades cultures today and reconstructing the past which has been scrubbed clean by events may not be the way to do it.⁵

As the world has become increasingly interdependent and people are constantly moving to follow, or escape, from events of the day, it is difficult for immigrants, transients and people living in the diaspora to come to terms with their identity. Many are struggling to redefine themselves even though those in power are trying to do it for them. In this difficult space, it is crucial to reclaim the power to name and find themselves in relation to and separate from the dominant culture. Some people living in the United

4 Renita J. Weems, '1-2 Chronicles' in *The African Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora* Hugh R. Page Jr. General Editor, p. 286-290 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 286.

5 This is particularly true following WW II, where the British, French, Dutch, Belgian, and American protectorates and colonies were dismantled, and arbitrary lines were drawn in the sand, dividing the mid-East and Africa into nations which did not necessarily follow cultural boundaries, as when the Kurds found themselves without a country, and split between Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.

States today wanted a scrubbed image of the U.S. which 'existed' in their minds before all these new liberal ideas. If the 1960's lead us into exile because of women's liberation, civil rights movement, people of color, immigrants, so-called illegals caused our destruction some may feel that getting back to the good old days is what we need. It is important to recognize that the good old days never existed for much of the US as mansions and summer homes that had 20 bedrooms may have been the life of a few but not reality for the nation. The Chronicler may also be addressing such people who may have wanted the good old life back again. The Chronicler encouraged the people to move forward rather than backwards and to focus on rebuilding the temple. It is the temple which will bring all the key players together, the exiled and those who remained.

The book of *Chronicles*⁶ is inspired by the events of Israel's exile in Babylon and the subsequent return. In trying to recount these events, *Chronicles* reconstructs a cultural memory of the people of Israel. The exile and the return represent far more than theological metaphors. From the beginning to end, these traumatic events ordered all of Israel's past into a tension between two fundamental experienc-

6 In the Hebrew tradition, the book of *Chronicles* is a single book, placed at the end of the Jewish Bible, the last book of the *Kethuvim*. See Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1712.

es: sojourning⁷ and settlement. The tension between sojourn and settlement, exile and return, not only brings structure to the Chronicler's memory of ancient Israel; it also defines Israel's experience in terms of its relationship to the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires that shattered then shaped Israel's monarchical past,⁸ conjuring up some inescapable memories, which can cause problems for us today. Illegal aliens and desperate immigrants have shaped our history but it has become the "glorious past" and the current illegals, those people ostensibly living off our wealth - that have made it into our consciousness.

This experience of exile, even exile in place, as with the current Palestinian population living under Israeli rule or Kurds, left without a land, and dominated by Turkish or Iraqi rule, causes pain, anger and loss which can then be translated into hatred and acts of violence. We see this in the country of Korea which has experienced invasion, imperialism and division.

Korea and Japan

The Japanese invaded Korea and occupied Korea from August 29, 1920 to August 15, 1945. The Japa-

7 To stay somewhere temporarily, such as an exile, followed by a return.

8 Gregory Lee Cuellar, *The Peoples' Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, edited by Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Wilda C. Gafney, Leticia A. Guardiola-Saenzk, George "Tink" Tinker and Frank M. Yamada (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 526.



nese presumed that they had every right to occupy Korea and do what they wanted with the people of Korea. There was much brutality and a loss of Korean culture, identity and society. This was the distorted perception of reality that the Japanese people held in order to justify themselves that they are able to occupy another country.

My mother, used to tell me stories of the Japanese occupation of Korea. She told stories of her childhood experience of living on the run, fearful of being shot or being killed by land-mines, planted to injure or kill civilians. One such land-mine exploded as my grandmother was fleeing during the war. She was injured but she survived the explosion. During her childhood, my mother was terrified and could not fully over-

come this terrible event. She lived a life of exile from her own city of Seoul not knowing when it would be safe to return home. The consequences of such experiences have had grave effects on the lives of many Koreans and still haunt many who have lived through similar horrific ordeals. The difficulty of rebuilding lives after such trauma can have lasting effects on the generations who follow. The generations who follow are displaced, without a strong identity of home, place, religion and country.

Building Walls⁹

There have been many good reasons for building walls. Walls

⁹ This section is adapted from my blog post "Walls that Divide" Sojourners (Nov 3, 2014). Accessed March 28, 2016 [<https://sojo.net/articles/walls-divide>]

protect against aggressors, such as Hadrian's wall and the Great Wall of China. Even as we examine the Bible, there are references to walls. In Nehemiah, the survivors who remained and those who returned home are full of shame that "the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been destroyed by fire" (*Nehemiah* 1:3). The walls gave them protection and security against bandits as the only barrier to felons from the outside world.

For people today, we may have a very different perception of the function of a wall. There may be a negative understanding in a world where we have become hardened to the needs of the hungry, impoverished, malnourished neighbors who want to come into the U.S. just to work and feed their families. A wall exists at many parts of the U.S. and Mexican border to help America protect itself from foreigners who want to enter into the United States without proper documentation. In the decision to protect our country from undocumented people, we are preventing many people from access to food and a way of living which may not be available in their own home country.

Rather than having these attitudes towards the stranger, we need to nurture feelings of inclusion. Even along the U.S. and Mexico border, a wall exists which divides the two countries; a wall that provides constant surveillance to deter people from entering into the U.S. illegally,

a wall built from the remaining metal landing scraps of the Gulf War, a wall that expanded the role of the military's use of metal. The border has become militarized with patrols who treat migrants as prisoners. It symbolizes militarization, xenophobia, hatred, pride and fear of the other, a reminder of wanting to protect what is yours and not sharing what God has given you. Walls continue to go up as the American people continue to fear that the migrants will take away the jobs. There is an enormous amount of fear of the other which may poison the lives of the poor in both countries.

The walls went up in 1994 between the Mexican and U.S. border after the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which was intended to help with trade and the economic status of Mexico. However, it backfired and made the economic situation worse for the Mexicans. It was only the rich corporations and companies that benefited from the Free Trade Agreement as they were able to move their factories to Mexico where the labor was cheap and profits higher. What Americans fail to recognize is that the undocumented people do not cross the border to steal, to create problems, to fight or to murder, but to find jobs to provide for their families back home. Therefore, we need to rethink our border policies. Many Americans have actually begun to call the migrants 'clutter' and have reduced

them to jetsam. As we ponder walls and the devastation caused by building them, we have come to recognize that we can't continue building walls to separate us from others. We need to replace them with prudent friendship.

A few years ago, I took a class to Mexico-U.S. border through BorderLinks, an organization that provides educational experiences to connect divided communities, raise awareness about border and immigration policies and their impact, and inspires people to act for social transformation. We visited the metal wall that separates the United States from Mexico at Nogales, Mexico.

Rich corporations and companies that benefited from the Free Trade Agreement as they were able to move their factories down to Mexico where labor was cheap and profits higher. As the economy of Mexico suffered, more people made their way, without documents, to the United States to seek work so they could support their families.

In 2006, the United States responded with the Secure Fence Act. As President George W. Bush signed the bill, he stated, "This bill will help protect the American people. This bill will make our borders more secure. It is an important step toward immigration reform." The act included provisions for the construction of physical barriers-walls-and the use of technology to forward these ends.

This wall is under constant surveillance to prevent people from entering into the U.S. illegally.

The Korean peninsula is another example of a place that is divided by a great wall/barrier at the 38th parallel. The divided border is called the DMZ: a 'demilitarized zone," created in 1953, after Korea was separated into two countries by the United States and the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. This division continues to generate fear and hostility.

I have visited the DMZ several times; the last time I took two

In the midst of horror, God travels into exile and returns with us.

of my three children to see it. They are too young to remember the visit, but every time I visit the DMZ I am overcome with emotion. The devastation of families separated, lives lost, friendships broken, and a country torn apart. It is a sign of despair, hatred, sadness, anger, division, and hopelessness.

At the border, there is a metal fence that divides the road traveling into the DMZ. Hundreds of letters, notes, flowers, and trinkets are woven into the fence, left by families and strangers to express the pain and longing that each person feels. Koreans want the two Koreas to unite so that the wall can be dismantled and families reunited. Brokenness needs to be healed.



This image is similar to that of the Berlin Wall that divided East and West Berlin and Germany. It was built of bricks and other left-over war materials from WWII. It had barbed wire attack dogs, mines, and spotlights. It was a symbol of fear and the failure of a repressive regime. This Berlin wall is now gone, but the U.S./Mexico border reminds us of the Berlin wall. The walls are built to separate people and not to unite. It signifies the failure of American and Mexican policies to accomplish economic justice and the feminization and the powerlessness of the other, the dominated countries.

As we reflect on the significance of walls today, we need to do

so in light of the passage in Nehemiah. The walls built today as those in Nehemiah are not used functionally the same as the time in Nehemiah or in other cases in history to protect people from real dangers, such as the ancient cities of Europe¹⁰. Today, there may be walls around us that may be physically or socially built; some may be in need of repair. We have built walls as shortsighted ways of dealing with other countries, strangers and communities.

Korea has experienced war, and especially the exile of young women who were taken as sexual slaves for the Japanese soldiers. Korea has a history of such loss of culture, identity and community for many of its citizens. As a separated country it seeks reconciliation, solidarity and peace for its separated peoples, so the north can share the prosperity of the south.

Hope for a Broken World

It is important to recognize that in the midst of horror, God travels into exile and returns with us. God was in the gas chambers with the Jewish victims...and walking with the survivors into a new life that is far more important than whether the new life replicated the

¹⁰ <http://www.thetourexpert.eu/fortified-towns/>

old. Life cannot be reenacted, but the presence of God can be experienced in new lands or when one returns to traditional homelands.

The work of the church is not to simply accept the *status quo* as 'God ordained' and something which needs to remain in society. The church needs to challenge, critique and reimagine what the 'reign of God' needs to be like here on earth as political circumstances change, as when the two Germanys were reunited and violence ceased in Northern Ireland. In this way changes that help the poor, the dominated, the enslaved, and subordinated can occur. This is the mandate of the church for us today, retelling the reality of God walking with us from the past into the future.

1 and 2 *Chronicles* provided testimony that despite the destruction of the Temple and exile, the hopes and dreams of a national revival of Israel could never be extinguished. Israel's future and destiny was tied to the God of its history and not to human powers. God is in control, ordering the destinies of empires and their inhabitants. Even though humanity believes that their human leaders control world events, the Hebrew Scriptures reinforce that God is in control of history. It is God who ultimately allows the Israelites to return to their land. This explains why *Chronicles* is the last book in the historical narrative Hebrew Bible¹¹ as it retells the his-

11 Renita J. Weems, '1-2 *Chronicles*' in *The African Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from*

tory of God's people from creation to their own salvation from exile. God reaches out and saves God's people. God controls the world and we need to constantly come before and seek God's wisdom and help in eliminating the evil structures of this world.

Today, we need to broaden our sense of our society to include the world and see if we need to restructure our lives so that others around the world can live more equally and in harmony with each other. *Chronicles* pulls us out of our comfort zones and encourages us to look at ourselves in the mirror to figure out if we are the ones who hold the imperialistic power and are dominating other countries. If we are, what steps we need to take so that we are not the oppressors, but are the liberators and are seekers who wish to build the reign of God in this world. There are some "allies" who can work with us and accompany the oppressed in their search for freedom and flourishing. We need to move forward and see how we can become agents of change in our new conception of a global society.

The concept of sojourning, settlement, and immigration are prominent concepts in today's post-colonial world where people were displaced and may experience migration, such as the monumental displacement of Hindus and Muslims in the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. They are asked to settle in for-

Africa and the African Diaspora, Hugh R. Page Jr. General Editor, p. 286-290 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 288.

eign lands and places, thus etching exile and sojourning into the minds of displaced people. Thus it becomes essential to reflect on the experiences so that a positive impact can be made upon their lives. Positive feedback is crucial for their survival in a postcolonial world. Proper exegetical analysis is also needed so that people will not have misconceptions about those of our brothers and sisters who are displaced and have become strangers to us.

The world needs God to facilitate a peaceful world. America has benefited from being complacent. We have reaped the benefits of having lived in the American empire. Out of this comfort we need to ask ourselves if we are being true to the gospel which speaks of love; acceptance; and helping the sick, poor and lame, when it means all the sick, poor and lame. As we recognize our own participation in a global economic domination, we need to detach ourselves from interests based entirely on attaining wealth and access to cheap goods and work towards eliminating injustices, oppression, and domination in our world. We need to ask ourselves who represents us in this story? Furthermore, we must entertain the possibility that we may be similar to the Persians in this account, who have not yet released our grip on all of our economic and political vessels.

Conclusion

We may need to reflect on how to repair relationships that we have damaged or have created to be out of balance. Maintaining such imbalanced relations with African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern clients creates the impulses which drive citizens of those clients into the hands of terrorist organizations, because they see no other escape or means of relief. As leaders within our own community or church, we need to examine where the walls of relationship have crumbled and how to delicately repair them.

As we think about walls and other barriers, we recognize that for such walls to come down we need to repair the damaged and broken relationships that built them in the first place. The hostility between the two Koreas needs to end. Peace needs to be restored on this tiny peninsula, my homeland. Walls can be torn down—walls that separate us from each other and keep families apart. As we endeavor in this work, our fears and hatred of the other need to be abolished. Communication, dialogue, trust, and mutuality need to be restored or created, where it has never been.

In the story of *Chronicles*, God never abandoned as the people thought that God did during the exile. The temple was gone and the exiled were taken away, but God never abandoned the people. *Chronicles* is talking to a community who has

been broken apart and scattered. The message that the Chronicler wants to share is that God is giving them a second chance. Thus community is very important to them. Rather than condemnation, we need to see grace and love of God that is so much greater than condemnation. In this narrative, there appears to be a love story. God is telling the people, "I love you, please come home." There is a passion within the story of God saying that you may have misbehaved but please come home. Keeping the community together is important and it is in the community that one finds God. One needs to build the community. Today, we face similar challenges as we try to see what is best for the immigrant and diverse communities. We need to be able to sustain them and keep

the community together, above the miasma of racism, sexism, xenophobia and chaos.

People may become afraid of each other rather than come to know each other. If we are to live peaceably with each other of various cultures, societies and religions, we need to learn to "Embrace each other"¹². That can happen if we allow the Spirit of God to move us and live within and through us.

¹² For more discussion see Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Embracing the Other* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).





Integral Pluralism as the Basis for Harmony: The Approach of His Highness the Aga Khan

Ali Lakhani

Central to my life has been a verse in the Holy *Qur'an* which addresses itself to the whole of humanity. It says: "Oh Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women..." I know of no more beautiful expression about the unity of our human race, born indeed from a single soul.¹

His Highness the Aga Khan

Conflict and Fragmentation: The Spirit of the Age

We are living in an age characterized by conflict and fragmentation, where the spirit of the age is increasingly pitted against the Spirit itself. In W. B. Yeats' prophetic words, things fall apart and the centre cannot hold. In the domain of religion, we have been witnessing conflicts – often of political or economic origin though purporting to be based on religious differences – that feed reactionary claims. At the same time, we have been witnessing a secular-

¹ Address by His Highness the Aga Khan to both Houses of the Parliament of Canada in the House of Commons Chamber (Ottawa, Canada) 27 February 2014. The scriptural reference is to *Surat an-Nisa*, 4:1.

ist ascendancy that questions the legitimacy of religion as such as well as of specific religions. The modern world is placing its faith increasingly in science over religion, in earth over heaven, and in man over God – reductively preferencing polarity over complementarity. Not unrelated to this, there is a deepening ‘malaise of modernity’. Despite the scientific and technological advancements of our age, and its medical and material marvels, there is a strange and discomfiting sense of dislocation, disorientation, distraction, disconnection, disenchantment, and dispiritedness in our triumphal, if not hubristic, march of ‘progress.’ It is easy in such an age to be cynical or apathetic. Are we, in the biblical phrase, gaining the whole world but losing our own soul? Are we forgetting our very nature, and thereby our true place in the natural world? Are we losing our sense of the sacred, and thereby our integral relationship with the cosmos? In a sophisticated era where materialism seduces the soul with more immediate rewards than the promise of a deferred salvation, and where the zeal to indulge our individual freedoms and appetites is stronger than the restraint of responsibility and moderation, we are experiencing a strong cen-

trifugal tug away from traditional notions of community and communion, and from our connection with the natural world. Uncertain of who we truly are, and lacking the awareness of our spiritual centre, it is easy for us to mistrust the ‘Other’ and to revert to tribal associations which – particularly in a globalized world of porous boundaries and therefore of increasing diversity – can lead us to paths of conflict rather than of harmony.

There is a need for us to rediscover the integral foundations of life, of connection, of wholeness and equilibrium in our disjointed world. While these foundations may be rooted in religion, it is an especially difficult task, in an age where religion is in such disfavor, to address solutions in expressly religious terms. This is lamentable because religion as such is the expression, albeit in particular theological idioms, of the universal and perennial theme of Unity and of pathways to Union. And it is especially lamentable that Islam – a religion which pre-eminently signifies ‘peace’ in its very name – should be so misunderstood even as it is defamed by terrorist groups who, through barbaric acts, misrepresent their own avowed faith. There is a need, then, not only

All quotations from His Highness the Aga Khan are excerpted, with thanks, from the official Aga Khan Development Network website (<http://www.akdn.org/speeches>) and, on occasion, from the online archive known as NanoWisdoms (<http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog>). Some of the speeches cited in this article are also excerpted from the publication *Where Hope Takes Root: Democracy and Pluralism in an Interdependent World* by His Highness the Aga Khan, introduction by the Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson, © 2008 by Aga Khan Foundation Canada, published by Douglas & McIntyre Ltd. (hereafter cited as *Where Hope Takes Root*).



to rediscover the bond that connects us to each other, but also to provide a corrective to the misperceptions about Islam in a manner that is true to the essence of the Muslim faith, and to faith as such.

The Aga Khan and the Ismailis

One quietly influential, moderate Muslim leader who has addressed the issue of the fragmentation of our times, and whose

approach provides a corrective for Islam and for faith as such, is the spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslim community – His Highness Prince Shah Karim Al-Husseini, known in the West by his title, ‘*Aga Khan*’. His approach, which can be summed up in the phrase ‘integral pluralism’, is true to universal and perennial principles that undergird his Muslim faith, while also appealing to secular humanists who might be wary of solutions couched in ex-

pressly religious terms.

By way of background, the Ismailis are a transnational community of Shia Muslims, located mostly in South and Central Asia, in parts of the Middle East and Africa, and in Canada, the USA, and Western Europe. The Aga Khan is the 49th 'Imam' or spiritual leader of his community, and is a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), and the only living Shia Imam in a succession of Imams beginning with the Prophet's cousin and son-law, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Ismaili '*Imamat*' is a supra-national entity representing the succession of Imams through the Nizari Ismaili lineage, and has a legal status and function recognized under international law, notably by Portugal, where the *Imamat* established its Seat in 2015, and by Canada, where the *Imamat* established a formal ambassadorial presence, the Delegation of the Ismaili *Imamat*.

The Ismailis' heritage includes the glorious era of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, where Ismaili Imams in the 10th century founded the city of Cairo as their capital and established *Al-Azhar Masjid* and University, one of the oldest surviving universities in history. From a theological perspective, the Ismailis follow spiritual principles emphasized by the Ja'fari jurisprudential school. As the Aga Khan noted in his letter to the Amman Conference in July 2005,

Our historic adherence is to the Ja'fari *Madhhab* and other *Madhahib* of close affinity, and it continues, under the lead-

ership of the hereditary Ismaili Imam of the time. This adherence is in harmony also with our acceptance of Sufi principles of personal search and balance between the *zahir* and the spirit or the intellect which the *zahir* signifies.²

As the Amman protocol indicates, the Ismaili approach is predicated on harmonizing the outer (*zahiri*) and inner (*batini*) realities through an intellectual and principal approach guided by the Ismaili Imam. This occurs through a reciprocal relationship whereby Ismailis pledge allegiance (*bayah*) to their Imam, who in turn guides them through the exercise of his ta'lim and ta'wil, that is, his intellectual-moral and principal-exegetical authority in conformity to spiritual principles (*Usul ad-Din*) and the traditions of Islam, adapted according to the needs of the changing times.

Underlying Principles

Central to these spiritual principles is the doctrine of unity (*tawhid*), which lies at the heart of Islam. It affirms that, though reality has multiple dimensions, it is essen-

² *Amman Message*, July 2005 [<http://amman-message.com/>]. The Amman Message is an initiative of the Royal Court of Jordan, begun in November 2004. It sought to define the *Ummah* (or Muslim community) and thereby to portray its diversity – an important retort to those who might seek to portray it as homogeneous. The Ismailis were recognized in the Amman Message as a part of the *Ummah* through a protocol from which the excerpt herein is cited.

tially one. While discontinuous and transcendent, it is also continuous and immanent. Referring to the reality of One God, the Holy *Qur'an* states that “He is the First (*al-Awwal*) and the Last (*al-Akhir*), the Outward (*az-Zahir*) and the Inward (*al-Batin*)”³, affirming thereby that reality is absolute, with a phenomenal (*zahiri*) aspect as well as an esoteric (*batini*) dimension “which the *zahir* signifies”.

Implicit in this is the notion that Infinity (or multiplicity) is inherent in Absoluteness (or unity). Diversity can therefore be understood as an aspect of unity, or of inner and complementary harmony. The epistemological implication of this is that reductive reality – that is to say, opaque reality, perceived only in its outward aspect, not as transparent to transcendence – is based on an epistemic closure which veils theophany. Instead of seeing “the Face of God” everywhere⁴, veiled humanity sees only the phenomenal world of multiplicity and outward difference. This kind of reductive perception is the very root of idolatry (*shirk*), which is forbidden in Islam because it opposes the basic creed of theophanic witnessing (*shahada*), of perceiving the reality that “There is no reality but God” (*la 'ilaha 'illa-Llah*). Thus one can be veiled from reality by both the

world and the egoic self, in each case through a fragmentary perception devoid of the sense of the sacred, and which thereby fails to perceive reality integrally, as holy, as whole.

A further implication of the Absoluteness of reality is its Perfection. It is the Origin and Font of creation as well as its Perfection and End. Humanity shares both a common patrimony (being created “of a single soul”⁵) and a common matrix (being created and sustained by Divine Mercy⁶) so that outward difference can be transcended by radial reconnection to the same Centre in all things. Unique among all creatures, human beings are created with a divine nature (*fitra*) capable of the grace of self-knowledge and self-transcendence. Hence the hadiths, “Heaven and earth do not contain Me, but the heart of My faithful servant contains Me” and “Whoso knows himself, knows his Lord.” Humanity is made for Perfection. To this end, human beings are endowed with the freedom and fiduciary responsibility (*amanah*) to live in conformity with their divine norm. Thus the scripture asserts, “And so, set thy face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all

5 *Surat an-Nisa*, 4:1.

6 God is referred to in the Holy *Qur'an* as both *Rahman* (intrinsic Mercy, the divine quiddity that is the “Hidden Treasure” of the *Hadith* of the Hidden Treasure, which describes creation to be an act of Divine Self-manifestation that projects the qualities of the divine treasury into existential reality as an aspect of His intrinsic goodness) and *Rahim* (extrinsic Mercy, the womb-like matrix that umbilically sustains and integrates creation).

3 *Surat al-Hadid*, 57:3.

4 *Surat al-Baqarah*, 2:115 (“Unto God belongs the East and the West, and wherever you turn, there is the Face of God. Truly, God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.”).

that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition (*fitra*) which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not.”⁷

In practical terms, these metaphysical principles of integral reality and human perfectibility have ethical implications. To conform oneself to integral reality requires one to live life with integrity. Despite their outward differences, human beings were created as separate communities so as to better know one another, to transcend their differences through the affirmation of their shared spiritual bond, and to vie with each other in good works.⁸ Spiritual growth therefore balances spirit and matter and rejects the materialism and individualism that characterizes the *ethos* of modernism.

Critique of Modernism

The Aga Khan’s attitude to modernity is to embrace the modern world (for Islam is a faith for all time) while being critical of the modernist ethos which rejects the spiritual basis of life. Two examples from his

⁷ *Ayat ar-Rum*, 30:30.

⁸ *Surat al-Maidah*, 5:48: “For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had God willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He has given you (He has made you as you are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto God you will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein you differ.”

speeches illustrate this. The first is from his address at the Seerat Conference in Pakistan in 1976, where he made the following observations about individualism and moral relativism:

I have observed in the Western world a deeply changing pattern of human relations. The anchors of moral behaviour appear to have dragged to such depths that they no longer hold firm the ship of life. What was once wrong is now simply unconventional, and for the sake of individual freedom must be tolerated. What is tolerated soon becomes accepted. Contrarily, what was once right is now viewed as outdated, old-fashioned and is often the target of ridicule.

In the face of this changing world, which was once a universe to us and is now no more than an overcrowded island, confronted with a fundamental challenge to our understanding of time, surrounded by a foreign fleet of cultural and ideological ships which have broken loose, I ask, “Do we have a clear, firm and precise understanding of what Muslim Society is to be in times to come?” And if as I believe, the answer is uncertain, where else can we search then in the Holy *Qur’an*, and in the example of Allah’s last and final Prophet?⁹

His Highness also cautioned in his Seerat Conference address that the modern world was increasingly at risk of losing sight of the Divine Countenance and of being trapped

⁹ Presidential Address, International Seerat Conference, ‘Life of the Prophet’ (Karachi, Pakistan), 12 March 1976.

in “a shrinking cage” of materialism:

Thus it is my profound conviction that Islamic society in the years ahead will find that our traditional concept of time, a limitless mirror in which to reflect on the eternal, will become a shrinking cage, an invisible trap from which fewer and fewer will escape.

The second illustration is from his address precisely three decades later at the Evora Conference in Portugal in 2006, where he asked,

How, in an increasingly cynical time, can we inspire people to a new set of aspirations – reaching beyond rampant materialism, the new relativism, self-serving individualism, and resurgent tribalism?¹⁰

The use of the expression “cynical time” reveals the His Highness’ concern about the loss of faith in modern materialistic and secularist societies. While not opposed to secularism as such, he has clarified that he is “opposed to unilateral secularism where the notions of faith and ethics just disappear from society.”¹¹ He has also expressed a concern about the deleterious effects of modern world’s secularist materialism and the potential for this to create divisions between the

¹⁰Remarks by His Highness the Aga Khan at Evora University Symposium: “Cosmopolitan Society, Human Safety and Rights in Plural and Peaceful Societies” (Evora, Portugal), 12 February 2006.

¹¹*Spiegel* Online Interview, Stefan Aust and Erich Follath, ‘Islam Is a Faith of Reason’ (Berlin, Germany), 12 October 2006.

Islamic and Western worlds:

I fully understand the West’s historic commitment to separating the secular from the religious. But for many non-Westerners, including most Muslims, the realms of faith and of worldly affairs cannot be antithetical. If “modernism” lacks a spiritual dimension, it will look like materialism. And if the modernising influence of the West is insistently and exclusively a secularising influence, then much of the Islamic world will be somewhat distanced from it.¹²

While being a modern man, at ease in the West, he nonetheless rejects the Occidental view that the Muslim world should follow the path of the West in regard to its modernist excesses, and has stated,

Although the modern page of human history was written in the West, you should not expect or desire for that page to be photocopied by the Muslim world.¹³

Instead, His Highness has emphasized the importance of an ethos founded on perennial principles and values, true to his Muslim faith.

Faith and Ethics

Building on the Qur’anic foundations of unity and community, and recognizing the Muslim

¹²School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, Commencement Ceremony (New York, USA), 15 May 2006.

¹³Baccalaureate address at Brown University on 26 May 1996.



ethical tradition that links spirit and matter, the Aga Khan's approach is premised on the convergence of faith and ethics. Rejecting the Augustinian division between faith and the world, he stresses that "Islam believes fundamentally that the spiritual and material worlds are inextricably connected"¹⁴ and that Islam is not just a faith but a lived reality, an integral way of life. He has repeatedly spoken of ethics as a bridge between the realms of faith (*din*) and the world (*duniya*). In one of his key public addresses, he stated,

One of the central elements of the Islamic faith is the inseparable nature of faith and world. The two are so deeply intertwined that one cannot imagine

¹⁴Address by His Highness the Aga Khan to both Houses of the Parliament of Canada in the House of Commons Chamber (Ottawa, Canada) 27 February 2014.

their separation. They constitute a "Way of Life."¹⁵

The "Way of Life" refers to the ethos of integral pluralism which lies at the heart of the Aga Khan's interpretation of Islam. It is an ethic that requires human beings to live their lives integrally, transcending outward differences through dialogue and a respect for human dignity, according to the principles and values of their faith. This principal and practical approach, which transcends theological differences, is humanistic in its appeal. It has two main components: first, a cosmopolitan ethic that embraces diversity; and second, a social conscience that impels one to improve the quality of life for all. These elements are premised on a holistic view of life, on an inclusive vision of society based on its common humanity (born "of a single soul"), and on a recognition of the inherent dignity of humankind. With regard to the vision underlying his integral approach, the Aga Khan has noted,

Islam does not deal in dichotomies but in all-encompassing unity. Spirit and body are one, man and nature are one. What is more, man is answerable to God for what man has created.

Human action must therefore

¹⁵From "The Spiritual Roots of Tolerance", speech made at the Tutzing Evangelical Academy, upon receiving the Tolerance Prize, 20 May 2006; *Where Hope Takes Root*, p.124, at p.125.

be governed by the ethical imperative to respect the underlying unity of life and to sustain an equitable social order; in other words, to live according to “Islam’s precepts of one humanity, the dignity of man, and the nobility of joint striving in deeds of goodness.”¹⁶

These objectives are enshrined in the activities of the Imam, conducted chiefly through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a network of agencies established by His Highness to improve the quality of human life in areas ranging from health, housing, economic welfare, and rural development to education and cultural pluralism. Speaking of the term “quality of life” and the purpose of AKDN, the Aga Khan has stated,

To the *Imamat*, the meaning of “quality of life” extends to the entire ethical and social context in which people live, and not only to their material well-being measured over generation after generation. Consequently, the *Imamat’s* is a holistic vision of development, as is prescribed by the faith of Islam. It is about investing in people, in their pluralism, in their intellectual pursuit, and search for new and useful knowledge, just as much as in material resources. But it is also about investing with a social conscience inspired by the ethics of Islam. It is work that benefits all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality or background. Does the Holy *Qur’an* not

16 The Delegation of the Ismaili Imam Foundation Stone Ceremony (Ottawa, Canada) 6 June 2005.

say in one of the most inspiring references to mankind, that Allah has created all mankind from one soul?

Today, this vision is implemented by institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network... The most important feature of these organisations... is that they share a vision, they work together, they create opportunity and they are inscribed in a single ethical framework.¹⁷

This “single ethical framework” is a reflection both of the unitive holistic vision that is central to faith, and of the social conscience that is its ethical imperative. As His Highness has underlined, “Islam is a faith of tolerance, generosity and spirituality”¹⁸, and these three elements are interlinked. It is by virtue of our shared spiritual patrimony that tolerance and generosity are incumbent on us as human beings; tolerance being a reflection of spiritual integrity, and generosity an expression of social conscience. Thus, the Aga Khan has observed,

Faith should deepen our concern for improving the quality of human life in all of its dimensions. That is the overarching objective of the Aga Khan Development Network...¹⁹

Though the Aga Khan openly

17 Alltex EPZ Limited Opening Ceremony (Athi River, Kenya), 19 December 2003.

18 Golden Jubilee Inaugural Ceremony (Aiglemont, France) 11 July 2007.

19 88th Stephen A. Ogden, Jr. Memorial Lecture on International Affairs, Brown University (Providence, USA) 10 March 2014.

advocates Islamic principles as the basis of his Muslim faith, he prefers not to promote his public views in overtly religious language or to engage within the narrow dialectic of theological discourse. This is not because he regards religion as irrelevant. On the contrary, as he has stated, “The message I will always give is that humanity cannot deal with present day problems without a basis of religion.”²⁰ He is clearly aware that in an age where formal religion – and particularly Islam – is under attack and, some would even argue, in decline, there is a need for a broad-based appeal to universal and perennial principles and values. As the message of Islam is of universal appeal, and its principles and values of perennial import, they can be couched in a way that avoids the potential divisiveness inherent in the proselytism of theology.²¹ His Highness’ preferred approach therefore is to speak in terms of a multifaceted humanism, of “universal human val-

ues which are broadly shared across divisions of class, race, language, faith and geography”²² and which “constitute what classical philosophers, in the East and West alike, have described as human ‘virtue’ — not merely the absence of negative restraints on individual freedom, but also a set of positive responsibilities, moral disciplines which prevent liberty from turning into license.”²³

A Cosmopolitan Ethic

This is one of the reasons that the Aga Khan prefers to speak in terms of a “cosmopolitan ethic” as a central element of his integral pluralism. As he explains,

There are several forms of proselytism and, in several religions, proselytism is demanded. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the principle of a cosmopolitan ethic, which is not an ethic oriented by faith, or for a society. I speak of an ethic under which all people can live within a same society, and not of a society that reflects the ethic of solely one faith. I would call that ethic, quality of life.²⁴

A fundamental attribute of the cosmopolitan ethic is “a readiness to accept the complexity of human society”.²⁵ Elaborating on this,

²² School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, Commencement Ceremony (New York, USA), 15 May 2006.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Paroquias de Portugal Interview, António Marujo and Faranaz Keshavjee, (Lisbon, Portugal) 23 July 2008.

²⁵ 10th Annual LaFontaine-Baldwin Lecture, Institute for Canadian Citizenship, ‘Pluralism’,

²⁰ Press Conference, Kampala, 18 September 1959.

²¹ This is evident from the following comments relating to his views on inter-faith dialogue: “In recent decades, inter-faith dialogue has been occurring in numerous countries. Unfortunately, every time the word ‘faith’ is used in such a context, there is an inherent supposition that lurking at the side is the issue of proselytisation. But faith, after all, is only one aspect of human society. Therefore, we must approach this issue today within the dimension of civilisations learning about each other, and speaking to each other, and not exclusively through the more narrow focus of inter-faith dialectic.” – Keynote Address to the Annual Conference of German Ambassadors (Berlin, Germany), 6 September 2004.

and on the spiritual roots of tolerance, the Aga Khan has stated,

It is an ethic for all peoples. It will not surprise you to have me say that such an ethic can grow with enormous power out of the spiritual dimensions of our lives. In acknowledging the immensity of the Divine, we will also come to acknowledge our human limitations, the incomplete nature of human understanding.

In that light, the amazing diversity of creation itself can be seen as a great gift to us — not a cause for anxiety but a source of delight. Even the diversity of our religious interpretations can be greeted as something to share with one another — rather than something to fear. In this spirit of humility and hospitality, the stranger will be welcomed and respected, rather than subdued — or ignored.

In the Holy *Qur'an* we read these words:

O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul ... [and] joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace ye became brethren.

As we strive for this ideal, we will recognize that “the other” is both “present” and “different.” And we will be able to appreciate this presence — and this difference — as gifts that can enrich our lives.²⁶

(Toronto, Canada) 15 October 2010.
26 *Ibid.*

Globalization and Pluralism

One of the effects of modernity has been globalization, and with it has come the tension of living with “the other.” This tension can often result in conflict. The key to managing the tension is pluralism, which “means not only accepting, but embracing human difference.”²⁷ A strong proponent of pluralism, in 2006 the Aga Khan, in partnership with the Canadian government, established The Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, Canada, as an independent, not-for-profit international research and education organization to cultivate the ethic of pluralism and to promote pluralistic goals worldwide.

His Highness views the need to combat the centrifugal influences of our time through the cultivation of a pluralistic ethic as one of the great challenges of the age. Thus, he has stated,

Diversification without disintegration, this is the greatest challenge of our time.²⁸

This is a delicate task involving the balancing of identity and difference while avoiding the polarizations of homogenization and of tribalism. The former can result in a bland world of diluted identities,

27 “How the world is shaped by the ‘Clash of Ignorances’” – published in the *Daily Nation* (Nairobi, Kenya) 15 June 2009.

28 88th Stephen A. Ogden, Jr. Memorial Lecture on International Affairs, Brown University (Providence, USA) 10 March 2014.



while the latter can result in ghettos and conflicts. This balancing task is vitally important because, as His Highness has noted, “every time pluralism fails, in one way or the other it ends up in conflict.”²⁹

Yet, he laments that the modern world has not responded well to this challenge:

Sadly, the world is becoming more pluralist in fact, but not necessarily in spirit. “Cosmopolitan” social patterns have not yet been matched by “a cosmopolitan ethic.”³⁰

29 CBC Interview, ‘One-on-One’ with Peter Mansbridge (Toronto, Canada) 1 March 2014.

30 Address to both Houses of the Parliament of Canada in the House of Commons Chamber (Ottawa, Canada) 27 February 2014.

The prevalence of greater diversity in modern societies can be perceived as a threat, as for instance in the case of the recent mass refugee migrations occurring from Syria and North Africa into Europe, prompting the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán to make a public plea in September 2015 “to keep Europe Christian.”³¹ This tribalist tendency

³¹ Prime Minister Orbán’s statement was published in September 2015 in the German newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. It stated, “Let us not forget, however, that those arriving have been raised in another religion, and represent a radically different culture. Most of them are not Christians, but Muslims. This is an important question, because Europe and European identity is rooted in Christianity. Is it not worrying in itself that European Christianity is now barely able to keep Europe Christian? If we lose sight of this, the idea of Europe could become a minority

is fundamentally opposed to the notion of a cosmopolitan ethic. In a public address at Harvard in November 2015, the Aga Khan explained,

A cosmopolitan society regards the distinctive threads of our particular identities as elements that bring beauty to the larger social fabric. A cosmopolitan ethic accepts our ultimate moral responsibility to the whole of humanity, rather than absolutising a presumably exceptional part. Perhaps it is a natural condition of an insecure human race to seek security in a sense of superiority. But in a world where cultures increasingly inter-penetrate one another, a more confident and a more generous outlook is needed. What this means, perhaps above all else, is a readiness to participate in a true dialogue with diversity, not only in our personal relationships, but in institutional and international relationships also.³²

A 'Clash of Ignorance'

Nowhere today is there a greater need for "a more generous outlook" and "a readiness to participate in a true dialogue with diversity" than in the case of relations between Islam and the West, which some have characterized as a 'Clash of Civilizations'. His Highness is "vigorously opposed to any notion of intrinsic conflict between the Chris-

tian and Muslim worlds."³³ Speaking of this so-called clash, he has commented,

The clash, if there is such a broad civilizational collision, is not of cultures but of ignorance.³⁴

His Highness has cautioned that 'ignorance gaps' can easily become 'empathy gaps'³⁵ and that what is required to bridge these gaps is a better cultural understanding and true cultural sensitivity. This "implies a readiness to study and to learn across cultural barriers, an ability to see others as they see themselves."³⁶

He is as critical of Muslims in this regard as he is of the West, noting that "What we are now witnessing is a clash of ignorance, an ignorance that is mutual, longstanding, and to which the West and the Islamic world have been blind for decades at their great peril."³⁷

To provide a corrective in this regard, and to lead by example, His

³³ *La Croix* Interview, Pierre Cochez and Jean-Christophe Ploquin (Paris, France), 8 April 2003.

³⁴ Keynote Address to the Governor General's 2004 Canadian Leadership Conference: 'Leadership and Diversity' (Gatineau, Canada), May 19, 2004.

³⁵ 88th Stephen A. Ogden, Jr. Memorial Lecture on International Affairs, Brown University (Providence, USA) 10 March 2014. Also, Keynote Address, Athens Democracy Forum (Athens, Greece) 15 September 2015.

³⁶ The Peterson Lecture, Annual Meeting of the International Baccalaureate (Atlanta, USA) 18 April 2008.

³⁷ Banquet hosted in Honour of Governor Perry (Houston, Texas, USA), June 23 2002.

interest in its own continent."

³² Samuel L. & Elizabeth Jodidi Lecture, Harvard University (Cambridge, USA) 12 November 2015.

Highness has regularly spoken out about misperceptions in the Western world about Islam and Muslims, emphasizing the diversity and pluralism of Muslims and the tolerant spirit of their faith, while strongly condemning both the terrorist outrages that are wrongly attributed to the faith, and the misperceptions and stereotypes about Muslims, as well as the false assumptions about the causes of so-called 'religious' strife. And in promoting this corrective viewpoint, he has also frequent-

"The clash, if there is such a broad civilizational collision, is not of cultures but of ignorance."

ly emphasized the vitally important role of educators, public figures, and a responsible media to promote cultural understanding and sensitivity.

He has also undertaken major cultural initiatives worldwide, including restoring historical cultural sites and revitalizing Muslim traditions and societies ³⁸, as well as establishing a major international museum³⁹ to highlight the pluralistic heritage of world civilizations, par-

³⁸Through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, it has engaged in several restoration projects as part of its Historic Cities Program, among which, notably, have been the Al Azhar Park project in Egypt, Humayun's Tomb in India, the Citadel of Aleppo in Syria, the Baltit Fort in Pakistan, the Old Cities in Kabul and Herat, Stone Town in Zanzibar, and the Great Mosque of Mopti in Mali.

³⁹The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada, which opened in September 2014.

ticularly that of the Muslim world, and the multicultural symbiosis between them, and "to actively promote, internationally, the spirit of 'convivencia.'" ⁴⁰

Social Justice

At the heart of the Aga Khan's efforts is a quest to improve the quality of life of all human beings. This is in keeping with the Muslim ethos of promoting social justice, and it is impelled by the ethic of a social conscience that derives from humankind's fiduciary obligation (*amanah*) to God. This is the primary objective of AKDN, and demonstrates a fundamental recognition of the ethical foundations of society. Reflecting on this responsibility, the Aga Khan has stated,

There are those who enter the world in such poverty that they are deprived of both the means and the motivation to improve their lot. Unless these unfortunates can be touched with the spark which ignites the spirit of individual enterprise and determination, they will only sink back into renewed apathy, depredation and despair. It is for us who are more fortunate to provide that spark.⁴¹

⁴⁰Introduction to 'The Worlds of Islam in the collection of the Aga Khan Museum' (Madrid and Barcelona, Spain) 5 June 2009.

⁴¹Quoted in CBC Interview, 'Man Alive' with Roy Bonisteel (Canada), 8 October 1986, from a speech made in India on 19 January 1983.



Photo courtesy of James Gordon

The provision of that spark through the pursuit of social justice is linked to the human quest for social harmony and ethical living. The pursuit engages the ethic of social conscience, of generosity and service, of responsible stewardship, and of pluralistic dialogue and understanding. It reflects the humanistic ethic of interconnectedness grounded in humility and a profound respect for human dignity. These are all qualities that His Highness frequently emphasizes in his public speeches.

From a practical perspective, the Aga Khan has also been a strong advocate for a culture of responsible government, based on merit and competence, and dedicated to improving the quality of life of all constituents. Noting the stresses

within modern governments, he has commented that the choice between democratic government and competent government is a false choice, stating,

The best way to redeem the concept of democracy around the world is to improve the results it delivers. ... We must not force publics to choose between democratic government and competent government.⁴²

In this regard, he has identified four elements that can strengthen democracy's effectiveness: "improved constitutional understanding, independent and pluralis-

⁴² School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, Commencement Ceremony (New York, USA), 15 May 2006.

tic media, the potential of civil society, and a genuine democratic ethic.”⁴³

The role of civil society (“an array of institutions which operate on a private, voluntary basis, but are motivated by high public purposes”⁴⁴) is vital in this regard. It is an aspect of what His Highness has termed the ‘enabling environment’ that is necessary to promote social justice. Leading by example, the AKDN’s work in partnership with private groups, NGOs and government organizations, has engaged in a vast range of projects – from building hospitals, universities and educational academies worldwide, to assisting with strategies such as microfinance in rural areas, and to reviving cultures as “a trampoline for progress” – in order to improve the quality of peoples’ lives globally, not only in areas populated by Ismailis. And as Imam, the Aga Khan has emphasized to his followers the importance of serving one’s fellow human beings, and of generosity, as an aspect of living the ethics of one’s faith.

An Integral Vision

The approach of the Aga Khan as a Muslim leader of our times is a useful corrective to many of the misperceptions about Islam in today’s world. His words and actions illus-

trate not only the essentially peaceful message of the faith but also the perennial and universal relevance of its principles and values as exemplified in His Highness’ integral and pluralistic vision. It is a vision of a lived faith – of engagement with life through creating a bridge between faith and the world, a “bridge of hope” that places value in community while respecting individual aspirations, and that embraces diversity while remaining true to the principles of faith.

⁴³ Keynote Address, Athens Democracy Forum (Athens, Greece) 15 September 2015.

⁴⁴ Address to both Houses of the Parliament of Canada in the House of Commons Chamber (Ottawa, Canada) 27 February 2014.



Out of the mouths of babes: Comenius and World Peace

Elizabeth Kristofovich Zelensky

There is needed in this century an immediate remedy for the frenzy which has seized many men and is driving them in their madness to their mutual destruction. For we witness throughout the world disastrous and destructive flames of discords and wars devastating kingdoms and peoples with such persistence that all men seem to have conspired for their mutual ruin which

will end only with the destruction of themselves and the universe. Nothing is, therefore, more necessary for the stability of the world, if it is not to perish completely, than some universal re-dedication of minds. Universal harmony and peace must be secured for the whole human race. By peace and harmony, however; I mean not that external peace between rulers and peo-

ples among themselves, but an internal peace of minds inspired by a system of ideas and feelings. If this could be attained, the human race has a possession of great promise.¹

This warning, eerily prescient in 2016, comes to us from 1643, from a Europe torn apart by war. John Amos Comenius², its author, was describing the destruction wrought by the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) an unprecedented breakdown of state power, during which armies, nominally inspired by confessional differences between Catholics and Protestants, slaughtered each other and ravaged the defenseless civilian population, resulting in the

flight of tens of thousands of refugees. By the war's end one third of the population of central Europe had been either displaced or killed. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the war, with both sides agreeing to ignore religious difference in favor of the secular principle of state sovereignty. This treaty also destroyed any hopes Comenius had of return to

Comenius understood war to be the symptom of an existential crisis of communication – man's alienation from man and from nature through his alienation from God.

his homeland. As a prominent Protestant he was banned from what is the present day Czech Republic, which was given back to the Catholic Hapsburgs.

And so, having become a stateless refugee himself due to war, Comenius - a leading European intellectual and philosopher - dedicated himself to perfecting and promulgating what he believed to be the formula for peace; a formula based on the idea of universal education, and embodied in the fragile forms of children, who were, in his words "... given to us as a mirror, in which we may behold humility, gentleness, benign goodness, harmony..."³

1 John Amos Comenius, "Rededication of Minds (Written in 1643)", *World Affairs*, Vol. 109, No.1 (March,1946),p.2.

2 For a scholarly biography, see Matthew Spinka, *John Amos Comenius, that Incomparable Moravian* (New York: Russell and Russell,1967), for his philosophy see Matthew Spinka, "Comenian Pansophic Principles" *Church History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1953): 155-165. All of Comenius ideas concerning pre-school children and education may be found in his *School of Infancy*, translated, edited and with an Introduction by Ernest M. Eller (University of North Carolina Press:Chapel Hill,1956) A shortened summary is contained in Chapter 28 "Mother's School" in J.A. Comenius, *The Great Didactic* [*The Great Didactic Online*: <http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.u/library/digital-collection/froebel-archiv/great-didactic/index.html>].

3 *School of Infancy*, pp. 60-61. Comenius' publicly stated idealization of children was quite

and among whom there is “neither rule of one over the other, nor compulsion, nor dread nor fear, but, on the contrary, love, candor, free discussion about anything that comes up. All these are missing when we older people deal with children. And this defect is a great obstacle to our free communication with them...”⁴

Comenius understood war to be the symptom of an existential crisis of communication – man’s alienation from man and from nature through his alienation from God. Humans had ceased to carry God in their hearts, and thus could no longer read God’s world as His image and symbol. Without God, God’s Creation as it actually exists and the laws and properties governing the natural, social and spiritual worlds



remain obscure to them. This leads to the inability of language to express truth which creates the tendency of words, and the images cast by words, to stand between the individual and reality. The result is the appearance of various “truths”; and, as a consequence, vice comes to be masked in the language of virtue, and eventually such masks are taken for reality, which inevitably results in idolatry. The All-Merciful Creator is forgotten for the sake of power, wealth, revenge, fame and other

revolutionary for his time. The more common attitude may be summarized in the following excerpts from a few Protestant sermons from this era: “... just as a cat craves mice, a fox chickens, a wolf cub sheep, so are infant humans are inclined in their hearts to ... impure desires, lewdness, idol worship, belief in magic, hostility, anger, strife, dissension,... gluttony and more.” “surely there is in all children a stubbornness and a stoutness of mind arising from natural pride which must, in the first place, be broken and beaten down.” H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society* (London and New York: Longman, 1995)p. 49.

⁴ *Infancy*, p.90.

“false idols”; thus, war.⁵

Children have not yet entered this cycle of false consciousness and alienation. It was the very openness of children to different points of view, their freedom of thought, not yet calcified by categories of convention, their preference for reality rather than words, for “doing and playing” rather than talking which brings them closer to God, according to Comenius. Commenting on *Mathew 21:16* “From the lips of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise,” in which verse the evangelist notes that Christ was recognized as the Messiah by the children alone, not by the adults, when he came to rid the Great Temple of Jerusalem of moneylenders, the philosopher stresses that children “... are valuable to God first because being innocent... they are not yet the defaced image of God and are unable to discern between good and evil, between the right hand and the left... they have yet to develop unbelief and impenitence... for Christ said that “Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”⁶ Children are the evidence of God’s presence here on earth. Around them heaven and earth overlap, for “Whereas the Lord declares that little children are always committed to the guard of angels, hence who has children within his house may be certain he also has angels... he who

5 John Amos Comenius, *Labyrinth of the World, and the Paradise of the Heart*, written in 1631 is an allegory devoted to this topic [English electronic version: <http://www.labyrinth.cz/en/contents>].

6 *Infancy*, p. 61.

takes little children in his arms may be assured that he takes angels. We do not nourish our infants, but they nourish us; for because of these innocents God supplies necessities, and we aged sinners partake with them. ...Do you wonder why God did not at once produce these celestial gems (children, *ekz*) in the full numbers he purposed to have for eternity, as he did angels? He has no other reason than that in doing so he honors us by making us his associates in multiplying creatures.⁷ Children are also compared to celestial plantlets, saplings, blossoms, and the homes where they dwell to paradise.⁸ Thus, children not only act as bridges or channels between this world and the next, but they embody the relationship of all humans to God - we are all children in this, our best aspect: “God Himself in His Word and in this life speaks to us adults as children. For in truth we are children, understanding divine and celestial things not as they are in themselves but according to our capacity.” (*I Cor. 13:11*)⁹

Comenius anchored his hopes for reform to reason which he called “the rational soul” or the body’s “guest”¹⁰. Reason was God’s gift to humankind; all humans, regardless of gender or social condition enjoy access to reason and reason, if developed properly in childhood, when it “as a lovely lit-

7 *Ibid.*, p. 62-63

8 *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

9 *Ibid.*, p.114.

10 *Ibid.*, p.63.

tle flower begins to unfold and distinguish things”¹¹ will inevitably lead back to God. The seeds of learning, virtue and piety are naturally implanted in children because children are the image of God, therefore they are capable of acquiring knowledge of all things created by God.¹² “There is nothing in heaven or earth or in the waters, nothing in the abyss under the earth, nothing in the human body, nothing in the soul, nothing in Holy Writ, nothing in the arts, nothing in politics, nothing in the Church, of which the little candidates for wisdom shall be wholly ignorant.”¹³ Or, to paraphrase Gregory of Nazianus, an Eastern Church Father cited by Comenius in “The Dedication to the Reader” of *The Great Didactic*, - man’s mind is perfectly matched to the world, it is the mind which gives the world its unity.¹⁴

Yet, the very institutions meant to hone and advance reason are one of the main sources for

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.112

¹² *The Great Didactic Online*, Chapter 5, The Seeds of These Three are Naturally Implanted in Us. [<http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/library/digital-collection/froebel-archive/great-didactic/index.html>]. By positing that the key to knowledge of the created world lies in human’s God-given reason Comenius displays that synthesis of science and faith which differentiates him from the other two great revolutionaries in Western thought of his time, Descartes and Pascal; the former excluding God from his scientific method, the later forsaking science in his quest for faith.

¹³ J.E.Hutton, *History of the Moravian Church*. Chapter XI, “Comenius and the Hidden Seed”, [http://biblehub.com/library/hutton/history_of_the_moravian_church/index.html].

¹⁴ *The Great Didactic Online*. Greetings to the Reader, Subsection 5.

its current defects: schools must be reformed. Education in its present state is not only inadequate but harmful to “the rational soul”, it taints and maims the uncorrupted reasoning of children, and destroys their natural love of learning and curiosity about God’s world. “[In the past]... Places designed for education were called colleges, gymnasia and schools (that is retreats of ease ...)These very names signified that the action of teaching and learning is in its own nature pleasing and agreeable, a mere amusement and a mental delight This joyousness however disappeared in subsequent times ... schools were no more places of amusement and delights. They became grinding houses of torture and torment...they imbued youth not with faith, godliness and sound morals but with superstition, impiety and evil conduct.... thinking to beat in knowledge, (the incompetent teachers) wretchedly tortured children.”¹⁵ The emphasis that Comenius places on play and joy as being essential to children’s development further darkens his contrasting image of contemporary schools: “ A joyful mind is half health ... The joy of the heart is the very life spring of man. Therefore, parents ought to be especially careful never to allow their children to be without delights, but should ... let their spirits be stirred by happy play ... running about, chasing one another, and by music and pleasant sights such as

¹⁵ *Infancy*, p.68

pictures.”¹⁶ “Boys ever delight in being employed in something, for their youthful blood does not allow them to be at rest. Now as this is very useful it ought not be restrained but provisions made that they always have something to do”¹⁷

Education, according to Comenius must be based on the study of Nature (the sensory world), on the training of Reason to classify and integrate this inductively attained data, and on the apprehension of moral and spiritual principles from divine revelation in Scripture. Comenius believed that one Truth underlay all knowledge-political, moral, scientific, linguistic- and this Truth stemmed from God as the *Logos* or Source of Order.¹⁸ Learning the texts of ancient authorities¹⁹ is a questionable methodology, since it demonstratively did not prevent the elites of Europe from pursuing a devastating war for nearly half a century. Direct experience of the world - what Comenius called “nature’s way” - leads to a true apprehension of God and men: “Do we not dwell in the Garden of Eden, as well as our predecessors ; why should we not use our eyes, ears, and noses as well as they; why need we other teachers than these in learning to know the book of Nature, Why should we not, instead of these dead books, open to children the living book of

nature,”²⁰ Comenius’ firm belief in the immanence of God’s presence in this world, in the essential goodness of all creation, and his emphasis on experiential learning, rather than on memory underlay his pedagogical principles; “As far as possible man are to be taught to become wise not by books but by the heavens, the Earth, oaks and beeches; that is they must learn to know and examine the things themselves and not the observations or testimony of others about things.” He was the first to clearly state that it is the child’s natural curiosity about the world around him, which should be used as the basis for schooling.²¹

His literacy textbooks are an example of the method discussed above. Using living words from actual life situations, instead of memorization of theoretical tracts or grammars, and the mother-tongue or vernacular in combination with Latin, he wrote what would become the two most popular children’s books of the early modern Western world, the *Janua Linguarum Reserata* or *The Gate of Language Unlocked* (1631) and *The Orbis sensualium pictus* or *The World of Things Obvious to the Senses through Pictures* (1658). He originally wrote these books in both Czech and Latin, side by side; thus, pupils could compare the two lan-

²⁰ *Infancy*, p.20.

²¹ “Matter comes first, form follows, things are essential, words accidental, things are the body, while words the garment” *The Great Didactic Online*, Chapter 16. The Universal Requirements of Teaching, Subsection 15. Natural Order.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.84.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.91.

¹⁸ Spinka, *Pansophic Principles*: 156.

¹⁹ *The Great Didactic Online*, Chapter 25.

guages and identify familiar words and things with the unfamiliar Latin terms. Both of these books were translated into many other European languages besides the original Czech.²² While their success resulted from the real-life observations of the author, both as father and pedagogue, of how children actually learn, they were based theoretically on the idea, going back to Plato, that images speak to souls directly and are thus in closer contact with the “heart” or emotions. Children, not yet caught up in the obfuscations stemming from our reliance on imprecise words, have souls which are tender, clear, and easily impressed and are thus the key to the more general program of reform of humanity and a “rededication of minds”: “The most useful thing that Holy Scripture teaches us is that there is no more certain way under the sun for the raising of sunken humanity than the proper education of the young. ...and if anyone should wonder why God should prize children so highly he will find no weightier reason than that children are simpler and more susceptible to this remedy which the mercy of God grants to this lamentable condition of man.”²³

It was in *The Great Didactic* (1633), the work which revealed his revolutionary approach to pedagogy, that he first expressed his desire

²² We will be using Joh. Amos Comenii, *Orbis sensualium* or *The Visible World* (London, 1685) the English translation from 1685, found online through EEBO.

²³ *The Great Didactic Online*, Dedication



to compose a picture book for preschoolers, with the resulting *Orbis sensualium pictus* mentioned above, eventually published as a separate tome in 1658. Comenius states in *The Great Didactic* that such a book should be given to every child while they are still at home with their mothers, because at this age instruction should be carried out through sense perception. The book would



assist the child’s development in three ways, 1) It will make impressions on the mind of the objects portrayed 2) It will accustom the little ones to the pleasure which comes from books 3) It will aid in learning to read.²⁴ This book was the ancestor of all modern picture books for children.

The illustration reproduced below is from the first page of *Orbis*.²⁵ It demonstrates all of the principles of Comenius’ pedagogical revolution. Characteristically, Comenius may

²⁴ *The Great Didactic Online*, Chapter 28. The Mother-School. Subsections 25-26.

²⁵ Comenii, *Orbis sensualium* or *The Visible World*. Accessed on-line through EEBO. Image 11.

have used his own observations, as a father, of the joy that children take in imitating animal sounds to illustrate the sounds of the letters; for example, the letter “G” is introduced with a picture of a goose and the words “The goose gaaglath/Anser ginglit. Ga ga”. By using examples familiar to the child from the real world, the abstract notion of certain sounds being connected with certain letters is clarified and retained, and an introduction to Latin, the necessary component to any education higher than primary at that time, is accomplished.

On the Frontispiece of *The Great Didactic* (1633) Comenius summarizes his purpose in proposing educational reform:

Let the main object of this, our Didactic, be as follows: to seek and to find a method of instruction by which teachers may teach less, but learners learn more; by which schools may be scenes of less noise, aversion and useless labor, but more leisure, enjoyment and solid progress and through which the Christian community may have less darkness, perplexity and dissension but on the other hand more light, orderliness, peace and rest.²⁶

The peace agenda behind his education effort, as stated above, is reiterated numerous times throughout all of Comenius pedagogical works. Another example comes from *Orbis* under the rubric “Humanity/

²⁶ *Great Didactic Frontispiece*.

Humanitas”.²⁷ It begins with the following admonition “Men are made for one another’s good, therefore let them be kind.” The entry then goes on to say on the next page; “Love, so that you may be loved,” illustrating friendship by the figures of two women greeting each other and two turtle doves, and illustrating the opposite of love, by depicting a duel, “where men are angry, cruel and implacable (rather wolves and lions than men).” The convention of dueling embodied the idea of vice masked as a virtue- for the sake of “honor” murder is justified.

That the connection of Comenius’ pedagogical reform plans to the ideal of world peace is still recognized in our own time was underscored on the three-hundredth anniversary of *Opera Didactica Omnia* in 1957 by UNESCO.²⁸

Europe’s catastrophic situation in 1643, with all of the horrors of the Thirty Years War was due, in large measure, according to Comenius, to the failure of its education system: “Every one knows that whatever disposition the branches of an old tree obtain they must necessarily have been so formed from its first growth, for they cannot be otherwise... Man therefore in his first formation of body and soul should be molded so as to be such as he ought to be throughout his whole

27 *Orbis* or Visible. Image 133.

28 Marie Madeleine Rabeq, “Comenius, Apostle of Modern Education and of World Understanding”, *The UNESCO Courier*, November, 1957.



life”.²⁹ And so, his answer to war does not lie in improving security, or better weaponry and armies, nor in re-establishing a balance of power, but in creating a common intellectual foundation for humanity, as a “re-dedication of minds”; and this re-dedication begins with children and their education. While his organizational schema of incremental learning, based on a child’s different developmental stages, starting with pre-school, going to primary school, secondary school, college and university, as first outlined in *The Great Didactic*, in 1633, continues to be the bedrock of modern pedagogy, the ends of these reforms-the transfiguration of humankind and

29 *Infancy*, p. 69.

the rest of creation - are taken less than seriously today, and are usually dismissed as being "Utopian". It seems to me, however, as we look at the present condition of our world, at the degradation of our natural habitat, at the endless conflicts and wars, at the waves of refugees, that we might reconsider Comenius. As the last fragments of paradise lost in our disenchanting world, children remain one of our few hopes, but only if we give them an education which will strengthen and broaden their connection to the natural world and which will help them recognize their innate ability to see God's presence in every blade of grass and in every human face.

In conclusion I would like to cite a dedicatory epistle written by Comenius to the Turkish Sultan in 1666, as a glimpse into his dream of a rational paradise based on the universal brotherhood of man:

Certainly, since each one of us worships that one God, the creator of us all, the fact that we worship him in different ways should not make us pursue one another with hatred, nor go after one another in a hostile way, nor provoke one another with quarrelsome disputations. Rather, engaging in a pious and silent contemplation of mysteries, and in a peaceful discussion one with another, we should consider, with open minds, what it is that has the greatest truth or verisimilitude. Indeed, as we are all made in the image of God, we are not equipped with horns, claws or teeth to

tear one another apart like wild beasts; nor is our understanding dull and mindless, designed for universal ignorance, like that of brute cattle; rather, we have rational souls, made for perceiving and discriminating all things, for choosing freely what is good and true, and indeed rejecting what is bad and false. In accordance with what God said to Moses: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose life, that you may live!"³⁰

³⁰ Noel Malcolm, "Comenius, the Conversion of the Turks and the Muslim-Christian Debate on the Corruption of Scripture," *Church History and Religious Culture*, Vol.87.No.4(2007): 482.



Les religions, entre violence et paix

Eric Vinson

Since the Enlightenment, the modern secular discourse has stigmatized religion as a source of violence. Eric Vinson argues that in order to understand how and why religion can justify violence but also promote peace, we should move beyond the simplistic dichotomy between religion and politics and rethink religion as a mediating instance between politics and spirituality. (Managing-Editor)

La violence, au coeur du religieux ?

Depuis le XVIIIe siècle au moins, la modernité occidentale

aime à souligner les défauts des religions traditionnelles, à commencer par leur implication – directe ou indirecte – dans toutes sortes de violences. "Fanatisme", "obscurant-

isme", "superstition", "arriération", "guerre sainte"... A travers ces vocables et quelques autres non moins négatifs, nombre des penseurs des Lumières et de leurs héritiers pointent ainsi les manquements et incohérences (réelles ou supposées) de ces traditions envers leurs propres standards moraux, si ce n'est à l'égard de "l'humanisme", norme universelle émergente promue par les temps nouveaux. Si bien que la "violence religieuse" et sa dénonciation vont peu à peu devenir des lieux communs dans l'opinion des sociétés en voie de sécularisation, et l'un des principaux ressorts argumentatifs pour critiquer les religions (surtout les trois monothéismes). Dans la culture française actuelle, marquée par une imprégnation anticléricale et certaines lectures antireligieuses de la laïcité, les religions passent ainsi souvent pour des foyers autoritaires d'ignorance, d'hypocrisie et finalement de sévices variés, dont souffriraient leurs fidèles comme les autres, croyants ou non.

L'un des premières questions posées par cet état de fait est bien sûr la *contradiction* existant entre ces maux liés (de près ou de loin) aux religions – violences indéniables au vu de l'expérience historique de nos civilisations – et les innombrables appels à la paix, à la concorde, à la réconciliation proférés par les textes sacrés et les autorités de ces mêmes religions. Sans oublier les actions concrètes entreprises par ces dernières et par leurs membres au

service de l'harmonie individuelle et collective, mettant en pratique ces appels scripturaires... Hélas contrebalancés par d'autres appels – certes moins nombreux – émanant des mêmes sources, pour inciter cette fois à l'usage de la force, au combat, à l'intolérance. Or, au fond de cette contradiction, l'on retrouve le problème de la définition, de la délimitation et de la signification même du phénomène religieux. Problème que nous voudrions poser à travers quelques hypothèses clés, qui ressortissent toutes plus ou moins de la problématique religion/politique ; et, plus fondamentalement encore, à celles du mal et de la théodicée.

Voici les principales de ces hypothèses sur le lien religions/violence :

1) Intrinsèquement ouvrières de paix, les religions sont régulièrement instrumentalisées par la politique, elle-même consubstantiellement liée à la violence ; les violences apparemment religieuses résultent ainsi d'une manipulation et/ou d'une illusion, qui dénaturent et menacent le religieux authentique ; en elles-mêmes, les religions n'ont donc rien à voir avec la violence, mais c'est au fond le péché (individuel et collectif) des hommes qui tend à les défigurer, voire à les corrompre. Mécanisme dont elles sont les victimes impuissantes, surtout quand leurs adversaires modernes les identifient à tort avec ces violences exogènes.

2) Les religions veulent fondamentalement la paix, mais elles

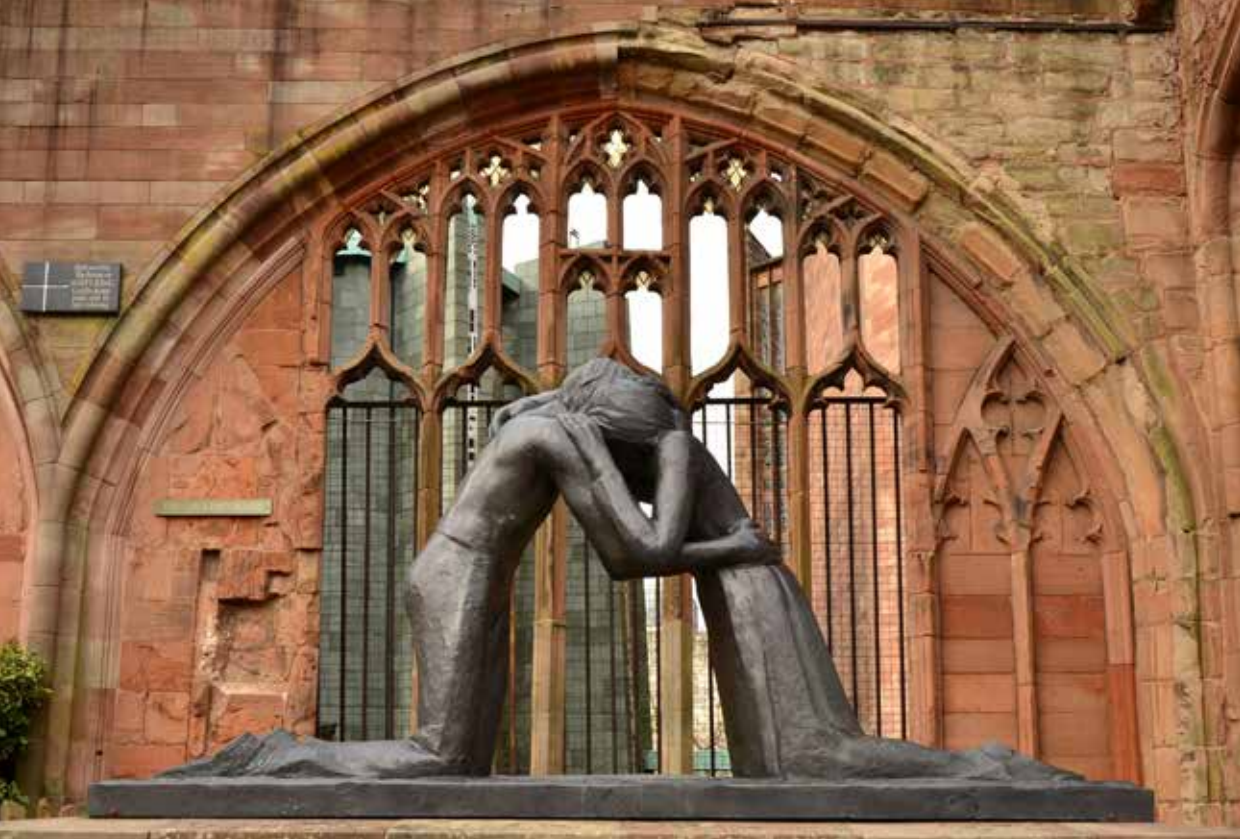
reflètent aussi les sociétés et les individus qui les ont vu naître et auxquels elles s'adressent et s'adaptent. Elles sont donc marquées par les violences qui caractérisent ces derniers ; violences propres à la nature humaine, que les religions tentent tant bien que mal de réguler, orienter ou transmuter, selon la logique du "moindre mal" (voire de la "coïncidence des opposés", notamment moraux, dès qu'il est question de l'Absolu divin). Les religions luttent ainsi contre la violence, mais lui laissent faute de mieux une certaine place, temporaire, en faisant preuve de réalisme et de pragmatisme envers ce bas monde et ses habitants, marqués par le péché. Une vision à laquelle s'apparente, par exemple, la théorie mimétique de René Girard, selon lequel les "sacré archaïque" vient réguler la violence diffuse qui menace la société, en la concentrant périodiquement sur un "bouc émissaire", généralement innocent de cette violence. D'où un maintien de l'ordre social fondé sur cette injustice cyclique, sorte de mal nécessaire anthropologique minimal, de tragédie civilisationnelle (qui trouverait, selon René Girard, sa résolution uniquement à travers la "bonne nouvelle" chrétienne).

3) Charriant toutes sortes de contenus culturels divers et de normes contradictoires accumulés au fil des siècles, les religions – qui sont les plus vieilles institutions culturelles du monde – contiennent le pire et le meilleur. Etant en cela incohérentes

(notamment sur le plan moral), chacun peut y puiser ce qu'il souhaite selon les besoins – éthiquement ou politiquement bons ou mauvais – du moment.

4) Les religions sont des systèmes idéologiques institutionnels rivaux visant la puissance, le contrôle des humains et le maintien de l'ordre établi (dont elles profitent) ; et pour conserver ou déployer ce pouvoir à l'interne comme à l'externe, elles veulent souvent, sinon toujours, l'embrigadement, la coercition et parfois la guerre. Elles ne sont au fond que des formes archaïques de la politique (plus précisément, de l'idéologie), c'est-à-dire de la domination. Une position que l'on retrouve *grosso modo* chez les marxistes, par exemple.

5) Enfin, une "méta-hypothèse" doit être prise en compte : celle qui distingue et classe les religions en fonction de la grille de lecture contrastées produite par l'articulation des hypothèses précédentes. En effet, ces dernières ont été formulées à propos des religions en général, c'est-à-dire à propos du religieux dans son ensemble. Mais on peut aisément différencier en la matière (et l'histoire des théories, confessionnelles ou non, sur la religion le montre assez) des religions réduites à la politique et à la violence, souvent qualifiées de "fausses religions" dans le cadre de la polémique interreligieuse – surtout autrefois. Et puis d'autres religions, au contraire valorisées comme "ré-



vélées", "authentiques", "pures" en contrepoint du premier groupe des "fausses religions" (décrites comme simplement humaines, voire comme d'origine démoniaque). Ainsi, en fonction de ses propres options idéologiques et/ou convictionnelles, tel auteur classera par exemple le christianisme dans l'une des "cases" citées (hypothèses 1, 2, 3 ou 4), et l'hindouisme dans telle autre ; alors qu'un autre analyste rangera ces deux religions dans deux autres catégories...

Chacune de ces hypothèses mérite un examen approfondi, qui dépasse de loin les limites, étroites, de cet article. En outre, une autre piste devrait être explorée : celle de la possibilité – ou non – de distinguer précisément une violence intrin-

sèquement religieuse de l'ordinaire violence politique, supposée purement séculière... Or, à en croire les travaux de l'ancien ministre libanais Georges Corm¹ ou du théologien américain William Cavanaugh², une telle dissociation s'avère en fait impossible ; W. Cavanaugh démasquant même – derrière l'assimilation "religion = violence" – un stéréotype fondateur de la modernité : un "mythe" typiquement moderne, par lequel l'État-nation cherche à capter le sacré dévolu pendant des millénaires aux traditions religieuses en les diabolisant et les discréditant.

1 Georges Corm, *Pour une lecture profane des conflits : sur le "retour du religieux" dans les conflits contemporains du Moyen-Orient*, Paris : La Découverte, 2012, 275 p.

2 William Cavanaugh, *Le Mythe de la violence religieuse*, Paris : Ed. de L'Homme Nouveau, 2009, 382 p.

Devant les hécatombes sans précédent dues aux idéologies modernes que sont les nationalismes et les totalitarismes (nazisme, stalinisme, maoïsme...), une telle argumentation interpelle. Récentes à l'échelle historique, ces idéologies ne prirent-elle pas toujours les religions pour cibles, ou, pire encore, pour instruments ?

Ne disposant pas de l'espace suffisant pour analyser ces différentes problématiques comme il le faudrait, on peut néanmoins éclairer l'une des questions centrales qui les réunit, à savoir celle des définitions respectives du politique, du religieux et des rapports qu'ils entretiennent, notamment eu égard à la question du pouvoir et de la violence. Ce qui implique d'utiliser une troisième notion, en lui donnant un sens précis : le spirituel.

Définir, distinguer et articuler trois notions : le religieux, le spirituel et le politique

"Spirituel" est un mot régulièrement utilisé, le plus souvent sans conceptualisation, dans un flou qui constitue certainement l'une des explications de son succès. De fait, "religieux" et les termes de sa famille d'une part, et "spirituel" et ceux de la sienne d'autre part, ont longtemps

été employés comme des quasi-synonymes ; pensons par exemple à la distinction occidentale classique entre "l'autorité spirituelle" (en l'occurrence religieuse, puisqu'il s'agit de l'Église catholique) et le "pouvoir temporel" (monarchique, impérial, etc.)... L'usage conduisant néanmoins à spécialiser peu à peu le terme "spirituel" pour désigner ce qui a plus spécifiquement rapport avec l'au-delà, le surnaturel, le Divin, au sein même du religieux, perçu comme une réalité plus composite, à la jonction de ce "pur spirituel" et du "temporel" (profane,

Le socio-politique, le religieux et le spirituel forment un continuum et sont inséparables, comme le sont le corps, l'âme et l'esprit dans un organisme humain vivant.

mondain, terrestre, séculier, social), comme on va le voir dans un instant. Le "spirituel" apparaissant ainsi – en quelque sorte – comme la dimension la plus mystique du religieux, car directement en rapport avec le Divin, l'absolu, l'infini et pour cela la plus dégagée des contraintes sociales et politiques.

Pour sortir de cet état d'indétermination, nous faisons les hypothèses suivantes :

1) On ne peut définir rigoureusement le religieux qu'en tension/articulation avec deux autres

notions, à savoir le "spirituel" et le "(socio-)politique" ; notions elles-mêmes vagues si on les envisage séparément, mais précisées par un emploi simultané et articulé. Un peu comme les ternaires notionnels "gauche/centre/droite" ou "chaud/tiède/froid" ne font sens que par l'interaction entre leurs composantes respectives.

2) Ce modèle ternaire décrit la situation régnant au sein du type idéal de la société traditionnelle, qui est de fait la matrice de la situation moderne ; et ce même si la seconde se distingue radicalement de la première, en particulier sous ce rapport du religieux/spirituel. Il faut donc comprendre comment fonctionne la société traditionnelle en la matière pour éclairer ensuite le fonctionnement de la société moderne, qui en provient par généalogie et opposition.

Selon ce modèle tripartite de la société traditionnelle, le socio-politique, le religieux et le spirituel forment un continuum et sont inséparables, comme le sont le corps, l'âme et l'esprit dans un organisme humain vivant, selon la vision de l'homme des grandes traditions religieuses³, dont les conceptions socio-politiques sont justement marquées par le holisme, l'organicisme ou encore l'inséparabilité du macrocosme et du microcosme. En effet, selon

ces conceptions, le corps, la psyché et l'esprit d'une personne humaine vivante sont aussi interdépendantes qu'inséparables ; et pourtant, il est possible – et nécessaire à qui veut bien connaître l'homme – de distinguer par la pensée ces trois instances ; ces trois niveaux de réalité unis mais non confondus : le physique, matériel, organique, "grossier" ; le psychique, "animique" et conceptuel, sensible et subjectif, ou encore "subtil" ; et enfin, le spirituel, mystique, supra-formel, "ultime".

Le caractère heuristique d'une telle approche se vérifie notamment dans l'univers biblique, avec ses trois figures paradigmatiques et complémentaires du roi (pôle politique), du prêtre⁴ (pôle religieux) et du prophète (pôle spirituel⁵). Trois figures pour lesquelles l'accent définitionnel et fonctionnel porte sur le pôle qui leur est associé par excellence, mais sans être pour autant séparé des deux autres pôles : ainsi, Moïse, qui – comme Mohammed dans l'islam – les réunit tous trois en lui, mais tient plus particulièrement le rôle prophétique en déléguant le rôle religieux au grand

3 Cf. les travaux sur le sujet de l'anthropologue français Michel Fromaget, de l'historien et théologien français Jérôme Rousse-Lacordaire ou encore du théologien italien Vito Mancuso.

4 Le juriste, le théologien et les autres spécialistes de la Loi et des Ecritures saintes (rabbins dans le judaïsme, oulémas en islam, pasteurs en protestantisme...) correspondent également à ce type « religieux », dans les traditions où n'existent pas de « prêtres » en tant que tels.

5 Le moine, ou encore mieux, l'ermitte – qui « fuit seul vers le Seul » (Plotin) et pour qui « Dieu seul suffit » (sainte Thérèse d'Avila) – peuvent également constituer une figure typique du spirituel ainsi conçu, compte tenu de leur caractère "a-social".

prêtre Aaron et le rôle politico-guerrier à Josué. Ainsi, le roi David, par essence personnage politique mais qui est aussi un personnage éminemment "religieux" (ne doit-il pas construire le Temple de Jérusalem, centre du culte divin propre aux prêtres ?) et tout autant "spirituel" (la tradition prête à celui qui a reçu l'onction sainte la composition des psaumes, et surtout une véritable intimité mystique avec Dieu) ; complémentarité et inséparabilité des trois fonctions chez David résumée dans l'idée de Messie, si importante historiquement et théologiquement, qui s'origine justement dans la figure du père de Salomon. De même, dans le judaïsme antique tel que nous le montre la Bible, les grands prêtres, les rois et les prophètes sont des types qui font système et se complètent en s'opposant, aucun des trois n'étant complètement coupé du champ où œuvrent spécifiquement les deux autres.

Correspondant au plan corporel, le socio-politique est l'instance qui gère par excellence l'ordre social, terrestre, matériel, celui des corps, justement, en assurant leur santé et leur prospérité, c'est-à-dire leur préservation physique face aux dangers et nécessités de ce bas monde (fonctions économique et sécuritaire⁶, qui implique pour ce-

6 Cf. *De Monarchia*, III, 16, où Dante souligne que la fonction de l'Empereur – c'est-à-dire du pouvoir temporel – est de conduire les hommes à la "félicité temporelle" "dans la tranquillité de la paix" en les protégeant des troubles et désordres ; et ce en complémentarité avec le Pape – l'autorité spirituelle – qui

tte dernière l'usage de la force, voire de la violence). A l'opposé, le spirituel ne s'occupe – comme son nom l'indique – que de l'Esprit, c'est-à-dire de la Réalité ultime, divine, envisagée pour Elle-même, dans une relation gratuite et désintéressée avec l'Absolu, l'Infini. Ce qui ne l'empêche pas d'intervenir dans le champ religieux et socio-politique, quand les nécessités spirituelles – ici inséparables de l'éthique – l'impliquent ; en témoignent les interpellations voire les contestations des prophètes bibliques à l'égard des monarques, du clergé et de la société toute entière de l'ancien Israël. Enfin, le religieux est ce qui constitue la nécessaire médiation entre ces deux pôles respectivement spirituel et politique, opposés et inconciliables en dehors justement de cette articulation religieuse. De ce point de vue, et contrairement aux conceptions actuellement dominantes en France, le religieux apparaît ainsi comme une réalité par définition mixte, médiante et ambiguë, qui tient autant du spirituel et que du politique – et donc, d'une certaine violence –, puisque il a justement pour fonctions simultanées de "spiritualiser" la vie sociale et politique, d'une part ; et d'autre part, d'"incarner" (d'"incorporer") et d'institutionnaliser le spirituel dans la vie concrète, quotidienne, des humains, tant individuellement que collectivement. Ce qui ne va pas, parfois sans violence : qu'on pense,

doit quant à lui les mener au salut éternel. Le premier veille ainsi au "salut" des corps, et le second à celui des âmes.

en particulier, au type humain à la fois religieux, socio-politique et spirituel que constitue le chevalier, ce guerrier vertueux – présent mutatis mutandis dans toutes les civilisations – qui combat pour le bien et défend la veuve et l'orphelin.

En médiatisant ainsi les exigences du spirituel vers le socio-politique, et réciproquement celles du socio-politique vers le spirituel, le religieux est ainsi par excellence l'instance intermédiaire, ambivalente, qui assure la cohésion, la survie et la vie d'un monde proprement humain. Spiritualisant autant que possible le socio-politique et socialisant (ou politisant) autant que nécessaire le spirituel, le religieux est donc un lieu de tension et de contradiction, mais aussi de régulation. Ce qui fait de lui la clé de voûte de l'édifice humain traditionnel, où convergent les poussées opposées des forces contraires qui caractérisent ce dernier, par nature hiérarchisé en fonction de la "primauté du spirituel" sur ce bas monde. En employant le langage symbolique propre à cette vision traditionnelle du monde, nous pourrions dire qu'entre les exigences de la Terre (le socio-politique, "en bas") et celle du Ciel (le spirituel, "en haut"), le religieux ("au milieu") est par excellence le lieu de l'Homme, où l'ordinaire des jours est régulièrement rendu "extraordinaire" par sa communication (au moyen de l'activité rituelle) avec ces réalités d'En-haut ; et où cet "extraordinaire" du Divin se trouve en

quelque sorte apprivoisé voire banalisé – c'est-à-dire humanisé – par la familiarité récurrente des rituels religieux ordinaires et des institutions qui les administrent. Qu'on pense à l'exemple, en la matière si parlant, de la messe catholique, liturgie quotidienne où est censé s'opérer à chaque fois le miracle de la transsubstantiation, qui unit justement par excellence la Terre et le Ciel, le Divin et l'Humain... Des rituels et institutions qui, du fait même de cette fonction d'apprivoisement, familiarisation et banalisation du spirituel originaire, sont menacés de routinisation, sclérose, dérive... N'étaient les surgissements périodiques mais imprévisibles de ce spirituel (re-)fondateur et régénérateur, proprement prophétique, à même de ressourcer mystiquement "d'En-haut" ce religieux humain trop humain, pour éviter sa dénaturation complète et son absorption par l'ici-bas (socio-politique, parfois violent).

Envisager ainsi le religieux comme instance non-dichotomique – médiate, mixte, ambiguë – de matérialisation/humanisation du spirituel et de spiritualisation de l'humain et du monde conduit au constant suivant, d'importance. Bien que distincts, le religieux et le spirituel sont vraiment intriqués⁷, et

7 Sur les problèmes posés par une opposition trop tranchée entre spirituel et religieux, voir Nancy Ammerman, "Spiritual But Not Religious ? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion", *Journal for the scientific Study of Religion*, 52/2, 2013 et Sandra M. Schneiders, *Religions vs. Spirituality : a contemporary Co-*



historiquement inséparables ; mais modernité et postmodernité remettent en question leur articulation traditionnelle, en les confondant selon certains rapports, en les séparant radicalement selon d'autres. D'où un schéma occidental actuel selon lequel, le "bon religieux", c'est en fait ce qu'on appelle désormais le "spirituel"⁸, réduit à l'intériorité privée, à la non-normativité et à l'espace informel où les spiritualités issues des religions historiques sont censées pouvoir communier, une fois amputées de leurs volets socio-politiques respectifs, jugés "archaïques" et/ou incompatibles les uns avec les autres. Le "mauvais religieux" ren-

nundrum, Spiritus, 2003.

8 Cf. Lionel Obadia, "Terminologie des sciences des religions et vocabulaire anthropologique : retour sur l'abstrait et l'empirique dans le répertoire conceptuel", *Histoire, Monde et Cultures religieuses*, juin 2013, n° 26 "Les Mots de la religion", Paris : Karthala. p. 41-57.

voyant quant à lui selon ce schéma à l'institution et à la tradition, par lesquelles on définit couramment "les religions" comme des systèmes normatifs et identitaires clos, s'excluant les uns les autres, passésistes voire réactionnaires, oppressifs envers l'individu et l'intelligence, inutiles et même nuisibles du fait de leur caractère liberticide et conflictuel supposé.

Caricaturale, cette simplification contemporaine des catégories de "spirituel" et de "religieux" (ainsi que de leurs rapports) l'est à bien des égards. Elle ignore en particulier cette inséparabilité du spirituel et du religieux dans le temps long de l'histoire humaine. Elle oublie en effet que le religieux – et les religions – peuvent être vus comme les résultats socio-historiques paradoxaux et spécifiques issus d'un double mouvement simultané : l'institutionnalisation du spirituel dans un contexte politico-culturel particulier ; et la spiritualisation progressive de ces mêmes institutions politico-culturelles. Cette dichotomie du "bon" et du "mauvais" religieux méconnaît enfin l'ambivalence foncière de ce dernier, travaillé par des tropismes – respectivement céleste et pur (au sens d'éthique et de non-violent) versus terrestre et impur, autrement dit potentiellement violent – à la fois opposés et complémentaires. Et comme l'attention occidentale contemporaine tend à identifier le religieux avec ses seuls aspects négatifs, il est bon de rap-

peler que si ces derniers existent bel et bien, ils ne sont pas le tout de la question. Un regard objectif impliquant donc de prendre aussi en compte les efforts millénaires des traditions religieuses pour réguler, limiter, sublimer si ce n'est éradiquer la violence, en leur sein comme à l'extérieur.

Les religions au service de la paix

Un fond éthique partagé par les religions

Auteur de l'ouvrage francophone de référence sur la "règle d'or" – règle éthique qui revient à "Ne fais pas à autrui ce que tu ne voudrais pas subir", ou à "fais à autrui ce que tu voudrais qu'il te fasse" –, le philosophe et théologien Olivier

du Roy⁹ en a retrouvé trace partout où il a cherché. Que ce soit dans sa version négative ou bien positive, explique-t-il, "cette maxime morale est attestée dans toutes les cultures et religions du monde depuis le Ve siècle avant Jésus-Christ, depuis Confucius, le bouddhisme et l'hindouisme, l'Égypte ancienne, la Mésopotamie, le mazdéisme, la Bible et enfin l'islam. Elle joue un rôle majeur dans l'histoire de la pensée chrétienne où elle est considérée comme l'expression de la loi naturelle. Luther et les réformateurs lui accordent une place éminente dans leur prédication. Elle devient un argument majeur des Quakers contre l'esclavage au XVIIe siècle."¹⁰

9 Cf. *La règle d'or : histoire d'une maxime morale universelle*, Paris : Cerf, 2012, 2 t., 1518 p.

10 In Olivier du Roy, *La règle d'or : le retour d'une maxime oubliée*, Paris : Cerf, 2009, 178 p.



L'un de leurs leaders, William Penn (1644-1718) ayant d'ailleurs fondé en Pennsylvanie une société sans peine de mort ni armée permanente, car vivant en harmonie avec les Indiens. A côté de la "règle d'or", les diverses Ecritures et corpus de sagesse offrent bien sûr mille et une autres paroles et injonctions condamnant toute agression, grave aussi bien que légère : des "dix commandements" aux "cinq préceptes" bouddhistes, du Sermon sur la montagne au Coran ("Celui qui tue un homme, c'est comme s'il tuait toute l'humanité. De même celui qui le sauve, c'est comme s'il sauvait tout le genre humain", sourate 5,32 ; "Nulle contrainte en religion !" 2, 256 ; ou encore "Si Allah l'avait voulu, il aurait fait de vous une communauté unique. Toutefois il ne l'a pas fait, afin de vous éprouver en ce qu'il vous a donné. Devancez-vous donc mutuellement dans les bonnes actions. Vous retournerez tous vers Allah et il vous éclairera sur le sens de vos différences", 5,48). Impossibles à lister tant elles sont nombreuses, ces sentences pacifiantes le sont infiniment plus que les propos inverses, même si ces derniers existent aussi. En outre, ces paroles de concorde s'ajoutent à toutes celles qui incitent au bien et aux multiples vertus, jusqu'à l'"amour du prochain" et même "des ennemis" (Mat. 5, 44). De quoi attester, sur la longue durée, le rôle civilisateur des religions, "grandes éducatrices du genre humain" à travers leur défense et illustration des mêmes

normes morales et principes spirituels. Un fond humaniste partagé, et en cela véritablement universel, à la connaissance et à la diffusion duquel le théologien suisse Hans Küng consacre depuis 1993 sa Fondation Ethique Planétaire, Weltethos¹¹ (basée en Allemagne).

Par ailleurs, on doit aussi mettre au crédit des religions leur vaste et constant effort culturel et caritatif contre les diverses formes de souffrance, de pauvreté, de barbarie. Concernant leur lutte en faveur du savoir, des malades, des démunis, quelques exemples suffiront parmi tant d'autres : règle sacrée universelle d'hospitalité, et d'asile dans certains lieux saints ; alphabétisation millénaire des juifs, pour lire la Thora ; fondation des hôpitaux, écoles, bibliothèques et universités par l'Église chrétienne médiévale, à qui les Maisons de la Sagesse ou du Soins musulmanes transpirent le savoir antique. Incitation permanente des trois monothéismes (et des autres traditions, exaltant la vertu du don) à la générosité et au partage, avec le *tsadaka* juive, l'aumône ou charité chrétienne et la *zakat*, l'un des cinq piliers de l'islam. Du médecin et philosophe persan Avicenne (980-1037) au charitable Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), de la Croix rouge au Croissant Rouge et de Mère Teresa à l'Abbé Pierre, la religion n'est-elle pas – selon Marx lui-même – "l'âme d'un monde sans cœur" ? Du moins jusqu'à ce que l'État-Providence, les

11 Fondation Weltethos : <http://www.global-ethic-now.de>

Organisations Non-Gouvernementales et la sécularisation ne viennent, tout récemment à l'échelle historique, lui contester cette mission clé d'humanisation, en insistant exclusivement sur les conflits et destructions culturelles (autodafés, iconoclasmes, etc.) revendiquant un motif religieux ; lesquels n'ont, hélas, pas manqué non plus au cours des siècles.

Les religions inspiratrices de la non-violence et des "spirituels en politique"

Spécialiste des questions relatives à la paix, le jésuite Christian Mellon¹² souligne cet apport irremplaçable des religions à la pacification du monde : "Un certain nombre de croyants estiment, à tort ou à raison, que la tradition religieuse à laquelle ils adhèrent leur interdit de recourir à la violence, même pour de justes causes. Si nous disons "à tort ou à raison", c'est parce qu'il n'entre pas dans (notre) propos de trancher, à propos de chacune des traditions religieuses, la question de savoir si cette interprétation est fondée ou non : au nom de quoi dira-t-on, par exemple, que (le non-violent radical) Tolstoï a été plus fidèle à l'Évangile que le pasteur et théologien allemand Dietrich Bonhoeffer, qui estima que son devoir était de soutenir le complot visant à assassiner Hitler ?" Restent les "sources d'inspiration que les acteurs non-violents ont dit avoir trou-

¹² Christian Mellon, Jacques Semelin, *La non-violence*, Paris : PUF, 1994, 128 p., p. 29.

vé dans leurs traditions religieuses". Ainsi, c'est du jaïnisme, antique confession indienne très minoritaire, que Gandhi a reçu son concept clé, l'*ahimsa* (littéralement "non-nuisance"), reprise dans l'hindouisme et le bouddhisme. Autre source de la non-violence, cette religion offre au XXe siècle des figures remarquables qui articulent la spiritualité et la démocratie : le maître zen et militant des droits de l'homme vietnamien Thich Nhat Hanh et les deux prix Nobel de la Paix, le Dalaï Lama et Aung San Suu Kyi (actuellement aux portes du pouvoir en Birmanie), qui ont tous trois résisté pacifiquement à la guerre, la dictature ou la colonisation.

Bien que moins connus, de tels artisans de paix existent aussi en islam. Du côté du soufis tout d'abord, de certains grands maîtres médiévaux – Ibn Arabi, par exemple, qui souligna la convergence des spiritualités authentiques – au chef de la résistance algérienne face à la conquête française, l'émir Abd el-Kader (1808-1883), qui devint une vedette internationale – honorée à la fois par le Pape et les franc-maçons – pour avoir protégé, au péril de sa vie, les chrétiens persécutés à Damas en 1860. Plus près de nous, on peut également penser à Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988), ami et disciple du Mahatma Gandhi, ou au théologien démocrate Mahmoud M. Taha (1909-1985), "le Gandhi soudanais". Enfin, les Balkans ayant eux aussi "leur" Gandhi, avec l'écrivain



non-violent Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006), le premier président du Kosovo.

Concernant le christianisme, ses apports en matière de paix sont moins ignorés, ainsi que le détaille C. Mellon : "A diverses époques de l'histoire, des groupes de chrétiens ont pris au pied de la lettre les enseignements du Nouveau Testament sur la renonciation à la violence : "Si l'on te frappe sur la joue droite, tend encore l'autre" (*Matthieu* 5, 39), "Ne résiste pas au méchant" (*ibid.*), "Celui qui prend l'épée périra par l'épée" (*Mat.* 26, 52). Les témoignages concordent sur le fait que les premières communautés

chrétiennes n'ont jamais envisagé de se défendre par les armes contre les persécutions, et qu'elles considéraient toutes les activités faisant verser le sang comme des péchés particulièrement graves. Quant au métier des armes, il est d'abord jugé incompatible avec la foi (...). Pour Origène (185-252), par exemple, le chrétien ne doit "tirer l'épée ni pour faire la guerre, ni pour faire valoir ses droits ni pour aucun autre motif, car ce précepte de l'Évangile ne souffre aucune exception." (*Oeuvres*, corpus de Berlin, vol. II, p. 221-222). Marginalisé après la conversion au christianisme de l'empereur Constantin (313) et l'élaboration par Au-

gustin (354-430) d'une justification théologique de la guerre, le refus de la violence sera périodiquement remis à l'honneur par les mouvements de "retour à l'Évangile" qui jalonnent l'histoire du christianisme : émergence de la vie monastique (Ve-VIe siècles), Vaudois (XIIe), franciscains, (XIIIe).¹³ Par la suite, certains courants – comme les protestants mennonites – mettront à nouveau la non-violence au centre de l'éthique chrétienne. En France, c'est d'ailleurs ces anabaptistes qui obtiendront de la Convention, en 1793, le droit à l'objection de conscience. Autre occurrence historique bien connue : Leon Tolstoï (1828-1910), chrétien radical hétérodoxe excommunié en 1901 notamment pour avoir dénoncé les incohérences et compromissions des Églises. Or Tolstoï fut aussi l'un des principaux inspirateurs de M. K. Gandhi, lequel influencera à son tour tant d'autres "spirituels en démocratie", unissant la non-violence à la foi religieuse et démocratique : Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, etc. De quoi réactiver en pleine modernité, *mutatis mutandis*, le modèle classique de la "sainteté politique", si abondamment illustré au cours des âges ? On pense, par exemple, à l'empereur bouddhiste Ashoka (v. - 304- - 232), au quatrième calife Ali (Arabie, v. 600-661), au roi de France Louis IX (« saint Louis », 1214-1270), à l'Anglais Thomas More (1478-1535, le saint patron des

hommes politiques), à la Française sainte Jeanne d'Arc (1412-1431), au premier Dalaï Lama chef d'Etat, Lob-sang Gyatso (1617-1682), etc.

L'interreligieux face aux conflits

Dans une logique de tolérance, de compréhension mutuelle et à terme de concorde universelle, le combat pour la paix rencontra peu à peu le désir de dialogue oecuménique, puis interreligieux, en particulier chez certains protestants. En 1893 à Chicago fut ainsi ouvert le premier Parlement mondial des religions, sur une initiative de quelques unitariens ; et le Mouvement international de la réconciliation (MIR) est né quant à lui en 1919, avant de s'ouvrir très tôt aux autres chrétiens, puis aux autres croyants, après 1960. Quant aux Mennonites déjà évoqués, "sur la base d'une ré-interpretation de leurs credo et coutumes, ils sont devenus depuis la fin des années 80 des experts du peace-building actifs dans une soixantaine de pays", atteste la politologue Sandrine Lefranc¹⁴. Depuis le concile Vatican II (1962-65) et surtout les rencontres d'Assise à partir de 1986, l'Église catholique s'est elle aussi ralliée à la démarche interreligieuse, à laquelle elle apporte ses grandes capacités d'action et de médiatisation. Dans ce cadre, ses priorités sont la lutte pour la paix, la liberté de conscience et le dialogue inter-

¹⁴Cf. Sandrine Lefranc, *Des pacificateurs inspirés. Notes sur des groupes anabaptistes et évangéliques américains*, Terrain, n° 51, 2008, p. 42-49. [<http://terrain.revues.org/10963>]

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

convictionnel, illustrés par des lieux (comme la communauté de Taizé, en France), des manifestations (les JMJ, Journées Mondiales de la Jeunesse) et des mouvements, tel Sant'Egidio. Habile médiatrice, cette communauté internationale née en 1968 en Italie a notamment contribué à la fin de la guerre civile au Mozambique, en 1992. A ces grandes causes ecclésiales, l'encyclique *Laudato si'* du pape François vient d'ajouter l'écologie, dont la portée planétaire ne peut que rejoindre l'universel spirituel, éthique et – en l'occurrence – politique. Autant d'innovations qui témoignent d'une progressive ouverture au pluralisme de l'antique tradition pacificatrice catholique, tissée de messages pontificaux, d'efforts diplomatiques et d'initiatives éthico-spirituelles variées, telle la "paix de Dieu" (Xe-XIe siècles) visant à limiter les violences dans la société féodale européenne. Longtemps initié par des chrétiens, le dialogue interreligieux se trouve depuis quelques années également pris en charge par des croyants issus d'autres confessions, ainsi qu'en témoignent le Festival de Fès des musiques sacrées du monde (Maroc) et les activités du DICID (Qatar), ou plus récemment du KAICID (Arabie Saoudite), patronnées par des musulmans ; ou encore l'Amitié judéo-musulmane, pour prendre un exemple français.

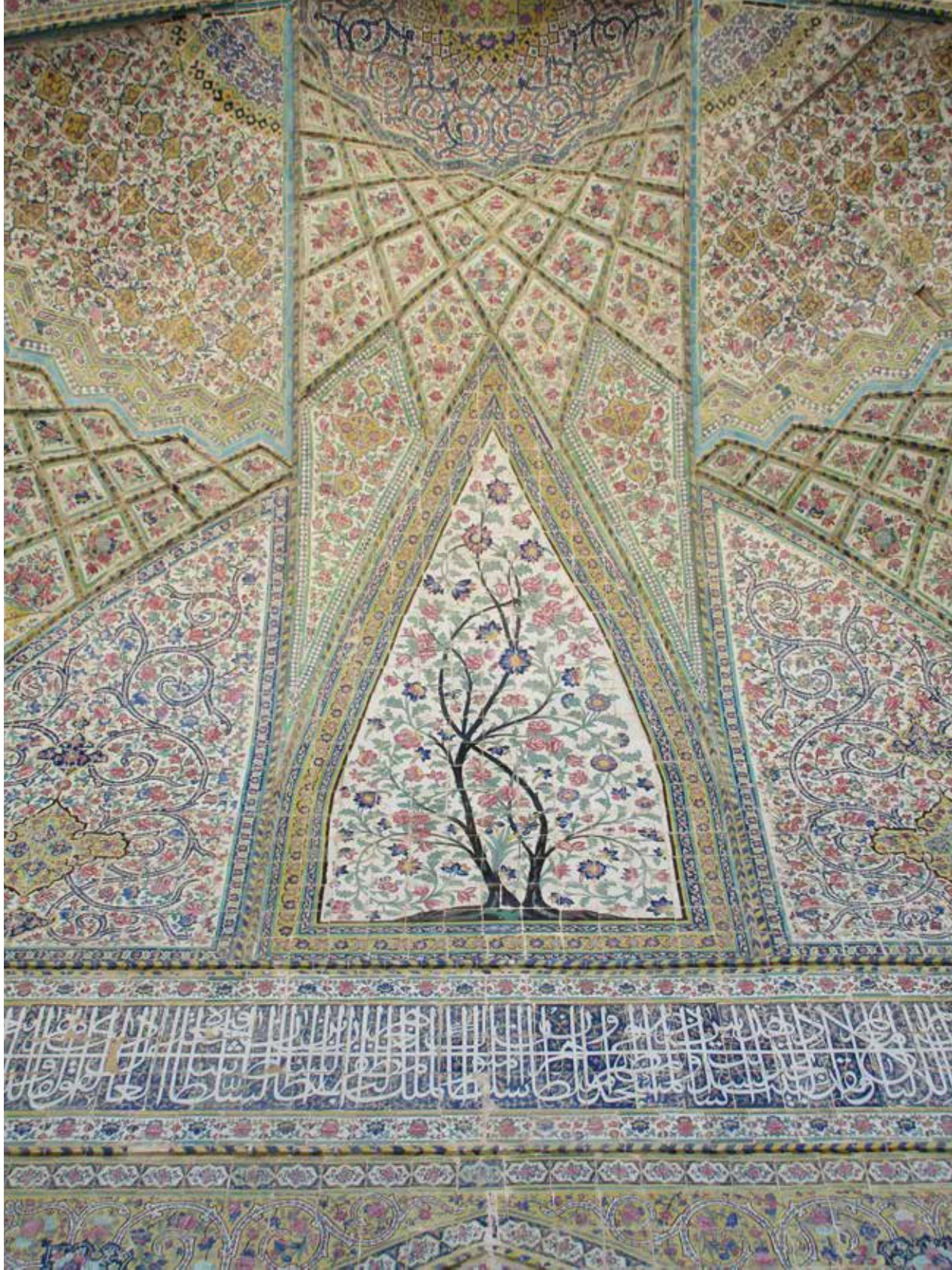
Conclusion

Eclairant, réchauffant et humanisant toutes les civilisations depuis toujours, le "feu sacré"¹⁵ du religieux peut aussi incendier, consumer et détruire parfois, sans qu'on puisse vraiment savoir si ces embrasements périodiques sont propres à la nature violente de ce dernier, qui se trouverait ainsi révélée ; ou bien résultent de dérives – soit endogènes, soit exogènes – issues des instrumentalisation, récupérations et manipulations du religieux par le politique (et d'autres intérêts, économiques en particulier). Contrairement aux conceptions dominant la modernité occidentale, il semble bien – en tout cas – que le lien du religieux et du politique ne soit pas ni contingent, ni optionnel, mais soit au contraire nécessaire ; et qu'il se concrétise par la même d'une façon ou d'une autre, que l'on approuve ou condamne cet état de fait. Ce qui signifie, hélas sans doute, que le religieux possède des rapports structurels avec la violence ; soit du fait de sa nature propre, soit en raison de ce lien avec le politique, lui-même voué au maintien de l'ordre à l'intérieur des sociétés ou entre ces dernières, autrement dit à l'usage tendanciel de la force.

Mais souligner l'inséparabilité du politique et du religieux ne revient pas à la réduction de l'un à l'autre (ce qui reviendrait à confon-

¹⁵ Expression de Régis Debray, cf. son livre *Le Feu sacré : fonctions du religieux*, Paris : Fayard, 2003.

dre "religion" et "idéologie") ; ni a fortiori à la réduction du religieux à la violence, ne serait-ce qu'en raison du lien non moins consubstantiel existant entre le religieux et le domaine éthico-spirituel, qui s'oppose justement par nature à la violence. Reconnaître et assumer les relations complexes qui relient à la fois le spirituel avec le religieux et le religieux avec le politique conduit ainsi à une vigilance humaniste à l'égard des dérives toujours possibles du religieux, quand il perd sa position médiane entre ces deux pôles opposés et complémentaires. Et, en particulier, quand il devient un outil voire une "arme" particulièrement efficace (du fait de sa puissance intrinsèque de "feu sacré") dans les mains du politique, notamment comme moyen de mobilisation des foules ou de sacralisation de l'identité, du pouvoir, de l'ordre social en place, de la communauté, etc. Heureusement, face à de telles instrumentalisation, le religieux possède des gardes fous éthico-spirituels spécifiques, communs à toutes les religions et civilisations : la récurrence scripturaire de la "règle d'or" et d'autres valeurs pacifiantes ; l'existence de dialogues inter-communautaires et de pratique d'intériorité incitant au travail sur soi ; ou enfin la manifestation régulière de leaders "spirituels en politique", le plus souvent non-violents.



Book Reviews

Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions, ed. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). xxvii, 210pp, \$20.00. Tenth Anniversary Edition.

Our collective sensibilities are assaulted by many cases of violence and terror. Our global landscape is indeed tormented by news of horrendous terror committed in the name of God. It seems very ironic that sacred traditions that are meant to safeguard human wholeness have been used to justify hatred and violence all over the globe. This is one of the heart-wrenching realities of our contemporary world. Therefore, the search for new models concerning peace provides a new sense of hope for a world relentlessly yearning for a message of hope in the midst of chaos. In a season of negative perspectives about religion, it is important to set the record straight concerning the enduring connections between religion and peace. New paradigms concerning peace are imperative in a terror-saddled world. Religion can contribute some valuable insights to this important process.

Subverting Hatred is an edited book that brings together different voices on religion and peace from different religious traditions. The book is a lucid appeal to recover the transformative power of religion in the midst of global violence and terror. It is comparative and seeks to provide a cross-cultural understanding of peacebuilding. Beyond destructive rhetoric, the book seeks to provide a new narrative that can engender peace and understanding in the world. It uses a case study approach to uncover the contributions of religion to both inner and global peace. It wrestles with an understanding that religion can contribute to the discourse on subverting hatred and building the capacity for peace.

The essays in *Subverting Hatred* emerged out of a project commissioned by the Boston Research Center in the spring of 1998. The purpose of the project was to study the theme of nonviolence in the scriptures, the oral teachings, and the traditions of world religions. It is a bold testimony of the ambiguities and conflicting messages that emerged from the study. Religious traditions are replete with ambivalent messages about war and peace. Nonetheless, the project encourages scholars to investigate the fundamental message of peace in all religious traditions.

The book notes that the Buddhist peace wheel, the Confucian/Daoist teachings that teaches how to “channel conflict” and “call for cooperation,”

the Hindu tradition concerning *ahimsa*, Islam's *al-jihad al akbar* (the Greater Struggle), and the Jainist advocacy for peace are all enduring insights that can contribute to peace, harmony, and justice. This book amplifies the challenges of peacebuilding in all religious traditions. Using sacred texts, theologies, histories, traditions, and practices; it is a compendium of the rich legacy of nonviolence in religious traditions.

The ten chapters in the book cover Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism and Daoism, Hinduism, Indigenous Traditions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It opens with a powerful foreword by Daisaku Ikeda, Founder, Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the President of the Soka Gakkai International and concludes with an epilogue by Donald K. Swearer. The book's editor, Daniel Smith-Christopher teaches theological studies and directs the Peace Studies program at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. In his introduction, he sets out the rationale of the book. According to him, "the main purpose of *Subverting Hatred* is an invitation to reflect on religious traditions in the context of the current debates about violence and nonviolence, and to offer resources from within religious traditions that would support a nonviolent approach to pressing issues" (p.xxiii).

Typical of most edited books, the chapters in *Subverting Hatred* are uneven in terms of their depth and critical dimension. This is one of the pitfalls of an edited volume. However, this dimension does not diminish its value for contemplating useful models for peacemaking and justice. It is a wonderful collection of essays on what Michel Foucault called a "reverse narrative" that would refute the tendency to solely use religion to justify violence and mayhem.

Akintunde E. Akinade

Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014). 499 pp. ISBN 9781847921864 (Hardback)

The recent work by Karen Armstrong entitled *Fields of Blood* is more than a new contribution to the ongoing debate about religious extremism, radicalism, fanaticism and the so-called religious terrorism that is so much present in our world. It also provides an in-depth scholarly attempt to explain the historical roots of violence in human history. Penned by the author whose numerous other works on religious subjects (such as *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*; *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*; *The Case for God: What Religions Really Means* to name but a few) have earned her the status of a very distinguished and respected scholar in the field of religious studies, *Fields of Blood* is a synthesis of her scholarship on religious and non-religious violence from ancient times to the present day. The book places the question of religious violence in a larger context that takes into account as well its socio-economic, political and cultural roots.

The book is divided into three parts and thirteen chapters, besides the introduction and the afterword. In the first part the author delves into the history of ancient civilizations such as the Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian empires of Mesopotamia, the Aryan kingdoms of Indian Subcontinent, the Chinese ruling dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou and finally the biblical prophets and their peoples down to the first century BC and the birth of Jesus Christ. Most of these civilizations developed during the Agricultural or Neolithic revolution. This revolution created a situation in which the emergence of more complex societies, with a highly stratified organization, became unavoidable. Society was thus divided into a ruling elite supported by military force on the one side and ordinary peasants and farmers on the other side. In Armstrong's view, violence in all these societies can be traced back primarily to political and economic struggles, with neighboring cities and communities fighting each other for the control of fertile territories. Later on, this practice led to the development of more and more organized warfare, with empires waging wars on an ever larger scale. As Karen Armstrong observes, violence at the time had little to do with religious beliefs and practices, in part because religions were in the early stages of their development. Only centuries later did religions become systematically organized institutions, with their own principles and laws. For the author, religion was "embedded into political, social and domestic arrangements of a society, providing it with an overarching system of meaning. Its goals, language and rituals were conditioned by these mundane con-

siderations” (Armstrong, 22).

Similar conditions were found among societies ruled by the biblical prophets and kings. The author vividly narrates how primitive and ancient religious rites and practices were being incorporated into the political, economic and cultural fabric of those societies. She also analyses how monotheism emerged and the role of priests in the formation of a body of written religious literature. This leads us to the second part of the book where several important topics are discussed including the formation of Christianity, Byzantine Empire and its dissolution, the coming of Islam and finally the issues related to notions of Crusade and *jihad*.

Christianity, with the idea of Christ’s Divine Kingdom, originally emerged as a reaction against oppressive forms of government in the Ancient world. This origin did not prevent the Byzantine Empire to use extreme forms of repression and domination against its own subjects. Although Christianity appeared during the period known as the *Pax Romana* where relative peace was established within Roman Empire, Christians and Jews were still being persecuted because they represented a potential challenge to the Pagan Roman emperors. After the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, Christianity was officially recognized and from then it began its transformation into a power structure of its own, with the clergy gradually replacing pagan rulers and claiming for themselves their political power. In what she writes about Christianity in the Western world, Karen Armstrong pays a special attention to its attitude toward Islam, which was seen as a threat to Europe but also toward European Jews as well as those Christians who opposed the institutional Church. Religion was clearly used as an excuse to protect the so called ‘papal *libertas*’, a notion borrowed from Ancient Rome and referring to special privileges granted to the new ruling class, namely the Christian clergymen. Religion was similarly used to justify the Crusades. For the author, besides its religious zeal, these wars were always motivated by social and economic factors, i.e. the staggering and chaotic situation in many parts of Europe caused by endemic civil wars, famine, all sorts of diseases and other disasters. Despite the claim that the Crusades were waged to liberate Christians from Islamic domination, the main motivation lied elsewhere. Many Europeans wanted to escape misery in their own land and the popes saw in the Crusades an opportunity to strengthen their political power.

In the third part of the book entitled “Modernity”, Armstrong discusses questions such as the modern understanding of religion in the Western world and the process of separation between religion and state that gave rise to secularism. She concludes with two interesting chapters called “Holy terror” and “Global *jihad*” respectively. For the author, the idea of liberating others which started with the Crusades has survived in “Western imperial

aggression” till our time. As a result of the Enlightenment and industrial revolution, the unimaginable atrocities and terror brought about by the Crusades in the Middle East as well as in Europe itself have continued and extended even further in other parts of the world through colonialism. It is during this time that religion paradoxically has been accused of causing more wars, oppression and suffering than any other human institution. The author rightly asks, “more than what?” Furthermore, she once again tries to underline the fact that “[u]ntil the modern period, religion permeated all aspects of life, including politics and warfare, not because ambitious churchmen had ‘mixed up’ two essentially distinct activities, but because people wanted to endow everything they did with significance” (Armstrong, 359).

In failing to understand this very fact about religion when dealing with nations that went through a different process of development than the one undertaken by the Western world, modern thinkers and secularists only add fuel to the fire. At the same time, they tend to disregard those crimes and even genocides committed by colonialism in the pursuit of economic or political interest. In the chapter entitled “Religion fights back”, Armstrong analyzes religious fundamentalism, extremism and secular nationalism, as it developed in the Muslim world “under secular rule of the colonial powers which the majority of Muslims have experienced as militarily and systematically violent” (Armstrong, 288). Muslim extremism did exist even before the colonial period and was embodied by a few religious scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (who was himself responding to the Crusades and Mongolian invasion). Still the vast majority of Muslims as well as their political leaders have demonstrated through centuries a remarkable capacity to deal in a peaceful manner with the fact of religious diversity. Sufi philosophers and scholars such as Ibn ‘Arabī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, and even military commanders such as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin), all of whom have gained praise even in the Western world, are the best examples of this attitude. To account for the emergence of radical Islamist movements, to explain why today violence and terrorism are all-too often justified in the name of Islam, one cannot ignore the disastrous impact of colonialism on the Muslim world. As Karen Armstrong observes, it is not that “Islam is more prone to violence than Protestant Christianity.” But “Muslims had a much harsher introduction to modernity. Before the birth of the modern state in the crucible of colonialism, Islam had continued in many Muslim lands to operate as the organizing principle of society.” (Armstrong, 278).

Senad Mrahorović

Biographies



Karen Armstrong OBE is a historian of religion, whose books on the traditions of India, China, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have been translated into forty-five languages. They include, *A History of God*, which was an international bestseller; *The Battle for God*, *A History of Fundamentalism*; *Islam: A Short History*, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*; *Buddha*; *The Great Transformation: The Origin of Our Religious Traditions* and most recently *Fields of Blood; Religion and the History of Violence*. In 2007 she was appointed by Kofi Anan to the High Level Group of the UN Alliance of Civilizations with the task of diagnosing the causes of extremism. In 2008, she was awarded the TED Prize and began working with TED on the Charter for Compassion, created online by the general public, crafted by leading thinkers in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. It was launched in the fall of 2009 and has become a global movement. Also in 2008 she was awarded the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Medal. In 2013 she received the British Academy's inaugural Nayef Al-Rodhan Prize for Transcultural Understanding and in 2015 the ISESCO prize for educators. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a Trustee of the British Museum.

Akintunde E. Akinade is professor of Theology at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar. He is the author of *Christian Responses to Islam in Nigeria: A Contextual Study of Ambivalent Encounters* (2014).



Myriam Benraad BA, MPhil, PhD (Sciences Po Paris, France) is a researcher specialising in the contemporary Middle East and Arab and Muslim politics. She has taught political science and Middle Eastern politics at the American University Centre of Provence (AUCP, Aix-en-Provence). She is the author of *Irak, la revanche de l'Histoire. De l'occupation étrangère à l'État islamique* (*Iraq: the Revenge of History. From Foreign Occupation to the Islamic State*, Paris: Vendémiaire, 2015) and *Irak : de Babylone à l'État islamique. Idées recues sur une nation complexe* (*Iraq: From Babylon to the Islamic State. Misconceptions on a Complex Nation*, Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu, 2015).



Barry Cooper FRSC, a fourth generation Albertan, was educated at Shawnigan Lake School, the University of British Columbia and Duke University (PhD, 1969). He taught at several eastern universities before coming to the University of Calgary in 1981. He has published 180 articles and over 30 books, most recently *Consciousness and Politics: From Analysis to Meditation in the late work of Eric Voegelin*, (St Augustine's Press, 2016); in 2004, the University

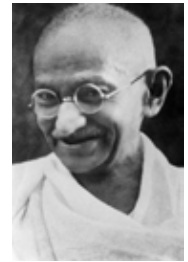
of Missouri Press published *New Political Religions: An Analysis of Modern Terrorism*. He publishes a weekly column in the *Calgary Herald* and other CanWest Global papers.



Renaud Fabbri is the Managing Editor of *Adyan/Religions* at the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. He received a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (France) and is specialized in the Philosophy of Religion and in Political Philosophy. His book *Eric Voegelin et l'Orient : Millénarisme et Religions Politiques de l'Antiquité à Daech* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016)

analyzes the spiritual and ideological roots of Islamism, Jihadism and Hindu Nationalism in the light of Eric Voegelin's "philosophy of consciousness."

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was the preeminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India. Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.



Eric Geoffroy is an Expert in Islam and Professor in Islamic Studies in the Department of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Strasbourg (France). He also teaches at another institutions such as the Open University of Catalonia (Barcelona). Specialist in the study of Sufism in Islam, he works as well on intercultural and interreligious relations and spirituality challenges in the contemporary world (spirituality and globalization; spirituality and ecology...). He published more than ten books and directed collective works as well. He is the author of numerous articles in magazines specialized in Islamology and has written more than twenty articles in *the Encyclopedia of Islam* 2nd and 3rd

ed. (Brill, Leiden). Some of his publications have been translated into different languages.



Daisaku Ikeda (1928-) is a Buddhist philosopher, peace-builder, poet and author. He is president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a socially engaged network of Buddhist lay believers with members in 192 countries and territories around the world; he is also the founder of a number of educational and research institutions, including the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, and Soka University. Since 1983, Ikeda has issued peace proposals addressing critical global issues and in support of the work of the United Nations.

Grace Ji-Sun Kim is an ordained minister in the PC (USA) noted for her work in the fields of feminist, post-colonial and Asian American theology. Kim is the author or editor of 10 books, most recently *Embracing the Other* (2015) and *Making Peace with the Earth* (2016). She earned a B.S. from Victoria University in 1992; an M.Div. from Knox College in 1995; and a Ph.D. from University of Toronto in 2001.



Ibrahim Kalin, Ph. D. is currently the spokesperson for the Turkish presidency and is a fellow at the Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University. He received his Ph. D. from the George Washington University. His field of concentration is post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy with research interests in comparative philosophy, Muslim-Christian relations and modern Turkish history. Dr. Kalin has published widely on Islamic philosophy and the relations between Islam and the West.

Patrick Laude has been teaching at Georgetown since 1991. His scholarly interests lie in comparative spirituality, poetry, and Western interpretations of Islam and Asian contemplative and wisdom traditions. He has authored over ten books including: *Pathways to an Inner Islam* (SUNY, 2010), *Pray Without Ceasing* (World Wisdom, 2006), and *Divine Play, Sacred Laughter and Spiritual Understanding* (Palgrave, 2005).





Ali Lakhani graduated from Cambridge University with a B.A. (Hons), LL.B., and LL.M. He is based in Vancouver and has practised as a barrister and solicitor at all levels of the courts in Canada for nearly 40 years. In 2015 he was appointed 'Queen's Counsel'. In 1998 he founded *Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity*, which he continues to edit. He is the editor of the

anthology, *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam* (2006), which contains his prize-winning essay on 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 'The Metaphysics of Human Governance: Imam 'Ali, Truth and Justice', and is the author of an anthology of essays, *The Timeless Relevance of Traditional Wisdom* (2010). An Ismaili Muslim, he has recently written a book (forthcoming) on Ismaili faith and ethics, focusing on the teachings of His Highness the Aga Khan.

Oliver Leaman teaches philosophy at the University of Kentucky and has previously taught in the Middle East and Britain. He is the author most recently of *The Qur'an: Philosophical Perspectives*, Bloomsbury, 2016 and *Controversies in Contemporary Islam*, Routledge 2013 and is on the editorial board of the Islamic Studies section of Oxford Bibliographies Online.



Louis Massignon (1883-1962) was a Catholic scholar of Islam and a pioneer of Catholic-Muslim mutual understanding. He was an influential figure in the twentieth century with regard to the Catholic church's relationship with Islam.

Senad Mrahorović, PhD, is a researcher at the DICID. His research interests include Religious studies, Orientalism, Sufism, philosophy and religious art.



John Paraskevopoulos is a Shin Buddhist priest from Australia. He attended the University of Melbourne where he was awarded first-class honours in Philosophy. Reverend Paraskevopoulos received ordination in 1994 at the Temple of the Primal Vow (Hongan-ji) in Kyoto and has written a number of works including *Call of the Infinite* (also pub-

lished in French, Italian and Greek editions), *The Fragrance of Light* and *The Unhindered Path* (scheduled to appear in late 2016). He is currently engaged in a range of pastoral and scholarly endeavours.



Samuel Bendeck Sotillos is a Board Affiliate of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, an Advisor to the Institute of Traditional Psychology and has worked for several years in the field of mental health, covering a broad spectrum of disorders in various psychiatric settings. He has published in

numerous journals, including *Sacred Web*, *Sophia*, *Parabola*, *Resurgence*, *Temenos Academy Review*, *Studies in Comparative Religion* and is the editor of *Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy*. He lives on the Central Coast of California.

Sofia Stril-Rever: PhD in Indian studies, a writer, biographer and interpreter of the Dalai Lama with whom she has co-authored 3 books: *New Reality* (Les Arènes, 2016), *My Spiritual Journey* (Harper One, 2010), translated from French into about twenty languages, and *My Appeal to the World* (Hay House International, 2015). As an interpreter of sacred *mantras*, she has also released the CD *Dakinis* (SometimeStudio, Paris, 2012)



Sofia Stril-Rever is the cofounder and spokesperson of P.U.R.E., the Association for Peace and Universal Responsibility, based in Paris, France, www.buddhaline.net



Eric Vinson, Ph. D in Political Science (Sciences Po Paris) is specialized in religious, spiritual and political issues. He teaches religiology, Buddhism and religious pedagogy in the Institut Catholique de Paris (ICP), and religious and secular culture in Sciences Po. As a journalist, he worked for French newspapers such as *Le Point* and *Le Monde des Religions*. As the president of *Enquete* and *Growing Together*, two non-profit NGOs, he is devoted to the promotion of religious

knowledge and education, dialogue and mutual understanding in secular societies. Co-written with his wife Sophie Viguier-Vinson, his latest book is entitled *Jaurès le prophète, mystique et politique d'un combattant républicain* (Albin-Michel, Paris, 2014).



Eric Voegelin was a German-born American political scientist and philosopher. Born in Cologne in 1901, he died in Stanford, California in 1985. In his first works, Voegelin focused on the religious roots of modern political ideologies such as Communism and Nazism, which he initially interpreted as a form of Gnosticism. In his later works he developed a theory of consciousness and

a religious phenomenology.

His most important works include *Political Religions*, *The New Science of Politics, Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*, *Order and History* (5 volumes) and *Anamnesis*. They have been published in the *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* (University of Missouri). The most accessible introduction to his thought remains his *Autobiographical Reflections*.

Elizabeth Zelensky teaches at several Washington D.C. area universities, including Georgetown University and George Mason University and has worked as a historical consultant for the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Justice. Her scholarly interests focus on the discourse of Westernization and spirituality in pre-revolutionary Russia and she has written *Windows to Heaven* (Brazos, 2005).



