

RELIGION AS AN AID AND HINDRANCE TO POST-CONFLICT COEXISTENCE WORK

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An unprecedented level of paradoxical religious movement characterizes the contemporary era. On the one hand, there is a greater number of people than ever before who are expressing either a secular perspective on life or a view of their own religion that is completely independent of traditional religious authority, dogma and law. In fact, there is more and more experimentation in some quarters on the basic meaning systems of traditional religion. This is particularly due to the unprecedented level of involvement of women in public religious life, but primarily due to the interesting interaction of the liberal state and free religious inquiry and experimentation. This is also due to the generalized modern experimentation with sexual roles and lifestyles. Furthermore, the unprecedented mixture of people of all faiths in many parts of the globe, but especially in large cosmopolitan centers, has also given birth to great creativity in religious life.

At the same time we are witnessing an unparalleled invigoration of extreme enthusiasm for old patterns of belief and practice on the part of many others. One is a function of the other, and a reaction to the other. Whereas the former depends on the liberal state, the latter is often expressed in active opposition to state authorities, secular authorities, and the basic institutions of global secular culture.

This has set many religious people on a collision course with the rest of society, and in some cases, is creating serious levels of destructive conflict and

violence. On the other hand, this religious revivalism is shaking up complacent cultural institutions of the modern state, and it is forcing most people to rethink their moral and political assumptions as citizens of their state, as well as citizens of global society.

This extraordinary level of religious activity takes place in the post-Cold war era. The post-Cold War era is also characterized by two countervailing trends. One trend is unprecedented economic integration and cultural homogenization, especially at the hands of materialist culture associated with the Western forms of investment, media, advertising and entertainment. But the other trend is unprecedented cultural/religious fractionalization. People the world over are rebelling against this materialist homogenization, searching out the roots of their identity, exploring the uniqueness of their background and its original systems of meaning.

The pattern of intense integration, referred to above, is also felt in the liberal religious sphere in terms of multi-faith communication and cooperation that has never seen its equal in human history. This too is transforming modern life and creating a common global culture. Thus, while the fractionating character of religious revivalism is more noticeable, and sometimes more violent, there is a quiet revolution of integration taking place as well.

It is not an age of a new world order, but an age of great social, cultural and psychological uncertainty in the context of an overwhelming and almost overpowering economic integration of the world. It is in eras of great uncertainty that we see some human beings gravitate to traditional religious systems in search of stability and identity. But how this search is undertaken, and how it integrates or dis-integrates with the world at large, depends very much on the socio-economic, psychological and political situation of the individual and the individual group.

The most important implication of this is that we see very different possible futures emerging from the human interaction with traditional religion at this point in time. There are patterns at work that indicate that religion is one of the most salient phenomena that will cause massive violence in this century. But there are other indicators from our current experience that suggest that religion will play a critical role in constructing a global community of shared moral commitments and vision. Religion's visionary capacity and its inculcation of altruistic values has already given birth to extraordinary leaders, such as Gandhi, King, the Dalai Lama, Bishop Tutu, who, in turn, have had a dramatic effect on pushing the global community toward ever greater commitments to human rights and compassion for human and non-human life, regardless of race or citizenship. [\[i\]](#) In other words, religion has helped set the stage for a fully functioning global moral community that may take a very long time to fully materialize, but that is unquestionably closer to fruition than a century ago. There have always been exclusive religious visions of a peaceful world. Never before in history, however, have so many leaders and adherents been inspired to work for a truly inclusive vision that is multi-cultural and multi-religious.

The contraindications to this trend are painfully apparent in the murders and tortures, and the religiously donated financial support for brutal regimes, that have been abundant in recent history. At the same time there is an unmistakable level of global commitment to shared values that is being upheld and defended every day by literally hundreds of government and non-government agencies globally who adhere to and legally uphold the international agreements of the United Nations. There is no doubt that, difficult as it is to imagine, the brutal abuses in places such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Tibet, and Burma, would be even worse than they have been if it were not for this global consensus. Admittedly, the latter still lacks the teeth of enforcement, and we stand deeply frustrated at the tragic failures. But from the long view of history,

there is a remarkable shift toward moral consensus. Religious leaders, visionaries and activists played no small role in this, especially since World War II.

What overwhelms our consciousness as of the Fall of 2001 is the power of religious terrorists to kill an unprecedented number of civilians, especially due to willingness to commit suicide for the sake of otherworldly gains. In point of fact, suicide is the most difficult of all security breaches because it puts into question every human being one sees and what he may be carrying around, literally or figuratively.

In addition to the Al Qaida network, we should not forget that Timothy McVeigh was also deeply influenced by a paranoid and bizarre form of Christian identity. Furthermore, religious murder used to take much longer to carry out due to poor technology, but the sum total of its effects historically, in terms of the great religious wars and crusades, is well known for its massive atrocities.

Our subject is how to deal with these paradoxical contributions of religion to the social order (or disorder) in the post-conflict setting when there is at least some collective efforts underway to promote coexistence between enemy groups.

Radical religion as a destabilizing and destructive force in human history is well known, and forms a considerable obstacle to such effort in the past. From the earliest stages of monotheism this destructive side was manifest. Biblically based monotheisms—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam--insist on the sacred nature of the Hebrew Bible, and in that book genocide of select “idolatrous” nations is not only permitted, it is commanded. Whether or not genocides upon entry into the land of Canaan ever actually took place is hard to know, but the textual precedent for mass murder gave permission since that time for centuries of massacres of polytheistic natives across the world. This is the sad result of successful Christian conquest of

Europe, Africa and the Americas. Theology was always there at the critical moment to justify the slaughter. It goes without saying that millions of believers abhorred this, but, by and large, the organized hierarchy of religion was either silent or complicitous. From the Crusades to turn-of-the-century American decisions to Christianize the Phillipines, the results were always the same, the deaths of hundreds of thousands accompanied by cynical theological constructs.

Islam's success was built on violent conquest as well, and the conquests continued well after Mohammed's death. The results were less bloody comparatively but quite intolerant by standards today of civil rights, especially for polytheists. And there were occasional periods of extremism at the hands of radicals such as the Almohides and Almoravides which were quite riddled with the deaths of innocent non-believers. Enslavement of polytheists and destruction of their own religions became standard, and some of this continues to this day, in Sudan for example.

Eastern and indigenous religions have had similar problems and byproducts. Indigenous religions in and stemming from Africa were often predicated on the use of occult powers to destroy one's enemies, while wars and violence built on Buddhist or Taoist principles have been well known from Japan to Sri Lanka, especially in the twentieth century.

Religion had an important role to play in undergirding the neo-fascist and racist political movements in South Africa, Bosnia, and Rwanda. In each case the complicity of leading religious figures or institutions was critical to the success of the oppression. Furthermore, at any number of times in the last twenty-five years, Israelis and Arabs came closer together, inching toward solutions, only to have religious extremists assassinate major leaders, including Sadat and Rabin, and slaughter hundreds in the most brutal fashion, thus creating impossible political circumstances

that stalemated all efforts. The majority of Jews now killed by Arabs in this war are being killed by heavily funded religious extremists, whereas the backbone of the settler presence in the West Bank continues to be the religious settlers and their ideological supporters in the government.

Only the truly intolerant secularist would divorce this horrific evidence of religion's folly, on the other hand, from the equally compelling evidence that the creative imagination of religious geniuses from Amos and Isaiah to Jesus, Rumi, and Gautama Siddharta, have saved millions of people from their own worst impulses. In so doing they made a more peaceful world than what might have been. This in addition to religion's inspiration providing the world, blessing the world, with political geniuses such as Gandhi, King, and the Dalai Lama, who undoubtedly saved hundreds of thousands, if not millions of lives, by steering their constituencies to nonviolent resistance and constructive forms of pursuing justice and peace.

The interesting question is what are the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of great religious souls? What beliefs, practices, and mental disciplines animate their extraordinary courage and creativity? And how can this be put to use in coexistence work? These are very large questions that I have addressed elsewhere [\[ii\]](#), but, in short, it comes down a series of beliefs and practices that become second nature, habits of the mind and heart that generate extraordinary paradigms of inter-personal behavior that can be of benefit to religious and non-religious actors alike.

These beliefs tend to include: the connection or inter-relatedness of all sentient life, the sacredness of each and every human being, and the possibility of human change and evolution for the better, or repentance. Practices tend to include a series of mental assumptions and concentrations that lead to an habitual embrace of compassion, peace, justice, mourning as a sacred task, forgiveness, and apology.

Finally, the extraordinary religious peacemakers understand the power and importance of story, mythic structure, and, above all, ritual as a transformative act.

Despite the presence of such extraordinary religious figures both in history and today, the fact is that we face some unprecedented circumstances of so many millions of religious people bumping up against competitors in a crowded and confusing world. The question then becomes how to take the best of religious beliefs and practices and apply them to unprecedented levels of interaction. Here is where the intellectual class across the world, the ones who for centuries have been at the forefront of often courageous inter-religious exploration, have done such a great disservice. They have emphasized the skills that they have—and not others--and overlooked the importance of skills that they sometimes lack. They have emphasized ideas, words, abstract discussions of theology or even comparative studies of myth, but not the single most important ingredient of coexistence: relationships and the emotional bond that is the bedrock of all moral interactions. What is needed globally is not just discussion and dialogue but relationship building, only one part of which is intellectual discussion and dialogue.

It is the level of relationship that matters, not the level of dialogue. Relationship depends upon gestures of honor, shared understandings of civility, hospitality, generosity, expressions of regret, and shared defense against needless suffering. And that is just a brief list of characteristics of relationship building. All of these characteristics of relationship building can be and must be justified by religious sources, especially because extremists will bring their own sources to deny the possibility or permissibility of relationship based on respect and equality.

There is a critical role to be played in the generation of these relationships by model leaders on all sides. But, on the other hand, no peace process should be

tyrannized and suffocated by backward leaders, religious or otherwise. Creative conflict resolution, including religiously informed conflict resolution, must work with but also circumvent encrusted leadership that is part of the problem.

There is one trait that is more important than all the rest for peacemaking, and that is humility, and the silence and listening to the soul of the other, that emerge from the discipline of humility. I am reminded of the enthusiasm that Buddhist teachers receive when they come to Israel, and how odd it is that these ‘polytheists’ would receive such a warm welcome, especially from Israeli youth. Young people always help us perceive what is missing in a culture, what its great weaknesses are. A young person has not yet had to buy into his/her culture and socio-economic prison, and therefore becomes an important barometer of tragic flaws. It is no surprise to me that these Buddhist teachers, who practice silence, laugh at themselves in ways unthinkable to monotheistic hierarchies, and speak, above all, and repeatedly, about humility and compassion to all living things, are the leaders that would attract young disaffected Israelis in search of spiritual solace. This is what is missing in life for many people of this region, both Jewish and Arab. These young people are happy to respect and accept the more unfamiliar and strange aspects of Eastern spirituality because the underlying gentleness, humanity, and non-combativeness of these great teachers, such as the Dalai Lama, are qualities that they so rarely see in an environment that has made a tension-ridden state of no-war and no-peace into a cultural centerpiece.

One cannot blame the inhabitants of Israel and the Palestinian lands for evolving a culture of stress and argumentation. No one can pass judgment on how others cope with interminable violence. But one can, indeed one must diagnose what

is wrong on a deep cultural, psychological and spiritual level, note how many are rebelling against this, and recommend future alternatives.

It seems clear that, from a religious if not cultural viewpoint, humility, silence, and the wisdom of compassionate listening, have ample precedent in monotheistic literature, both as recommended moral behavior, and as deep religious experience. [\[iii\]](#)

Throughout Biblical and Qura'nic literature humility is a *sine qua non* of the human being's position before God. It is a quintessential act of faith. [\[iv\]](#) In Judaism it is even portrayed as a Divine attribute to be emulated, [\[v\]](#) and for all Abrahamic traditions the great prophet of the Bible, Moses, is described as the humblest of all men. [\[vi\]](#)

As far as silence is concerned, Judaism and Islam are rather loquacious, in comparison to Buddhism, for example. Prayer is communal and loud; study is the same. But, in truth, Tibetan Buddhism has some pretty lively and loud elements to it that has struck a number of Jewish observers as strikingly similar to old Jewish forms of study and debate. It is the balance of silence and speech, of talking and listening that is intriguing in Buddhism. It is also the case that the Biblical prophetic tradition is a tradition that is characterized by as much silent listening as it is by long speeches. After all, where do the classical monotheistic prophets and heroes receive their wisdom if not through silent listening in desert and wilderness?

The monotheistic cultural tendencies of recent times could use a corrective from A. conflict resolution theory and practice and B. global religious traditions about humility, silence and listening. In this case, at least, there is a happy coalescence of at least some religious traditions and the most avant garde conflict resolution practice.

The best peacemakers that I have watched work—the best social change makers in general—are people who understand silence, who value the “power” of orchestrating the evolution of human relationships without dominating those relationships or encounters. Such peacemakers are not afraid of and even welcome open discussion, but they do not relish argumentation for its own sake. They do not see every conversation as a win/lose phenomenon, and they do not mistake overall progress and success in their endeavors with the need to “win” in every encounter and conversation, even in their peace efforts. This requires great personal discipline, a very long view of time and “outcomes”, and a strong degree of personal inner peace. It also requires a deeply felt patience, a basic trust of humanity and the world, viewed over time, and a love of imperfect human beings as such.

Many people I know who love peace have not internalized these values sufficiently, and thus become bad peacemakers despite their best intentions. The task of evoking and inculcating these values and worldviews is something that could benefit from a fusion of spiritual values and training in conflict resolution. The character of the peacemaker is a major concern in religious literature, and it should be the same for conflict resolution theory and practice.

Till now far too much of the emphasis of conflict resolution has been on process, replicable processes for use in all contexts, as if peacemaking were a General Motors car to be disassembled and assembled in all parts of the world and all circumstances. But this becomes impossible and even barbaric, culturally speaking. Far better to offer ways to evoke the peacemaker herself from each culture and religion. [\[vii\]](#) Furthermore, eliciting the peacemaker is important and vital, but more emphasis should be placed on the moral character of the peacemaker. A peacemaking personality has been the goal of many religious traditions. It is also a more elastic

phenomenon. If you can trust in the personality of a peacemaker, you can trust her to adjust herself with humility to new and different situations, particularly involving alien or enemy others.

Let us go further with the necessary characteristics of encounter. The Compassionate Listening Project, founded by Leah Green, represents a conscious institutionalization of listening as peacemaking, together with another crucial psychological/ethical capacity, compassion. Compassion is a basic Divine attribute in all monotheistic traditions, and there is much to build upon in terms of merging this value with techniques of peacemaking. Leah, and many others, such as Paula Green, have combined the capacity of “active listening” with compassion. Active listening distinguishes itself as a pro-active process of probing, but subtle, questions which indicate to the other much more than respectful silence.

The complete silence of strangers, even the respectful kind is often viewed with suspicion: ‘Do they really hold me in disdain?’ ‘Are they really seething with hatred behind the urbane smile and false courtesies?’ Etc. But compassionate, active listening is the kind of listening that leaves no doubts about the position of the listener. The listener may not agree with everything she hears. The listener may even oppose, when asked, the violent choices of the group. But she has demonstrated that she has not just been silent before the suffering—or the joy—of the other, but that she has heard, understood, and indeed felt it.

Finally, humility necessarily interlaces—as many emotive/ethical gestures do—with the bestowal of dignity and honor, mentioned above. Human beings, particularly those who have suffered indignity and injury, crave the dignity of being heard and understood, almost as much as they need air to breathe and water to drink. In our rush to economic and geographic negotiations of conflict we constantly forget this basic

need. Leah's group has specialized in bringing groups to Israel to listen compassionately to the entire spectrum of Jewish and Palestinian political and religious life. This has proved to be transformative for many participants and should be studied further.

Active listening is part of a much larger set of new and innovative paths of peacemaking that emphasize gestures, rituals, narrative, and relationships, all of which are undergirded by the moral discipline of humility combined with compassion, active demonstrations of respect, and honor. And it truly is a discipline that requires years of practice.

Some further examples of this new work include shared study of sacred texts in Jerusalem, across enemy lines, with the act of study becoming the actual gesture of respect and reconciliation, but also the basis of relationship building, shared mourning, and constructive argumentation. Rebuilding destroyed religious sites has been an important part of reconciliation in Bosnia. The restoration of devastated or abused cemeteries has proven to be of immense value, as has been the visitation of sites of massacres, with the accompanying acknowledgment by word and deed of the pain of the other. In fact, much of the successful Christian-Jewish reconciliation work of the last thirty years has occurred at these very sites.

More examples. Just recently in Jerusalem, just two days after Islamic extremist suicide bombers destroyed the lives of dozens of Israeli teenagers, there were shared celebrations of Ramadan and Chanukah by those superior religious souls of the region who hold on, sometimes by a thread, to relationships and humanization of the other. The United States, Cambodia and India have seen marching used in an opposite way as it has been in Ireland. Both for war and peace, marching is a sacred act. But the point is that it is a vital and ongoing means of reconciliation, from Maha Gosananda's

walks to Gandhi's marches, to marches retracing the path of slaves in Richmond, Virginia, and black and white congressman of the United States government retracing the Freedom Marchers' treacherous journeys through the South. All of these marches have been deeply spiritual events, rituals of immense power and transformation for those who participated in or witnessed them.

Prayers became critical to some efforts to frame tough negotiations in Latin America, a way to make a moral space and presence in the midst of hard bargaining, a way to make an oasis of vision in the midst of the predictable and necessary tale of grievances and injuries. Increasingly, secular educational institutes, such as the Adam Institute in Israel, have seen the value of overlaying their education for democracy and human rights with cultural and religious foundations that will appeal to the spiritual side of the youth who they are educating. These are just a few examples. A full documentation, a true telling of this global story, awaits the generosity of foundations and governments many of whom still need to see the wisdom of this new path.

I want to conclude with one example that is close to my heart, and that is an effort on the part of sheikhs and rabbis in Israel and Palestine to create a religious peace treaty, a symbol of peace and, more recently, a token ceasefire. [\[viii\]](#) An Islamic concept, referred to as *hudna*, has had a history in the Middle East that allows for the possibility of coexistence. This is a hotly debated topic, because religious ceasefire has the implication of a temporary cessation of hostilities, not true peace. Those of use who have worked on this have believed that the power of religious symbol as a force for even temporary cessation of violence and hate would be enough to generate other symbolic gestures, and further progress on the hardcore issues. It would give a momentum to religion as a source of healing rather than hatred, which could be built upon by further efforts. Most importantly it would give a voice to those religious

leaders who have been threatened and silenced by the well-financed radicals supported by oppressive leaders around the Middle East.

We whistled in the wind for a long time. We met with as many diplomats as we could. We made the case for the wisdom of this path to politicians and seasoned diplomats. Many were persuaded but remained silent. We managed to get support in principal from a letter received from the President of the United States. We met with Arafat on several occasions with really extraordinary results. As dubious and duplicitous a peace partner as he is, we felt that just getting the approval of the top leaders would generate new possibilities. It did and it has. The leaders are important, but the goal of their involvement should be to circumvent their intransigence and ultimately make their presence less important, historically speaking.

Despite the knee-jerk skepticism of many, we have now come to a situation in which key Arab businessmen, members of the Israeli Parliament, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Attorney General of Israel, and the President of Israel, have publicly expressed interest in cultural and religious symbols of reconciliation, and, specifically, interest in *hudna*. This is rather startling considering that this is taking place in the midst of the Intifada and in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001.

We have argued that such gestures have no business attempting to replace security cooperation and counter-terrorism measures, but that counter-terrorism measures have no business trying to substitute for a means to change the one thing that perpetuates all wars, fear and hatred. That requires trust, forgiveness, and many other treasures of the human mind that only the path of ritual and culture can truly provide.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are a series of suggestions, which I will elaborate upon one at a time:

1. Recognize the paradox of religious hate and love, violence and pro-social values, and face the implications.
2. Contain damage of prejudices and hatred emanating out of the texts and traditions of organized religion, as well as from religious leaders and representatives
3. Understand the paradoxes of hermeneutical variation with time and place. Understand the war within each tradition traditionally and in the contemporary setting
4. Find the peacemakers and strengthen within and between communities.
5. Build alliances of new hermeneutics
6. Bocus on deeds more than dialogue, or make dialogue contingent upon or interactive with a regime of righteous bilateral deeds
7. Understand and utilize the interaction of economics, psychology, power relations, and military reality that interacts with religious trends, in order to coordinate more effectively secular and religious efforts of peace, security, and development
8. Face and focus on the tremendous psychological power of religion to stimulate mood swings and utilize for reconciliation gestures of acknowledgment, apology and repentance, but be prepared to combat the compelling contagion of righteous hatred
9. Explore and utilize the power of symbols to divide, unite and reconcile

1. The most important step to take is to abandon naïve beliefs about religion that register it mentally as either a categorical positive or negative in terms of coexistence. There may be political interests at work in either demonizing or lionizing religion, such as President Bush's recent attempts rhetorically to see Islam in only good terms. But for strategists of coexistence it is critical to examine and understand how each religion involved in the conflict promotes countervailing values. One of the most important reasons that this is so important is that the adversary groups are generally speaking very familiar with the worst and best in their religions, cleverly using both to strengthen us/them dynamics of conflict and violence wherein one's own group are the righteous victims and the others are only abusers. They will know when you are soft-pedaling religion, and when you are covering up their own religious leaders' contributions to the conflict. This will not help matters. It is imperative to acknowledge fully both contributions to the war, the positive and the negative, and it is important to appeal engage religion in a way that will be believable to inherently skeptical audiences.

2. How does one contain the damage done by organized religions in the context of war? By stimulating and generating a public repudiation of the activities of some in the war, especially if and when they used particular symbols, traditions, or texts, in the course of justifying or perpetrating any atrocities. Each use of religion for atrocity must be responded to hermeneutically in exactly a parallel fashion.

The same goes for religious leaders or representatives who were active during the war must be encouraged, and, if possible, compelled to repudiate those same uses of religion during the war. They must reject and, if possible, disown actual religious perpetrators, especially those who committed atrocities in the name of religion.

If these leaders cannot or will not repudiate prior religious hermeneutics then it is important to encourage alternative leaderships and courageous individuals who will engage in that repudiation. This is most successfully accomplished where there are third party strategies to stimulate these reactions bilaterally and simultaneously or consecutively. These reactions should be accompanied by acknowledgments of the pain inflicted and apologies. This may take years but the efforts must begin as soon as possible and begin at a small scale.

3 and 4. If one understands in a deep way the hermeneutical variation of traditions, and the war within communities over their values choices, one is in a much better position to strengthen those who are engaged in battles for the pro-social side of a religious tradition. It is important to know the substance of the debate as well as the players, because conflict resolution or coexistence third parties will then be in a better position to design appealing peace strategies that gel nicely with the each communities' way of framing their choices morally and spiritually.

Strengthening the peacemakers means helping them financially and spiritually. It means giving whatever they need to persist. They should be the ones, for the most part, to explain their needs and what will make them more effective. But it is also the case that sometimes peacemakers are so fringe that they are not necessarily adept at social influence. We must also keep in mind that in every corporate religious group there are those peacemakers who leave the group and struggle from the outside and those who work from within. Mechanisms of support for religious peacemakers should always be so structured by third parties as to be ready for inclusion. This is particularly problematic historically for peacemakers who tend to be as exclusive as any other in-bred groups. It is the job of third parties to not allow left/right, or

peace/violence divisions to become encrusted in religious communities. There should be a highly elastic and creative process of ever widening communication and creativity.

5. In the long run this will create more and more possibilities of inter-religious alliances of new hermeneutics, new interpretations and symbols of coexistence. The more varied each group's religious actors are the more they will find their counterparts on the other side. Liberals will find liberals and conservatives will find conservatives, and out of a broadened coalition of those committed to coexistence will come a slow and steady defeat of those committed to violence.

6. Focus on deeds more than dialogue, or make dialogue contingent upon or interactive with a regime of righteous bilateral deeds. Dialogue is over-rated. It may make a good platform for leaders to demonstrate their political importance, but it just as often generates skepticism, especially when it is engaged too soon. It is the rage of the masses that this is the critical dynamic of religion and war, and that rage is not turned off like a spigot. It is true that leaders are critical symbols of social change, and fostering their relationship with each other is crucial. But we must not over-rate its contribution. The masses of people understand, in their wisdom, the evidence of reconciliation, acknowledgment and repentance, in the realm of deeds rather than in the rhetoric of political manipulation.

7. Efforts at religious coexistence work can be hampered by bureaucratic division of efforts and poorly integrated thinking about the nature of conflict. Just as deeds are crucial to true religious trust, so is development and poverty relief at the heart of serious conflict resolution. These two insights can and should be integrated in the form of creative programs and joint activities that the warring communities design with the help of others. So too, religious healing and psychological recovery need to work hand in hand. Each must understand the peculiar approaches of the other, and

attempt a cooperative or parallel set of processes. The same is the case with security concerns. Issues of public safety, crime and justice, should be framed where possible in terms of religious values. This does not mean surrender the public order to religious authority. At the end of the day, there is no peace when one religious community or another controls the military or judiciary or the public space as such. Most religious adherents around the world have come to understand that religion is at its best when it does not control the temporal space. Democracy and human rights ultimately depend upon this. That having been said, there is no reason that the liberal forms of social order—judiciary, police, democracy—should not be hermeneutically framed in religious ways. Enough adherents around the world are actively engaged in this framing process—often in very deep ways—so that this alliance of civil society need not be seen as the enemy of religion. This must be aggressively funded the world over. We are not engaged in a civilizational struggle today, nor a war of religions, but rather a war within religions and civilizations over the future of civil liberties, particularly the freedom of women. It is my impression that most religious adherents want human rights and democracy, but do not want it if it is perceived to be a means of crushing their identity or civilization. We need to work harder at making the case for a culture and religion friendly liberal social order. And we need the international corporations and representatives of capitalism to become an asset not a liability in this struggle.

8. Face and focus on the tremendous psychological power of religion to stimulate mood swings and utilize for reconciliation gestures of acknowledgment, apology and repentance, but be prepared to combat the compelling contagion of righteous hatred

9 and 10. The greatest danger that we face from religion today is its tremendous power to stimulate rage in massive numbers of people. Irresponsible clerics cannot

resist the opportunity to capitalize on this power to actively fight world orders with which they see themselves, at the present time, unable to coexist. In a poverty of vision, these clerics have not reached yet the conclusions that millions of other clergy have discovered about the modern world: namely, that it is possible for religion to flourish even with Coca Cola, MTV, and absolute freedom of choice by women and men. But the free floating rage of millions of people is the single greatest danger of human history. It waits, like a ripe fruit, for power hungry individuals and institutions to take advantage of that rage. And then the sociopaths, the fascistic leaders and terrorists come along as the great release of the rage. This is as true in the twentieth century, under the aegis of fascism and communism, as it is today under the aegis of fundamentalism.

It is our job to undermine that rage aggressively with compassion, acknowledgment, anti-poverty plans, and inherent respect for cultural and religious diversity. If there is global religious rage then a global Marshall plan is necessary to undermine its roots. This is the ultimate way to undermine the violent potential of religion, and give voice to the majority in each religious tradition who tend to abhor the abduction of their religion by rage.

[i] Less well known globally, but equally revolutionary in their context, are people such as Badshah Khan, the nonviolent Islamic leader of the Pathans, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel, of U.S. civil rights era fame, Dorothy Day, and many others.

[ii] Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); idem, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[\[iii\]](#) *Tractate Derekh Eretz Zuta* 1; *Avot of Rabbi Nathan* 15; For a representative collection of rabbinic approaches to humility, see Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, trans. Shraga Silverstein (Jerusalem-New York: Feldheim, 1969), chapter 22. There are numerous sources on silence and its relationship to understanding. See Midrash Rabbah (Margoliot ed.) Leviticus 16:5; Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw ed.) *Va'ye'tseh* 6; Otsar Midrashim Alpha Beta d'Ben Sira, paragraph 19; Tractate Derekh Eretz Zuta 7; T.B. Pesahim 99a.

[\[iv\]](#) See, for example, Qur'an 7:161; 57:16

[\[v\]](#) See Midrash Rabbah Deuteronomy 7:12; Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw ed.), Bereshit 4, Vay'erah 8, Ki Tisah 15.

[\[vi\]](#) Numbers 12:3

[\[vii\]](#) See Marc Gopin, "The Religious Component of Mennonite Peacemaking and Its Global Implications," in Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233-255.

[\[viii\]](#) See my *Holy War, Holy Peace* for the full text of at least one proposed peace treaty, as well as an extensive analysis of it.