

# **Living in Peace: Insights from World Religions**

Edited by  
**Chanju Mun and Ronald S. Green**

**Blue Pine  
Honolulu, Hawaii**



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**Blue Pine Books**

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Honolulu, Hawaii 96814  
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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012904304  
ISBN: 9780977755370

We wish to dedicate this humble serial volume on religions and peace to Venerable Jungwoo Seunim who has actively sought to bring peace.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Venerable Jungwoo Seunim**  
**Former Abbot of Tongdo-sa Buddhist Temple**

I am honored to write a recommendation for this volume edited by my monastic disciple Seongwon Seunim (Chanju Mun) and his close friend Dr. Ronald S. Green. Seongwon Seunim has conducted research in Buddhism in various religious and education institutions in Korea and abroad and is currently teaching Buddhist philosophy at the prestigious University of Hawaii – Manoa. Seongwon Seunim and Dr. Green edited and published eleven articles by renowned scholars in this current volume on religions and peace. I really appreciate the aforementioned two editors and eleven article contributors for publishing this volume. I sincerely hope that this commemorative volume may help Buddhists and other religious believers to remove conflict and violence and improve peace and harmony, even a little bit.

Seongwon Seunim established Blue Pine Books in the United States in 2005 and is making efforts to academically and religiously contribute to the dissemination and promotion of peace in world. He collected almost one hundred fifty articles from renowned scholars across the world, edited and published them in five serial volumes on Buddhism and peace. By so doing, he was able to establish a human and scholarly network for contributing to world peace through academics. He recently decided to extend the theme of the series from Buddhism and peace to religions and peace and planned, edited and published the first series on the extended theme.

While some Korean Buddhists hierarchically classified Huayan, vinaya, Yogācāra, Mādhyamaka, Tiantai, Chan, Pure Land and Tantric Buddhist traditions from their own sectarian perspectives, the majority of Korean Buddhists ecumenically viewed various Buddhist traditions. As a result, Korean Buddhism successfully developed harmony and unity among Korean Buddhist sects and

traditions throughout history. In this context, because Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism keeps ecumenism between Chan, doctrinal and vinaya traditions, between self-cultivation and other-benefitting, between Pure Land and Seon Buddhism, and between doctrinal and Seon Buddhism, it does not make conflicts with and perpetrate violence against other minor Korean Buddhist sects. Korean Buddhists also generally advocated ecumenism between the three traditional East Asian religions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism and contributed to harmony and peace among religions in pre-modern times.

Korean Buddhism should have close relations with other Buddhist traditions. Therefore, I have for a couple of decades continuously made religious connections and promoted religious exchanges with Indo-Tibetan, Chinese-Taiwanese, Japanese and Western Buddhism through my established Guryong-sa Temple, Yeorae-sa (Buddha) Temple and other Buddhist institutions. I received strong spiritual influence from H. H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso of Tibetan Buddhism and Grand Master Hsing Yun, the founder of the huge Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Taiwan, of Chinese Buddhism. I have had close friendship with the late Kamata Kōmyō, former abbot of Kyōgan-ji Temple, his son Kamata Tetsuo, current abbot of the temple, and Takehara Chimyō, abbot of Shōgyō-ji Temple of Japanese Shin Buddhism.

Buddhism should have close and mutual relations with Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, shamanism, Bonism, Shintōism and other religious traditions. Because Buddhism did not philosophically and doctrinally accept dualism and dichotomy, it did not make conflicts and wars with other religions. It reduced conflicts and violence and increased harmony and unity in society and among religions. It did not make and justify violence and conflicts in its name throughout history and all over the world. I think that any religion should contribute to the unity and harmony in society and in the world and should not make any conflict and violence in society and in the world. In this context, I strongly believe that this series may academically and religiously support the construction of unity and harmony in society and in the world.



We Buddhists in particular and we religious believers in general should make peace and harmony domestically and internationally not as an optional religious objective but as a mandatory religious objective. I think that when Buddhists and religious believers build peace and harmony among various Buddhist traditions and among various religious traditions respectively, we are able to naturally and inevitably accomplish peace and harmony among Buddhist traditions and among religious traditions respectively. We Buddhists and we religious believers should gradually, not suddenly, make efforts and disseminate the concepts of peace and harmony in various contexts, for example, in the individual, social, natural, world and cultural contexts.

Finally, Seongwon Seunim and his coeditor Dr. Green edited and published this invaluable volume and firmly located Korean Buddhism in particular and Buddhism in general in the Korean religious context and in the international religious context. Seongwon Seunim along with his coeditor Dr. Green planned, edited and published this volume and academically attempted to make peace in domestic and international contexts. I sincerely hope that readers come to understand the meaning of peace in different religious contexts through the writings of these eminent scholars. I admire how well Seongwon Seunim and Dr. Green organized the book and strongly wish that they might realize their goal of peace in the world.



## PREFACE

I shall briefly explain the historical and academic background of this current volume on religions and peace. Venerable Daewon Seunim initiated the International Seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, biannually held seven times from 1983 to 1995. He came to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1975 and established Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple at that time. He eventually made it the largest Korean Buddhist temple in North America. He was one of pioneers in introducing Korean Buddhism to the United States. I wrote about him and his peace activities in detail in a paper entitled “Venerable Daewon Ki and Peacemaking” in my edited *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007), pp. v-xxv.

Venerable Daewon Seunim concentrated his peace activities in two areas. First, he focused on making peace in the world by inviting a number of eminent scholars to and holding seven international seminars and disseminating Buddhist teachings on peace and justice. Second, as a Korean Buddhist monk, he dedicated his peace activities to bringing peace between North and South Korea. He visited North Korea eight times between July 1988 and December 1996. Between these visits, he hosted numerous meetings with many of the high-ranking administrators and politicians of the North Korean government and had thirteen official meetings with the Federation of North Korean Buddhists.

In 2005, he assigned to me the task of revitalizing the discussions on Buddhism and peace. Accordingly, I edited and published five serial books on Buddhism and peace since then. My close colleague, Ronald S. Green, and I extended the theme of the series from Buddhism and peace to world religions and peace in this sixth volume in the series. It includes eleven articles by experts in various religions.

I selected papers from the fifth seminar, held in Seoul, South Korea during November 18-21, 1991 on the theme of “Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace

and Justice” and published them in my coedited *Buddhist Exploration of Peace and Justice* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The seminar was held under the joint sponsorship of Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Korean Buddhist Research Institute of Dongguk University. More than 60 seminar participants came from Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Vietnam, and the United States.

I selected articles from the seventh seminar, held in Honolulu during June 3-8, 1995 on the theme of “Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice” and edited and published them in my edited *Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The seminar was held under the joint auspices of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii – Manoa. More than 40 scholars and religious leaders from Asia, Europe and the United States participated in the seminar.

I chose articles from the first and second seminars held in Honolulu during October 22-28, 1983 and in Tokyo Japan during December 2-7, 1985 and published them in my edited *The World is One Flower: Buddhist Leadership for Peace* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The first seminar proceeded under the auspices of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii – Manoa on the theme of “Buddhism and Leadership for Peace.” The theme of “Buddhism in the Context of Various Countries” was examined in the second seminar under the joint sponsorship of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Peace Research Institute of Sōka University. Participants came from China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States in the first seminar. Individuals from these six nations as well as from Bali, India and Mongolia participated in the second seminar.

I selected papers from the third seminar, held in Honolulu during May 23-28, 1987 on the theme of “Peacemaking in Buddhist Contexts” and edited, included and published them in my edited *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007). The seminar was cosponsored by the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Peace

Institute of the University of Hawaii – Manoa. Participants included those from China, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States. I also selected excellent papers among the numerous submitted to the editorial board of Blue Pine Books between 2006 and 2007, editing and publishing them.

I was fortunate to have received so many excellent papers between 2007 and 2008 and along with coeditor, Ronald S. Green chose among them to fit the fifth serial book on Buddhism and peace by Blue Pine Books. Because of their lasting importance, I also included in the volume entitled *Buddhist Roles in Peacemaking: How Buddhism Can Contribute to Sustainable Peace* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2009) two articles presented at the sixth seminar held in Honolulu during November 24-28, 1993 on the theme of “A Buddhist Worldview and Concept of Peace,” those by Y. Karunadasa and David Putney.

For the current volume, we issued a call for paper online and off. Although we received numerous outstanding submissions, an overwhelming number of them focused on Buddhism and peace. This being the case, we decided to reserve many of these for the seventh serial volume on the subject, to be published later this year.

I wrote an article “Lee Jungwoo and Peacemaking: Theory and Practice” and discussed Venerable Jungwoo Seunim as a concrete case study of Buddhist peacemaking. Because my close friend Ananda W. P. Guruge, a worldwide renowned scholar in Theravada Buddhism and peace studies, discussed the Buddha’s peace and reconciliation and generally outlined the Buddhist concept of the themes in his article, Dr. Green and I arranged his article before mine. Although we can see a number of peacemakers in Buddhist traditions, I just chose Venerable Jungwoo Seunim as a model Buddhist peacemaker and theoretically and practically analyzed his peacemaking activities.

He applied Korean Buddhism’s ecumenical tradition to promote unity and peace among Buddhist traditions in particular and among religious groups in general. He did not exclude any Buddhist doctrine and practice in his Buddhist philosophy and practice and did not place any specific Buddhist philosophy or

practice over others. He harmonized various Buddhist practices such as the meditation of Seon (known in Chinese as Chan and in Japanese as Zen), the chanting of Tantric mantras, the recitations of the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the recollection of Buddhist images, and other forms of practice, and judge one as better than another. Nor did he treat doctrines and practices as opposing each other, but as being mutually complementary.

We will definitely include in the seventh volume the article entitled “Buddhism and Peace: The Creation of a Saṅgha in London.” It was submitted by the Archives Committee of Shōgyō-ji Temple in Fukuoka, affiliated to the Higashi Hongan-ji Faction of Pure Land Shin Buddhism in Japan. That temple has a sister relationship with Guryong-sa Temple in Seoul, which Venerable Jungwoo Seunim established. Guryong-sa Temple is affiliated with the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the largest denomination of Korean Buddhism. Satō Kemmyō, a resident priest of Shōgyō-ji Temple, also kindly allowed us to reuse his published article entitled “D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War,” which we will likewise publish in the seventh volume.

Finally, I extend my deep appreciations to Venerable Daewon Seunim who guided me to the theme of Buddhism and peace and to Venerable Jungwoo Seunim who directed me to ecumenical philosophy and practice. Without the spiritual guidance and financial support of the two masters, I would have been unable to edit and publish the six serial volumes on religions (Buddhism) and peace. I am also indebted to almost one hundred fifty authors who allowed me to publish their valuable articles in the series. I cannot omit my sincere thanks to Dr. Green, coeditor of my established Blue Pine Books and Ms. Ling-yu Chang, its secretary, who made editorial and administrative matters move smoothly towards this volume’s publication at the working level as they have always done.

Chanju Mun  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
March 2012

## NOTES

1. The Pinyin system is used for Chinese terms, the Korean Government Romanization System revised in 2000 for Korean ones, and the Hepburn system for Japanese ones.
2. Diacritics are used on most of Sanskrit and Pāli terms.
3. Foreign terms, those not included in the *Webster English Dictionary*, appear in italics.
4. If authors have Romanized their names in ways contrary to East Asian Standard Romanization Systems, I have adapted their spellings.
5. If names have not previously been Romanized, I have done so using East Asian Standard Romanization Systems.
6. This book is edited based on the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).





## **INTRODUCTION**

# **LIVING IN PEACE: INSIGHTS FROM WORLD RELIGIONS**

**Ronald S. Green**

It is common to hear the opinion that “religion is responsible for more wars than any other factor in human history.” One encounters this in novels, on television, at the movies and, as a result, from students in World Religions classes. In considering this idea, it might be best to ask a different question: is it not greed and self-interest that appropriates the potential social, political, and personal power of religions as it does other philosophical and political entities which people, accurately or mistakenly, distinguished from religions? There appears to be much evidence to suggest, as does the sociologist Robert Michels, that religions tend toward institutional oligarchies and ultimately turn support to the interests of an elite individual or group. According to Michels, however, this tendency neither is exclusive of religions nor is it related to the intrinsic nature of the various philosophies of religions. That religions clearly have been used in the selfish pursuit of regional and global domination should be a warning to those attracted to the principles of universal love, altruism, and personal betterment that most of them strongly advocate. Looking at non-religious grassroots organizations that hold similar principles, we find that they too eventually become oligarchies,

especially ones most capable of attracting large numbers of people. As with religions, this does not imply that we should abandon their good work. When people get together to help those in need, the organizations created from their altruistic effort sometimes fall into the hands of the greedy. This in no way means that the idea of helping others is bad.

So-called religions are one of the repositories of human values and ideas at our disposal. It is up to us as informed individuals in modern times with unprecedented access to the world's traditions, whether we will search through these storehouses for the ample information and advice they hold or write them off as a loss, having never considered their contents. For better or worse, research suggests that people of faith live longer and feel happier. Even those who would retort that this is an example of how ignorance is bliss should consider whether their stance is truly worth the consequences. They might also ask themselves what they have to offer as "wisdom" and how the constructed "other" of religions is "ignorance." The psychologist Carl Jung observed Native American war veterans returning from battle with post-traumatic stress disorder were able to recover with the help of shamans who exorcised them of wrongdoings. This was in contrast to non-Native counterparts committed to and drugged in VA hospitals. There is something of great value here. Could our ancestors have known something deeply embedded in the psyche and responded whether they knew why or not? Currently, brain-imaging research is being conducted on Buddhist meditators in clinics around the world, including at the University of Wisconsin. If Buddhism does nothing else, which is far from my position, it can be shown to relieve stress, reduce brain activity in pain centers, lower blood pressure, and bring about other empirically verifiable beneficial results. Likewise, for those with deep faith in science, clinicians have verified the claims of religious practitioners who can maintain a warm body core temperature while submerged in ice water, maintain body weight during long fasts, control bleeding when pierced, and a variety of phenomenon once considered scientifically impossible. Similarly, we can likewise document the power of forgiveness on self and others. If the ancient seers were

simply deceived fools offering opiates to the masses, they apparently stumbled upon a variety of astonishing facts and techniques beneficial to individuals and societies. In contrast, the modern secular geniuses running the world or working for those who do, certainly are going about it in an odd way: with chemical pesticides, preservatives, fertilizers, genetically modified foods, antibiotics with corresponding super germs, BPA, carbon gases, nuclear disaster, and atomic warfare. We are destined to be judged as the generation that poisoned ourselves in body and mind. Should we say science is responsible or are there simply and not so simply problems with the adaptations and applications of science? What is science and what is religion? Political persons unqualified to do so have worked out these details for us. Looking at Asian cultures, for example, it was in the interest of those seeking economic and political domination to extract and essentialize features of those civilizations. Those extracted or imagined features were labeled religion as opposed to philosophy, science, and other allegedly distinct fields as the order of the world was being declared and defined by Europeans.

As John Thompson describes in more detail below, essentializing features of religions may have been expedient for the creation of modern Religious Studies since it lends to easy definitions. Likewise, it makes one religion easily the target of another, both seeming at odds according to the imposed rules. It also makes religions in general a readily available demon opposing rationality and even sanity. However, the assumed dividing lines among religions as well as between the religious and the secular are misleading and simply falsely imposed in many respects. As one example of this, we may consider the rise and later adaptation of the term "Hinduism" to describe what Europeans perceived as the religion beyond the Indus River, that is, the people of India. Sindhu, which became Hindu, is a Sanskrit word for river. However, what was the religion of India by the time of Alexander, not to mention modernity? There was the indigenous tradition of the Indus Valley that appears from artifacts to perhaps involve shamanism and yoga; there was the alleged Indo-European religion with the *devas* and *asuras* of the *R̥g Veda*; there was Buddhism,

Jainism, and other traditions. Still, perhaps there can be or could have been some use for this term “Hinduism” if these traditions did not view themselves as separate. However, there is a more important factor for our consideration in that they did not consider themselves “religions” by any of our poor definitions. They were at most Dharmas, laws. The laws of some of these schools are equivalent to the laws of physics. Therefore, the essentialized qualities that the term Hinduism is meant to embrace in Religious Studies, fails upon closer look. Some may see no problem in this because they can still lump all religions together in order to condemn them from the perspective of the secular. However, here is where a further problem enters from the opposite direction. First, if we define Hinduism as only the six *āstika*, the classical orthodox philosophies grounded in the Vedas, and exclude Buddhists, Jains, and others as heretics, there is still too much diversity to essentialize it in a meaningful way for classification and attack. Second, the *āstika* include schools of logic, atomism and what we might call atheism, all in debate with other philosophical schools of so-called Hinduism. Now we can no longer attack Hinduism as a religion, because it is not a religion, and we cannot attack it as non-rational or illogical, because it is the institution that preserved those very rudimentary elements that became science. Indeed, in the case of Hinduism we can easily see that what we are calling a religion by an ill-defined imposed construct is in fact the broad social organism that gave rise to philosophical debate. Religion, in this case, is not what we think it is: a narrow system of rituals and beliefs tending toward war. Instead, Hinduism is the varied cultures of India including sciences and mysticism. According to historical conditions across time and geographic locations, we might likewise consider the entities we are defining as other religions.

Is short, it appears likely that the idea of religion was imposed on Indian thought as a tool of European imperialism. Through the work of Edward Said and others, it is now fairly easy to see how the division of the world into East and West was this type of imperialist construct. Defining a self and other is a step toward discrimination, condemnation, and domination of the perceived

other. The same can be said of imposing the idea of religion on a people who did not see it that way. This European notion of religion as so imposed was conceived in relation to the historical development involving Christianity there. Christianity was viewed as an exclusive and closed institutionalized system, wherein the only way to the Father is through the Son. This poorly conceived notion of the extent of Christianity was taken as the model for other philosophical and social entities outside of Europe. It served to neatly define heretics and otherness. To this day, European and American teachers and students of philosophy typically refuse to acknowledge that India, China, or any country outside of Europe developed philosophy. Instead, they insist, those regions produced only “religious” thinkers. It will be interesting to see what happens to this Eurocentric, imperialist view when, in a decade or so from now, China becomes the foremost economic power and India becomes second only to China. What false categories of otherness might those next in economic and military control impose on the people of their colonies?

There is a well-known saying included in the introduction to many world religions textbooks: where there have been people, there too has been religion. Because there is no good definition for religion (among other reasons), it would be difficult to flesh out this assertion. If religion means a cultural repository of values, the statement is likely true. Now, let us reconsider the idea that “religion is responsible for more wars than any other factor in human history.” If by “religion” in this sentence, we mean culture then it certainly seems correct, although now it is a tautology. Put in this way, we can now understand more easily, the objection that not only does culture give rise to war, but it also holds many possibilities for peace. The latter is the subject of this book.

We originally envisioned the target audience for this volume as being university undergraduate students. It soon became clear, however, that we were receiving articles with information advanced scholars as well as non-academic people could also appreciate. Adhering to our first vision, we have asked that the language in these articles be appropriate for a class in World Religions, that is, easy to understand and free of religious rhetoric.

In an ecumenical attempt at fairness, we arranged the articles by religion, beginning with the oldest founders, although we admit to many layers of problems in this. In the first contribution, Rabbi Deborah Slavitt describes how language of the Jewish holiday Sukkot relates to a general wish for peace year round. The second article by the venerable monk Ananda W. P. Guruge explains some of the Buddha's teachings relating to creating peace, including the value he placed on *mettā* or cultivating friendships. Although Judaism and Buddhism are not typically seen as having similar messages, by reading these articles back to back, we come to realize this is the case. The third article by Chanju Mun is also on Buddhism. It considers the peace activities of the Korean monk Venerable Lee Jungwoo. Kathleen Kautzer writes about the ideological conflicts between left- and right-wing factions within the Roman Catholic Church. While these groups disagree on specific actions, both claim to be dedicated to making peace. Ron Large looks at a seminal protestant activist for peace and justice, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Large writes, "For King, love and justice form a partnership in which each one influences the other." Surely, there is a lesson in this for all of us. Marianne Kupin describes peaceful coexistence of religions in the Balkans during Medieval times. Although we typically view religions in Mediaeval days as in violent opposition to one another, particularly Christianity and Islam, there are also good exemplars for peacemaking. Zarrín T. Caldwell contributes an inspiring account of how the philosophy and activities of the Bahá'í Faith can contribute to a sustainable peace. Among their principles is the notion of being a citizen of the world. Ms. Caldwell's article is followed by a historical account of another important contemporary religion. Wigmoore Francis writes about Rastafari and Peace. Students will find this article particularly stimulating because many know the music of Bob Marley and other reggae performers from pop culture. Likely, however, only a small percentage of Bob Marley fans recognize his religious messages, although Jah is a frequent reference in his songs. Of those who know something of Rastafari principles of peace, few of them realize the movement developed in that direction from black

supremacist roots. John Thompson considers philosophical ideas related to religions and peace including the idea of religion itself. Dr. Thompson points out ways that those involved with a religious tradition form associated worldviews that impact their principles and behaviors. Tashia Dare writes a very informative article about Parents Circle-Families Forum. This is a grassroots organization intended to bring together bereaved families on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the hopes of providing mutual understanding in the effort of achieving peace and reconciliation.

As these articles indicate, what we call religions are not simply systems of superstitions inevitably leading to war. It is hoped that readers will come to see that such a perception of religions resulted from the artificial delimitation of broader cultural phenomenon, which include both philosophical and practical methods for establishing and maintaining peace individually and socially.





## JUDAISM

### A TABERNACLE OF PEACE

#### Deborah Slavitt

Israelis greet each other with “*Shalom!*” Arabic speakers might respond with its cognate “*Salaam!*” Jews the world over wish each other “*Shabbat Shalom,*” Sabbath peace. Where English speakers say “How are you?” Hebrew speakers say “*Mah sh’lomha?*” Literally, this means “How is your *shalom*?” Therefore, clearly this word “*shalom*” which everyone translates as “peace” means much more than the absence of war.

This everyday and casual use of the word for peace does not make it any easier to talk wisely about peace, or to make recommendations about how to achieve peace. I am reminded of what the prophet Jeremiah has to say about irresponsible leaders who run around saying “*shalom, shalom,*” but “there is no peace (*v’ein shalom*).”<sup>1</sup> Talking about it does not make it so. In our time we know great frustration at our inability to build nations or create jobs. We talk of “peace processes” and sport bumper stickers that say “Visualize World Peace,” but we do not know how to make peace here at home, never mind somewhere else.

Should we then give up on “making” peace? The example of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winners teaches us that there is much

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 6:14, my translation.

we can do: the winners are women from Africa who have been doing the concrete everyday work of peace. It is in our hands to do the same. Biblical Hebrew is a very concrete language and does not trade much in large abstractions such as World Peace. What is the concrete, daily meaning of this term in the Jewish tradition? Let us go and see how the classic Jewish texts talk about *shalom*.

Just one note before beginning: at the time I am preparing this paper, I am also preparing to begin the celebration of the holiday *Sukkot*. It is too bad that more American Jews do not celebrate this holiday, because it really is the quintessential holiday for most of Jewish history, from the Biblical era onward. Weaving its way through the holiday observances is the recurrent theme of *shalom*. I will come back to the holiday of *Sukkot* in the third section of this tour of *shalom* in scripture, liturgy, and observance.

## 1. Scripture

Any reasonable concordance to the Hebrew Bible will show well upwards of two hundred entries for forms of the root that gives us *shalom*. I will summarize the semantic range of the word and give a very few examples.

The root of the Hebrew word *shalom* is made up of the letters *shin*, *lamed*, and *mem*. The root crops up in verbs of all tenses and voices, as well as in nouns and adjectives. A verb, you ask? “To peace?” The broad semantic range of this verb includes the meanings “pay back, make whole, requite.” This is the usage in Lev. 24:18, 21, where it means “make compensation for,” as a human might do to make restitution of a physical harm or economic loss. God can be the subject of this verb, as at II Sam. 3:39, where it means to requite the wicked for their wickedness. Clearly in this sense God may also requite the righteous for their goodness—the context is not always negative. The verb can also be a stative, that is, describing the state of possessing *shalom*, and in this usage it means “to be whole, sound, well.” This is the

meaning at Job 9:4 (“whoever challenged Him and came out whole?”<sup>2</sup>).

In its noun forms, the root retains similar meanings. Most Biblical contexts show no connection between *shalom* and the absence of war; nor do they imply quietude or rest. Rather the noun meaning of *shalom* implies wholeness, health, soundness, mutuality, integrity. Look at the end of the Priestly Blessing at Num. 6:24-26. It ends “v’yasem l’kha *shalom*” (“...and may God grant you peace”). The other requests in the prayer are for God to bless and protect, light up His countenance and be gracious, and to look with favor. Placing *shalom* last in this series implies that all the preceding requests, if granted, would result in a state of *shalom* for ones thus blessed.

Is *shalom* in God’s gift alone? Look at Psalms 34:15: *Bikesh shalom v’rodphihu*: seek *shalom* and run after it.<sup>3</sup> The verb *rodph* connotes a vigorous, desirous pursuit of something. There must be ways, says this verse, that we humans here on earth can exert our energies to attain *shalom*. How are we to do that? The context of this verse from Psalms bids us guard our speech so it does not cause harm, so it maintains *shalom* among people. Why should we do this? The Psalm offers a motivation as well: the rewards of *shalom* are life and good fortune. If our actions cause harmony, our own harmony will be assured.

There is not space enough to explore many rabbinic texts about *shalom*, but one Talmudic principle I must mention is that of *sh’lom bayit*, “peace/harmony in the home.” “Home” in this context should be broadly construed and understood as the human realm. So preserving *sh’lom bayit* means making peace between any humans as well as making peace between husband and wife. The sages are prepared to subordinate several important values to that of preserving *shalom*. One example, drawn from the story of Sarah’s laughter and God’s report of it to Abraham, says that one may misquote another person in order to preserve *sh’lom bayit*,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*.

<sup>3</sup> My translation.

<sup>4</sup> Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 65b; and midrash Vayikra Rabbah 9:9.

overriding the principle of saying accurately in the name of another. Spouses may not scold or publicly embarrass each other even for infractions of important Sabbath laws—even meticulous Sabbath observance is overridden by the demands of *sh'lom bayit* (this is reflected in a story told about the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Me'ir Kagan), so precious is the harmony between husband and wife.

Sometimes defining the opposite of a term can help to understand the term itself. If you want a description of the absence of *shalom* in this sense, look at the passage surrounding Lev. 26:36:

“.... As for those of you who survive, I will cast a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight. Fleeing as though from the sword, they shall fall though none pursues. With no one pursuing, they shall stumble over one another as before the sword. You shall not be able to stand your ground before your enemies, but shall perish among the nations; and the land of your enemies shall consume you.”<sup>5</sup>

As the context indicates, it is the loss of mutuality with God and fellow man that leads to this chilling state of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. *Shalom* is the state that results from being in covenant relationship with God, following the terms of the covenant (the *mitzvot* or commandments). The right state of the relationship brings about a right state of the human in that relationship—health, wholeness, soundness, and hence, peace.

## 2. Litergy

Like Tanakh, the Jewish prayer book is replete with instances of the word *shalom*. Once again, I will generalize and then give a few exemplary illustrations. In Jewish liturgy, the idea of peace functions as a culminating, summative idea at the end of significant liturgical units. I interpret this to mean that peace (including all the ideas expressed by the word *shalom*) is the

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<sup>5</sup> Lev. 26: 36-38, JPS.

greatest good that can be achieved, and achieving it demands a combination of humans' best attributes and God's assistance. See the following examples:

*Amidah*: The *Amidah* is the central prayer of every worship service. It is really a series of prayers, praises as well as petitionary prayers (also called *b'rakhot* or "blessings"), for God's help with a series of core values (e.g., insight, repentance, righteousness). The last blessing of this series asks for God to grant peace. I see this as an acknowledgement that though God has given us all the tools to make peace on our own, we do not always manage that, and need some divine help.

*Kaddish Shalem*: The *Kaddish* is an Aramaic hymn of praise for God. In the liturgy it functions as punctuation between segments of the worship service. There are several variants of the *Kaddish* for use between various segments. At the conclusion of major liturgical units (for instance at the end of the *Mussaf*, the additional service on Shabbat morning) one variant, called *Kaddish Shalem* ("Whole" *Kaddish*), appears. The reason it is called "whole" is not so much that it is far longer than any other, but that it concludes with this phrase: "May the One who brings peace to His universe bring peace to us and to all Israel."<sup>6</sup> The word translated here as "universe" means "on high," that is, in God's realm. This final praise of God implies that the power to make peace is an attribute of God deserving of the highest praise, and at the same time sums up all the good to be derived from aligning oneself with God's will. As above, so below.

*Torah Service*: Monday, Thursday, Shabbat, and Festival services all contain a sub-unit of liturgy for the reading of the Torah. At the very end of these services, as the scroll is replaced in the ark, the liturgy quotes Proverbs 3:17-18 (the congregation usually sings these verses): "It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, and all who uphold it are blessed; its ways are pleasant, and all its paths are peace."<sup>7</sup> The antecedent of that "it" is Torah in the context of the liturgy (though in its original context, "it" is rather

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<sup>6</sup> Rabbinical Assembly, *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 181

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

“she,” wisdom, *chochmah* personified as a woman). Once again, the word *shalom* adds its concluding and summative value: learning Torah is learning peace, doing Torah is doing peace, and peace is the whole goal of the Torah enterprise. The sages of the Talmud concluded many study units by saying “*talmidei chachamim marbim shalom ba’olam*,” “students of the Sages increase peace in the world.”<sup>8</sup> The very act of teaching and studying Torah works to increase the peace of the world. Now we all know how much war there is in the Hebrew Scriptures; in light of this it might seem odd to maintain that Torah is peace. I would say two things in response: first, peace is not the absence of war, and, second and more important, Torah doesn’t mean ONLY the content of the first five books of Tanakh, but rather God’s instruction writ large. Any instruction in God’s will, including but not limited to the narratives in the sacred writings, is Torah.

Wedding liturgy: at the conclusion of the traditional wedding ceremony, seven blessings are pronounced. The sixth (the last is a blessing over a cup of wine) is really the concluding and summative blessing of the blessings specific to a wedding. This blessing exalts the wedded couple to symbols of an Israel reunited and in its homeland, rejoicing at the redemption and restoration of the people to right relationship with God. A series of Hebrew words rings the changes on joy and fellowship: *gilah*, *rinah*, *ditzah v’chedva*; *ahavah*, *achva*, *shalom*, *v’re’ut*. Look at the words *shalom* is keeping company with joyous song, neighborliness, love, deep companionship. In this context, *shalom* expresses the wholeness and integrity of God’s people in God’s land under God’s covenant. This is an image of the way it is meant to be, and every actual human couple marrying has a role in bringing that about.

*Hashkiveinu*: One last example: on Friday evening and holiday evening services, the last blessing in the *Sh’ma* and Its Blessings (before the *Amidah*), has a unique expression. This last blessing in this section of the service follows a blessing whose main idea is redemption, and this evening blessing asks for the little redemption

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<sup>8</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 64a.

of making it through the dangerous night, when our bodies simulate death, and there may be demons abroad, or at any rate we are afraid of things. The closing words of this evening blessing are: “Spread over us *sukkat sh’lomecha*, the shelter of Your peace.”<sup>9</sup> This is a very interesting expression, because it uses the language of the holiday Sukkot to express a general and year-round wish: the word translated here as “shelter” is in Hebrew “*sukkah*,” sometimes translated as “tabernacle, booth.” What is it about this particular kind of shelter that confers peace on those who shelter there for a time? How does this “shelter of peace” connect with the idea of the Sabbath? Kabbalists think of the *sukkat shalom* as another name for the *Shekhinah*, the immanent presence of God, and understand this prayer as the *Shekhinah* enfolding the individual and his or her extra soul received on Shabbat, or enfolding and protecting the people Israel as a whole on the eve of Shabbat. A sociological explanation would point out that as a *sukkah* is a fragile temporary dwelling in space, so Shabbat is a fragile temporary dwelling in time. Both the *sukkah* and Shabbat are meant to give humans a foretaste of the perfected world-to-come (sometimes called the messianic time, though the human messiah is not a necessary harbinger of that time). That world will be characterized by a thoroughgoing *shalom*, a harmony of the natural world, the people in it, and God’s realm that we can scarcely envision in our far-from-perfect condition. In that time the whole nature of the world will be different: lion lies down with lamb (and they both get up!), bear and cow keep company, children are safe from poisonous snakes. All nature will be different, and our relationship with the universe will be completely changed—we will inhabit a naturally-occurring perfect covenantal relationship with God.

Scriptural reference: Sukkat David, Amos 9:11: “In that day, I will set up again the fallen booth of David.” Redemption. After travails, “Beyt David,” house of David, *sukkah* is a humble house, not a palace, not a Temple, a humble dwelling place—but all we will need in the times to come, the times after the Day of the Lord.

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<sup>9</sup> Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, 33.

House of David, though fragile, frail, has received a promise of eternal covenant with God. However bad the relationship may get, there is always the promise of return, repentance, reinstatement of the best times and the possibility of the future.

### 3. Observance

Just as the weekly holiday of Shabbat is a foretaste of the world-to-come, so is the annual eight-day holiday of Sukkot. The *sukkah* is linked to the theme of redemption in the phrase *sukkat David* referred to in Amos 9:11: “In that day, I will set up again the fallen booth of David.”<sup>10</sup> After the terrible “Day of the Lord” redemption will come, and the *beyt David* (house of David) will be restored to its ascendancy in accordance with God’s promises to David and Solomon. Why a *sukkah* and not the royal palace fit for a king such as David? A *sukkah* is not a palace, not a Temple, but a humble dwelling place, suggesting a close and reverent relationship with God.

This notion of the ideal way to dwell with God weaves its way through the observance of the holiday Sukkot and its connection with *shalom*. The most prominent element of the observance of Sukkot is the building of a *sukkah* in which to celebrate the holiday. A proper *sukkah* must be fragile, open to the elements partially, roofed in greenery but only partially—one must be able to see the night stars through the gaps in the *skhakh*, the natural roofing material of the *sukkah*. The idea is for Jews to put themselves out in nature with only the scantiest of shelter, just as they were when wandering in the desert, and just as they were when, as residents of the promised land, they camped out during the harvest to gather the earth’s bounty. It is a role-playing of faith in God’s protection to dwell in a *sukkah*, and a practice run for the world-to-come when the scant shelter of a *sukkah* is all we will need. Another important part of the holiday celebration is to invite guests (*ushpizin*, from the Latin “*hospes*,” a guest), both virtual and living, into the *sukkah* and to accord them every honor. This practice invokes

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<sup>10</sup> Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*.



another meaning of *sukkat shalom* as a place where all may be made safe and secure, which is the first requirement for attaining *shalom*, wholeness, and well-being.

The third holiday practice that weaves in the theme of *shalom* is the holding of the *lulav* and *etrog*, a bundle of nature consisting of plants common to the Judea of antiquity: the palm, the willow, the myrtle, and the citron. One of the many meanings attributed to this bundle of nature is that each element is like a human trait: the *etrog* is about the size and shape of a heart; the palm branch is straight like a spine; the willow leaves look like lips; the myrtle leaves look like eyes. So the whole package represents all our physical and intellectual capabilities which, when held together, give us the ability to create *shalom* in the world if we will but use them to that end. When we combine these traits with the omnipresence of God, we are creating a powerful image of the potential harmony of the world order.

Let me summarize the teachings of the holiday as I see them and as they relate to the idea of increasing *shalom* in the world.

- Even though you are dwelling in a wilderness there is a powerful presence with you that can help make you stable.
- Do not wrap yourself up so tight in your shelter that you cannot see the outside—let your sukkah be open to the elements and the starlight. You have to go outside, make yourself vulnerable, open yourself up to the possibilities, and give yourself up to the protection of God.
- You have to let the other in, make room for him or her, in order to make peace.
- We are fragile creatures dwelling in the elements, but even so we are capable of joy, if we are in right relationship with the universe, including other people.
- We have all the tools to make peace: bodies, eyes, hearts, and lips. In addition, Instruction—that is Torah. When these all work in harmony, there is *shalom*. However, we must do the work, and even does it eagerly, whenever we can; make opportunities to create it—build a *sukkah*, a place that protects the possibility of peace.

- Our future holds a promise when living in right relationship with God will come as easily as breathing. Nature including our nature will no longer work against us. However, part of the responsibility to bring about that time lies with us. This world-to-come is not just a reward for good behavior, but the inevitable result of a mindful way of creating relationship.

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## **BUDDHISM**

# **THE BUDDHA ON RECONCILIATION AND PEACE**

**Ananda W. P. Guruge**

### **Part One: Reconciliation**

#### **1. Introduction**

Reconciliation is the process of maintaining or restoring amicable relations between opponents in the event of a dispute or conflict. Dispute and conflict have been inherent to human society at all times and they have been as much motivators of progress and development as perpetrators of destruction and disaster. Acknowledging their ineluctability, the need has been felt to ensure that their deleterious efforts are minimized, if not eliminated. The ideals to be achieved as counterpoints to dispute and conflict are amity, unity, harmony and peace. As an outstanding religious leader playing simultaneously the role of an active social reformer, the Buddha had much to say on reconciliation.

## 2. Amity, Unity, Harmony and Peace

Unity as the Buddha conceived was for opposites to coexist without discrimination. At the macro-level, the Buddha was emphatic in *Vasettha-sutta* (MN 98) that humans as opposed to flora and fauna belonged to one single unified species. Stratification or discrimination of humans on grounds of birth was rejected by him as unacceptable. If any grading was required, the only criterion was a person's actions and conduct. He demonstrated his profound commitment to the oneness of humanity by opening the doors of the Saṅgha on equal terms to each and every caste and class of the contemporary Indian society. Coexistence with the violent, the hateful and the ignorant without being affected by their lowly qualities was advocated by the Buddha when he said:

Happily we live indeed without hate with the hateful,  
 Happily we reside without hate with people who are hateful.  
 Happily we live in good health with the sick,  
 Happily we reside in health with people who are sick.  
 Happily we live without yearning with the yearning,  
 Happily we reside without yearning with people who yearn.<sup>1</sup>

If coexistence, thus illustrated, implied coping with the opposite, unity for the Buddha was a positive state in which amity or friendship was extended without reservation to everyone. It is significant that the term that the Buddha used most emphatically was *mettā* – a nominal derivative of *mitta*, a friend. However, his definition went beyond mere friendship and extended to loving kindness, when he compared the sentiment to be equal to what a mother felt towards her only son whom she would save at the risk of her own life. In a telling comparison of possible forms of merit, the Buddha stated that a moment of contemplation on *mettā* exceeded the merit of offering alms to a hundred of Buddhas. *Mettā* had to be extended to all sentient beings whom the Buddha encompassed as the stable and the moving without exception, long,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dhammapada*, 197-199.

huge, middling and tiny as an atom, seen and unseen, living near or far away, and born or seeking to be born. The definition excluded no one.

The thought of amity as “May all beings be well and happy” was further reinforced by the other three factors of *Brahmavihāra*, the sublime states, which the Northern Buddhists call the “imponderables.” *Mettā* or loving kindness in its active dimension is *Karuṇā*, compassion or pity, which enables one to react and respond to the pain and suffering of another. *Muditā*, sympathetic joy, felicitation or appreciation, is to overcome envy, jealousy and hostility and rejoice over another’s good fortune. The fourth sublime state of *Upekkhā*, signifying both equanimity and equality, removes obvious obstacles of either disposition or perception to unity and harmony.

*Samaggī* meaning unity and harmony was upheld by the Buddha as the cohesive bonding of the members of a group. Thrice in his admonition to the Licchavis did he underscore the importance of meeting in unity and harmony, discussing in unity and harmony and dispersing in unity and harmony.<sup>2</sup> Equating unity and harmony of the Saṅgha to the joy of the birth of Buddhas and the proclamation of the doctrine, he said, “Happy is the unity of the Saṅgha, and happy is the spiritual striving of the united Saṅgha.”<sup>3</sup>

Amity, unity and harmony together ensured peace and security. The Buddha viewed peace as a state of nonviolence and moral perfection. In three of the most important discourses, namely *Kūṭadanta*, *Agganna* and *Cakkavattisīhanāda Suttas* (DN 5, 27, 26), he traced the cause of violence, crime and moral degradation to poverty and inequitable distribution of goods and the deprivation of the destitute. It was from poverty, he said, that stealing, violence, murder, falsehood, evil speech, adultery, abusive and frivolous talk, covetousness, ill will, false views and perverted lust arose until finally filial and religious poverty and respect for leadership disappear. The result of such a process of moral degeneration, in which mutual enmity, hatred, animosity and

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<sup>2</sup> DN 16; and AN IV 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Dhammapada*, 194.

murderous thought would arise in people, is that they would kill parents, siblings and children with the insensitivity of a hunter of animals. Finally, the Buddha saw, as the ultimate consequence of poverty, a war of mass destruction with dangerous weapons, in which people would look upon each other as wild animals. Only a few, he asserted, would survive such a cataclysmic armed conflict.

That was not the only cause of war and violence that the Buddha had identified. In *Mahādukkhandha Sutta*, he found that the entire range of hostilities from domestic disunity and quarrels to internecine and international conflicts was due to sensuous craving, conditioned by sensuous craving and impelled by sensuous craving:

Truly, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens; the mother quarrels with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. Thus, given to dissension, quarrelling and fighting, they fall upon one another with fists, sticks, or weapons. And thereby they suffer death or deadly pain.

And further, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, people break into houses, rob, plunder, pillage whole houses, commit highway robbery, and seduce the wives of others. Then the rulers have such people caught, and inflict on them various forms of punishment. And thereby they incur death or deadly pain.

Now, this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in this present life, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MN 13.

### 3. Disputes and Conflicts of the Time of the Buddha

With such an in-depth analysis of the foundations of amity, unity, harmony and peace, which the Buddha had presented to many audiences of influential people, could he usher an era free of dispute and violence?

History tells us a different story, highlighting in the process the dismal reality of the inevitability of dispute and conflict. Even as the Buddha was expounding his lofty ideals of loving kindness and moral rectitude, kings waged war against kings. The Buddha's friend, King Bimbisāra of Magadha, was imprisoned and tortured by his son Ajatasattu. Being an ambitious empire-builder, he had designs on annexing the tiny republic of the Vajjis. The Buddha's own relatives were on the verge of engaging themselves in an armed conflict. An angry prince massacred multitudes of the Buddha's own clan. He himself was the target of a series of attempted assassinations, contrived by his cousin Devadatta. Even within the Saṅgha – that ideal society of equality, voluntary poverty, democratic decision-making and high moral standing – there were serious conflicts though without violence. How did the Buddha react? What solutions did he offer?

### 4. Direct Involvement in Conflict-Resolution

The methods he adopted on different occasions varied. To King Pasenadi, who was frustrated and grieving after three defeats at the hand of his nephew King Ajatasattu, the Buddha explained the futility of victory and defeat:

Victory breeds hatred;  
The defeated sleeps in sorrow;  
The peaceful sleeps happily,  
Abandoning victory and defeat.<sup>5</sup>

When his relatives, the Śākya and the Koliya, lined for war to share water of a river, he sat amidst the battle lines and asked them

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<sup>5</sup> *Dhammapada*, 201.

the crucial question: “What is more valuable – a drop of water or the lives of ksatriya chiefs?” He taught them to live without hate among the hateful (*Dhammapada*, 197-199) and narrated several *Jātaka* tales to underscore the value of unity and harmony. In *Sammodana Jātaka* (also known as the *Vattaka Jātaka* 33), a united flock of quails saves themselves by flying together in harmony with the hunter’s net whereas those in conflict fail to do so and get captured.<sup>6</sup> *Rukkhadhamma Jātaka* illustrates how those in unity moved to safety in unison while those disunited succumbed to danger. Indian literature has eloquent parables in praise of unity. Among them is the story of the father who demonstrates how a bundle of sticks tied together could not be broken whereas each single stick could be easily broken.

Twice did the Buddha try to persuade Vidudabha to desist from his revengeful massacre of the Śākya by sitting under a shadeless tree and telling Vidudabha that the shade of his relatives gave him comfort; was it a gesture of pleading for forgiveness on behalf of the Buddha’s errant relatives?

When the band of six monks physically assaulted the band of sixteen monks, the Buddha intervened to prevent them from doing or instigating others to do violent acts by pointing out that life was dear to every living being and everyone feared death. (*Dhammapada*, 129-130)

When a debate on a trivial point of discipline exacerbated into a major debate resulting in disunity within the Saṅgha as well as the lay supporters, the Buddha in utter frustration retired to the solitude of the Parileyya forest to express his disapproval and disappointment and to underscore the futility of acrimonious conflict. So the Buddha’s thoughts on dispute and conflict were founded on real world experiences, which he had himself experienced.

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<sup>6</sup> *Jātaka* 74.



## 5. The Mind where Violence Began

Many times did the Buddha decry violence. With his overriding principle that the mind was the forerunner of every action, as enunciated in the first two verses of the *Dhammapada*, the line of defense that he emphasized was attitudinal change – with the change taking place in the mind. In this he adumbrated the motto of UNESCO: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defenses of peace must be constructed.” This is how the Buddha wanted the change to take place:

Conquer anger with non-anger or love.  
Conquer evil by good,  
Conquer miserliness with generosity,  
Conquer falsehood by truth.<sup>7</sup>

The same he reiterated more emphatically:

Not by hatred are hatreds appeased  
By non-hatred or love do hatreds cease.  
This is the eternal law.<sup>8</sup>

Highlighting the role, which keeping grudges in one’s mind contributed to perpetuating hatred, he added both positively and negatively:

“He abused me; he beat me;  
He defeated me; he robbed me,”  
In those who do not harbor such thoughts  
Hatred is appeased.  
In those who harbor such thoughts  
Hatred is never appeased.<sup>9</sup>

A person of tolerance, non-hatred and nonviolence was described by the Buddha as wise, noble and mature (*Dhammapada*, 258-261) and a Brahman or a recluse (*Dhammapada*, 142, 405).

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<sup>7</sup> *Dhammapada*, 223.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

“Speak the truth; do not yield to anger and do no injury to anyone: by these three paths one will attain the world of gods and will not grieve anymore,” he once told Moggallāna.<sup>10</sup> Equally praised as noble persons were those who, with the power of patience and forbearance, endured reproach, beating and bondage (*Dhammapada*, 399) and who were friendly among the hostile and peaceful among the violent.<sup>11</sup> Among what were listed as teachings of all Buddhas were forbearance with patience as the highest of spiritual effort and refraining from abuse and oppression of others (*Dhammapada*, 184-185).

The Buddha’s own patience as regards recrimination or abuse he upheld as an example of being trained or disciplined:

Like an elephant in war  
Who endures the arrows that fall on it,  
I endure abusive words  
For humans are mostly without virtue.  
The trained or the disciplined they lead to the assembly;  
The trained or the disciplined (elephant or horse) a king rides;  
The best among the men is the trained or the disciplined  
Who endure abuse.<sup>12</sup>

The person whom the Buddha admired most was one, who by word, deed and thought, was “a binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peace-maker, a lover of peace, an impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace.”<sup>13</sup>

It is the same emphasis on qualities of the mind that is predominant in what the *Jātakas* list as the ten traditional qualities desired in a king, better known as the “*dasarajadhamma*,” (1) generosity, (2) virtue or morality, (3) self-sacrifice, (4) honesty or straightness, (5) gentleness, (6) self-control, (7) non-anger or

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 320-321.

<sup>13</sup> DN 1.

pleasant temperament, (8) nonviolence, (9) forbearance, and (10) non-opposition.<sup>14</sup>

As the mind is the forerunner of all actions, everything had the mind as the foremost and all were made in the mind, making the mind pure was the Buddha's remedy (*Dhammapada*, 1-2) and, as explained to Ananda as the teaching of all Buddhas, it was in the formula: "Avoid all evil; do good; and keep the mind pure."<sup>15</sup>

## 6. From Precept to Practice

While all these are prerequisites for reconciliation, the Buddha spelled out a procedure for it as regards disputes and conflicts within the Saṅgha. Four situations needing resolution were identified as doctrinal dissension, accusations, indiscipline, duties or actions. Seven approaches are prescribed in the Vinaya as follows:

- (1) "Face to face" inquiry and verdict in open assembly with all parties present and involved;
- (2) "Recalling mindfulness" where the accused recalls and acknowledges what he or she had done;
- (3) "Recognizing sanity" where an accused is given a verdict of acquittal on grounds of insanity when the offence was committed;
- (4) "Based on confession" where action is taken on the confession of an accused without further investigation;
- (5) "Majority decision" where in the event of not being able to reach unanimity, the community decides on the basis of numerical majority;
- (6) "Further misconduct" where an accused confesses only after formal investigation thus adding to the punishment for failure to be cooperative; and
- (7) "Covering over with grass" where both sides of a dispute or conflict admit that each had committed offensive actions and confess to the community and, in order to prevent further dissension or divisiveness, agree to close the case.

Of these seven forms of handling a dispute or conflict, what comes nearest to reconciliation is the last one that is figuratively

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<sup>14</sup> *Jātaka* I 260, 399; and II 400.

<sup>15</sup> *Dhammapada*, 183.

named “*Tinvattharana*” – covering with or covering as with grass. The final goal of reconciliation is negatively to prevent further dissensions and division and positively to restore amity, unity, harmony and peace.

The process begins by both sides to a dispute or conflict admitting each one’s wrongdoings. Through a further process of mutual understanding forgiveness, the final step is to forget the previous wrong doings and carry no further grudges.

## 7. Essential Ingredients for effective Reconciliation

The admission of one’s wrongdoing, the making of amends and the exercise of restraint in the future to prevent its recurrence are three essential ingredients for effective reconciliation. This the Buddha enjoined in the *Samannaphala Sutta*. For the growth of the Dhamma and Vinaya, one who admits an offense must make amends according to the Dhamma with restraint in the future. *Āṅguttara-nikāya* (DN 2) identifies as two wise persons one who sees and admits one’s offenses, and one who rightfully pardons one who had confessed one’s offenses. Those who do not do so are termed two fools.<sup>16</sup>

Such action had to be taken without being dissuaded or prevented by the four wrong causes of wrongdoing, i.e., *chanda* – wrongful desire or greed; *dosa* – animosity or hatred; *bhaya* – fear or intimidation; and *moha* – delusion or stupidity. (AN I 142; II 18) Another list, recurring many times in the Canon, gives four kinds of actions by which one shows one’s genial disposition to another, *dāna* – generous giving; *piyavacana* – pleasant or polite words; *atthacariyā* – benevolent action; and *samānattatā* – acceptance as an equal.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> AN II 21.

<sup>17</sup> AN I 26; II 32; IV 219; and DN III 192.

## **8. Application of the Injunctions of the Buddha to Current Conflicts**

To apply all such injunctions of the Buddha to reconciliation after an armed conflict of the type that several nations had experienced in recent time, the following steps have to be gone through:

- (1) Both sides of the conflict must agree to close the hostilities for the good of the community;
- (2) Each side must admit its wrong doings and a representative on behalf of that side should confess such wrong doings;
- (3) Each side should pardon the other;
- (4) Amends must be made on both sides with positive action;
- (5) Steps should be taken to prevent the recurrence of the situation in the future; and
- (6) The whole community must be involved in the process.

While each of the first three steps is important, it is in the implementation of the last three that the highest level of diligence has to be exercised.

Here, again, the Buddha had given a useful directive. Every issue must be investigated starting from the very origin. The term in Pāli – namely, *yonisomanasikāra* – is very expressive. How did the conflict arise? What were the causes? What acts of commission or omission led to it? These are the questions to be raised when amends have to be made by each side. Making amends demands causes to be identified and rectified. Maintaining and assuring peace and security in the future has to be the final result of reconciliation. Only then can the ground disturbed by the conflict be covered over with grass as the picturesque metaphor of the Buddha implies.

## **9. Buddhist Principles in Practice**

The most flagrant case to illustrate the application of the Buddha's principles in practice is that of Aśoka the Righteous, the third emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty of India (c. 265-228 BCE).

He came to power through a four-year war of succession in which, according to Sri Lankan Pāli sources, he killed ninety-nine half brothers, and, according to the Northern Buddhist sources, destroyed a horde of enemies. His atrocities earned him the appellation of Candāsoka, Aśoka the Wicked. In the fourth regnal year he embraced Buddhism as his personal religion. Four years after his conversion, he had to wage a war to annex the still unconquered region of Kalinga to the empire. In the course of the horrible war, a hundred and fifty thousand people were deported, a hundred thousand slain in battle and many times that number died of famine and pestilence. The remorse he felt was expressed in his own words as “gravely regarded and considered extremely painful” and “today one hundredth or one thousandth of the slaughtered, the dead and the deported in Kalinga would be a grave concern.”<sup>18</sup> Not only did he eschew war for the rest of his thirty-seven year reign but also admonished his sons and grandsons not to engage in any armed conflict. Being a realistic ruler he could not rule out any future war and therefore added to his admonition: “Even in a conquest by arms, may they desire forbearance and lightness of punishment.”<sup>19</sup>

Four of Aśoka’s principles relevant to our discussion of reconciliation come from Rock Edict XII, which though confined to interfaith understanding and cooperation, would extend to all areas of dispute and conflict. In general terms they are:

- (1) Treating and supporting all factions alike without discrimination in the development of ‘their inner essence’ (e. g. their cultural specificity);
- (2) Restraint in speech (*vacī-gutī*) by not criticizing the opponent inappropriately and, even where criticism is justified, by using civil language;
- (3) Coming to know the point of view of the opponent or, more precisely, putting oneself in the other’s shoes; and
- (4) Getting together (*samavāyo sādhu*) with the opponent for consultation, compromise and consensus.

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<sup>18</sup> Rock Edict XIII.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Getting together regularly for deliberation is the first of seven principles which the Buddha had laid down for the prevention of the decline and degeneration of any community, political, social or religious. Repeated in the Canon several times, this list, called *aparihāṇīyā-dhamma* (principles for the prevention of decline), is equally valid and relevant to the process of reconciliation. Paraphrased and stated in terms applicable to current situations in the twenty-first century, the seven principles are as follows:

- (1) Participate fully in public life and affairs, observe the democratic principles of compromise and consensus, and preserve harmony in spite of differences;
- (2) Make a balance between the tradition and the modern and make changes slowly and cautiously and not drastically;
- (3) Recognize the value and relevance of trans-generational wisdom;
- (4) Recognize the importance of women and their need for protection;
- (5) Protect the cultural and spiritual heritage;
- (6) Safeguard the practice of religion; and
- (7) Be open to all religious and spiritual influences in a spirit of tolerance.

## 10. Conclusion

Visualize a process of reconciliation, which results in conscious actions of goodwill and accommodation according to the Buddha's injunctions and principles on the part of factions in a dispute or conflict. There could be no better way to ensure lasting amity, unity, harmony and peace.

## Part Two

The following two sections of this article serve to provide proof of the more readily accepted view that Buddhism is a religion of peace, nonviolence, tolerance, loving kindness and compassion. Whenever a professed Buddhist (whether monastic or lay) anywhere in the world even vaguely suggests any solution to armed conflict other than through negotiated peace, on such

grounds as territorial and national rights and communal interests, such statements are received by the wider Buddhist community with shock, disbelief and justifiable condemnation.

Even where peace had to be restored as a matter of law and order by countering violence with violence, the teachings of the Buddha and the example of Emperor Aśoka are found to be the essential base for the attainment of amity, unity and harmony.

### 1. The Buddha and War

The Buddha, as a prominent opinion-maker of his times, did have observations to make on the state of war and peace. It is with regard to the conflict between king Pasenadi of Kosala and king Ajatasattu of Magadha that the Buddha said:

Victory breeds hatred.  
The defeated lives unhappily.  
The peaceful sleeps happily,  
Abandoning both victory and defeat.<sup>20</sup>

To the Buddha, there was no happiness beyond peace – a statement that is equally applicable to the spiritual goal of Nibbāna and to the worldly objective of freedom from conflict, war, violence and insecurity.

The Buddha saw war, too, like all other forms of violence, as a product of sense-pleasure or sensuous craving. In *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* of *Majjhima-nikāya* (MN 13), his familiarity with the details of an armed conflict in operation is indicative of warring times:

Having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver, both sides mass for battle and arrows are hurled and knives are hurled and swords are flashing. These who wound with arrows and wound with knives and decapitate with their swords, these suffer dying then and pain like unto dying.

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<sup>20</sup> *Dhammapada*, 201.



Having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver, they leap on to the newly daubed ramparts, and arrows are hurled and knives are hurled and swords are flashing. Those who wound with arrows and wound with knives and pour boiling cow-dung over them and crush them with the (falling) portcullis and decapitate them with their swords, these suffer dying then and pain like unto dying.<sup>21</sup>

Apparently, war, too, like quarrels and disunity was caused on account of slander and calumny. *Brahmajala-sutta* of *Dīgha-nikāya* (DN 1) speaks of a person who avoids these forms of speech, a peacemaker and lover of peace:

Putting away slander, he holds himself aloof from calumny. What he hears here he repeats not elsewhere to raise a quarrel against the people here; what he hears elsewhere he repeats not here to raise a quarrel against the people there. Thus does he live as a binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peacemaker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the Buddha's answer to war is moral transformation according to Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, figuratively presented as "conquest of self." It was in such a context that occupations like military service, and sale of humans, poisonous materials and weapons were declared undesirable forms of livelihood. But the Buddha was a realist. He knew that social change on a wider frame than spiritual development subscribed to Peace and Security. The following incident testifies to the Buddha's wider vision:

As king Ajatasattu was fortifying the capital city of Pāṭaliputta with the intension of annexing the Vajjian Confederacy to the expanding Magadhan empire, he sent his Brahman chief minister, Vassakara to the Buddha to find out indirectly whether, in the Buddha's opinion, the Vajjians could be defeated in battle. The

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<sup>21</sup> I. B. Horner, trans., *The collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, vol. 1, (Bristol: Pali Text Society, 1954-9), 112-118.

<sup>22</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha [Dīgha Nikaya]*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 5.

Buddha had taught the Vajjian leaders, the Licchavis, at Sarandada Cetiya seven principles for avoiding decline, as mentioned above.

The Buddha's position was that if the Licchavis followed these seven principles they would be invincible. However, as *Dīgha-nikāya* (III, 96) and *Āṅguttara-nikāya* (I, 228 and III, 239) record they had not done so. The young men were said to be fond of archery and went hunting with hounds. One of the elders complained to the Buddha, "The Licchavi youth are quick tempered, rough and greedy fellows; such presents as are sent by the members of their tribe – sugar-cane, jujubes, sweet cakes, sweetmeats, etc. – they loot and eat; they slap the women and girls of their tribe on the back." Apparently due to this laxity, Vassakara could undertake a covert campaign of bringing disunity among Licchavis so that they would not respond to summons for meetings. King Ajatasattu was then successful in battle and the Vajjian Confederacy was conquered. How the Buddha reacted to their defeat is not recorded. The repetition of this account in several different parts of the Pāli Canon, however, gives the impression that their defeat was due to their neglect of the seven principles, which spell out the Buddha's formula for Peace, Security and Prosperity of a nation.

As regards the massacre of Śākya by Vidudabha, the son of king Pasenadi of Kosala, the Buddhist tradition records that the Buddha dissuaded Vidudabha twice by sitting under a tree with little shade and telling him, "The shade of my kinsmen keeps me cool." On the third march against the Śākya, the Buddha had not been there, and hence Vidudhaba killed most of the Śākya. The Buddha's non-intervention on the third occasion is explained in the *Dhammapada* and *Udāna* commentaries as resulting from their past evil action of poisoning a river, which could not be averted. The same literature, however, claims that Vidudabha's victory was short-lived as on his return he and his army met death in a flash flood.

As opposed to these two incidents in which the Buddha had not actively intervened to secure Peace, he played a decisive role in the war between his paternal and maternal relatives, the Śākya and the Koliyas. A war was imminent on the issue of water of river

Rohini. The Buddha, according to the preamble to *Kunala Jātaka* and the commentaries, arrived between the two armies and asked them the question: “Which is of more priceless value – water or Kṣatriya chiefs?” He preached to them and convinced them of the folly of war and violence. Contents of his discourse on the occasion are recorded as the *Attadadana-sutta* of *Suttanipāta* and a number of *Jātakas*, which deal with the themes of the dangers of revenge, resolution of conflict and self-control.

Many *Jātakas* deal with the virtue of forbearance, tolerance, forgiving and nonviolence. Among them, one of the longest *Jātakas*, namely *Mahā-ummagga Jātaka* is a remarkable work on statecraft, in general, and mechanics of war and empire building, court intrigue, role of diplomacy and strategy, and establishing lasting peace through negotiated conflict resolution, in particular. The vizier whose ingenuity helped to save his own king and kingdom and brought about the final resolution of the dispute is held out as a paragon of wisdom.

In later Buddhist literature in Pāli occurs frequently a list of ten traditional duties of a ruler (*Dasa-rāja-dhamma*). They are (1) giving alms, (2) virtuous life or morality, (3) liberality or more specifically self-sacrifice, (4) straightness or honesty, (5) gentleness, (6) self-control (lit. asceticism or abstemious lifestyle), (7) non-anger or pleasant temperament, (8) nonviolence, (9) forbearance, and (10) non-opposition (*Jātaka*, I, 260, 399; II, 400).

The Buddhist list is significant when compared with the lists of qualities required of kings in Brahmanical and Hindu statements, for *ahiṃsā* or nonviolence is conspicuous by its absence in them. A further list of three things to be avoided by a ruler consists of falsehood, anger and derisive laughter (*Jātaka* V, 120). In the autocratic monarchies, war and punishment were entirely in the hands of kings.

## **2. Aśoka the Righteous as the Buddhist Role Model of Kingship**

The life and career of the third emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty, Aśoka the Righteous (c. 269-228 BCE), had served as a

model of ideal kingship and is frequently invoked even in current times as an example to be emulated by leaders and governments. Aśoka was a typical warrior king of the Indian tradition. When his father died, he wrested the throne from the rightful heir, his elder brother, and waged a four-year war of succession. In it he had killed as many as ninety-nine of his half-brothers, according to Southern Buddhist sources, and a vast horde of enemies, according to Mahāyāna sources. He was known for his violence as Aśoka the Wicked (*Candaśoka*). With his consecration he assumed the royal obligation of tending to Brahmans and all recluses without exception. Eventually he came in contact with the Buddhist Saṅgha and embraced Buddhism as his personal religion. Southern Buddhist sources date his conversion in the fourth regnal year. Yet, it did not prevent him from exercising the traditional royal duty of annexing an unconquered frontier region in Kalinga during the ninth regnal year. But, as all Aśokan scholars now agree, his exposure to Buddhism fashioned his reaction to the havoc of war. He says in Rock Edict XIII:

By King Devanampriya Priyadarsi who was consecrated for eight years, Kalinga was conquered. One hundred and fifty thousand in number were deported from there. About a hundred thousand were slain there. Many times that number perished. Hereafter, now that Kalinga was annexed, Devanampriya's observance of Dharma, love of Dharma and propagation of Dharma became ardent. There is this remorse in Devanampriya that he conquered Kalinga.

When an unconquered region is being conquered, the killings, the deaths and the deportations that it entails to the people are now gravely regarded by Devanampriya and considered excessively painful.

This, too, is further a grave concern of Devanampriya: that is, there live Brahmans or recluses or the laity of other religious persuasions, who are well-established in obedience to superiors; obedience to mother and father; obedience to elders; and good conduct and firm devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions, relatives, slaves and servants; and injury, or slaughter or deportation of loved ones occurs to them. Even if they are well-placed, when their friends, acquaintances or relatives, for whom their love is unceasing, encounter misfortune that, too, is an injury to themselves. This is the fate of all men and it is a grave concern of Devanampriya.

There is really none who is not devoted to a religion. Therefore, today, one hundredth or one thousandth of the slaughtered, the dead and the deported in Kalinga would be a grave concern of Devanampriya.

It is this remorse, which impelled him to change his military policy of conquest by weapons to conquest by righteousness. The term he coined for this policy was “*Dharmavijaya*.”

Aśoka evolved his own Dharma that he propagated through the entire administrative machinery of state as well as through messengers or *dutas*. These *dutas* are said to have gone as far as Greece, Syria and Egypt to a distance of nearly four thousand miles from the imperial capital. His Dharma was a simple code of ethics, which was multi-sectarian in character.

As far as the theme under discussion in this paper was concerned, it consisted of such aspects as non-injury of all living beings and show of mercy to them (Minor Rock Edicts I, II, IV, Rock Edict I, XIII); protection fully and partially of endangered species (Pillar Edict V); interfaith tolerance, understanding, appreciation and cooperation (Rock Edict XII); impartiality in the administration of justice (Rock Edict XV, XVI); abolition of war by turning war drums to the sound of Dharma (Rock Edict IV); decree to sons and their descendants to avoid of wars with weapons in favor of Conquest by Righteousness (Rock Edict XIII); and order in the same decree that in the event of being unable to avoid a war with weapons to be forgiving toward the enemy and to resort only to light punishment (Rock Edict XIII).

In spite of such a policy, Aśoka had not abolished capital punishment: he warned the rebels in frontier regions in Rock Edict XIII to submit to authority to escape execution and allowed a respite of three days to prisoners, who were given the death sentence, to appeal, to repent or to seek spiritual solace (Rock Edicts XV and XVI). There is also no evidence that the army was disbanded. The Sanskrit Avadanas and their Chinese translations and adaptations record four instances of Aśoka’s violent behavior – two before he became a Buddhist and two after. These are not found in South Buddhist sources. Two attributed to him after his embracing Buddhism need comment: One is that his second queen

was burned to death as punishment for blinding his son who is said to have spurned her sexual advances. The other is an ultra-fanatical step of having put a price on the heads of all Jain monks on ground that one of them had desecrated a Buddha image. While the possibility did exist that a criminal was sentenced to death, the entire episode is too fanciful to be accepted as reliable history. Tisarakṣita or Tissarakkha was Aśoka's queen during the last four years of his life and the only offence of hers on which all sources agree is the destruction or attempted destruction of the Bodhi-tree. As regards the massacre of Jain monks, such fanatical action is totally at variance with Aśoka's declared policy of interfaith amity of Rock Edict XII and neither the Buddha image nor the currency called Dinar was even known to exist at the time of Aśoka.

Aśoka's Conquest by Righteousness was evaluated by him in his twenty-eighth regnal year in Pillar Edict VII and he was very pleased with its results. It had to be so as he ruled over the largest empire ever to exist in the Indian subcontinent until his natural death in the regnal year thirty-eight – that is a reign of twenty-nine years without war.

Aśoka was a role model for kings of South and Southeast Asia, where he was widely remembered and spoken of. But that was more on account of his patronage to Buddhism than on his achievements as regards Peace and Nonviolence. In Myanmar, king Dhammazedi (1476-1496) took Aśoka as his exemplar in virtuous conduct. In Sri Lanka, Aśoka's influence has lasted twenty-three centuries and as late as the seventeenth century, a ruler bolstered his claim to power on grounds of being a descendant of Aśoka's kinsmen. In China, too, where Aśoka was a particularly admired patron of Buddhism during the heyday of Buddhism in the fifth century CE, Emperor Liang Wu-di (502-549) claimed to emulate him. Since more is known of Aśoka – especially through the decipherment, the translation and the publication of his inscriptions - he is held up not only by Buddhists but others, too, as a man of Peace, who is worthy of emulation.

#### Abbreviations

AN – *Aṅguttara-nikāya*

DN – *Dīgha-nikāya*

MN – *Majjhima-nikāya*

Snp. – *Sutta-nipāta*

## **BUDDHISM**

### **LEE JUNGWOO AND PEACEMAKING: THEORY AND PRACTICE**

**Chanju Mun**

#### **The inclusive Dharma lineage<sup>1</sup>**

Lee Jungwoo (Yi Jeong'u) (b. 1952)<sup>2</sup> was a disciple of Jin Hongbeop (1930-1978) and guides the Association of Master Jin Hongbeop's Dharma Descendants. He established Hongbeop Cultural Welfare Foundation on July 26, 2006 and propagated his master's ecumenism that treats Seon, doctrinal Buddhism and vinaya traditions as equals. In addition, he founded a number of propagation centers and cultural organizations and spread his master's ecumenism at home and abroad. He also loyally inherited the ecumenism of his grand master Yun Wolha (1915-2003) and received strong influence from the grand master's non-sectarian

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<sup>1</sup> I philosophically and comprehensively discussed the Dharma lineages in modern Korean Buddhism in my *Purification Buddhist Movement, 1954-1970: The struggle to restore celibacy in the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2011), 35-54.

<sup>2</sup> If I strictly apply the Korean Government Romanization System revised in 2000, I should Romanize his name as I Jeong-u (or I Jeong'u). Some scholars used to Romanize the name as Yi Jeong-u (or Yi Jeong'u). However, I adopted his Romanized spelling of Lee Jungwoo in this article.

philosophy after the early death of his master. However, while his master Jin Hongbeop and his grand master Yun Wolha attempted to realize ecumenism generally among monks, Lee Jungwoo applied ecumenism mostly among lay Buddhists.

Lee Jungwoo served as the twenty-seventh abbot of his parish Tongdo-sa Monastery, the fifteenth parish headquarters of Jogye Order, the largest denomination of Korean Buddhism, for four years from May 29, 2007 to May 29, 2011. Tongdo-sa Temple was traditionally considered the vinaya center of Korean Buddhism and presumably is one of the largest monasteries in Korean Buddhism. He attempted apply the ecumenical spirit of his master and grand master at the monastery. He also guided his dharma brothers, disciples, nephews and grand disciples to inherit from his master and grand master and embody ecumenism in their daily lives. He has financially helped them receive good education through the Hongbeop Cultural Welfare Foundation. Because we cannot imagine the Association of Master Jin Hongbeop's Dharma Descendants without Lee Jungwoo, he is the association's actual leader.

He inherited Jin Hongbeop's ecumenism that did not hierarchically arrange Buddhist traditions and did not accept Imje (Chinese, Linji; Japanese, Rinzai) Seon (Chinese, Chan; Japanese Zen) sectarianism and sectarian Dharma lineage.<sup>3</sup> Korean Buddhism currently has two seemingly contradictory traditions: ecumenism and Imje Seon sectarianism. We can regard current Korean Buddhism as a crossroad between the ecumenical Dharma lineage of Wonhyo (617-686), Uicheon (1055-1101), Jinul (1158-1210), Taego (1301-1382), Gihwa (1376-1433), Hyujeong (1520-1604) and other ecumenists and the sectarian Dharma lineage of Imje Seon Buddhism established by disciples of Hyujeong. While ecumenists equally classify different Buddhist traditions and texts, Imje Seon sectarians hierarchically classify them and locate their

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<sup>3</sup> See Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe (The Publication Committee for the Memorial Collection of Seon Master Jin Hongbeop's Works), ed., *Hongbeop seonsa chumo munjip* (The Memorial Collection of Works for Seon Master Jin Hongbeop) (Yongsan: Tongdo-sa Temple, 2008).



Imje Seon Buddhist tradition and texts over other Buddhist traditions and texts.

While his master Jin Hongbeop applied ecumenism in the monastic group of Tongdo-sa Monastery, Lee Jungwoo used ecumenism in the societal context. As his master did, he did not accept Imje Seon sectarianism and sectarian Dharma lineage.<sup>4</sup> Even though they did not publicly accept Imje Seon sectarianism and sectarian Dharma lineage, they also did not publicly reject them. Although they did not publicly accept Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage generally admitted among Korean monastics, they might be critical of the lineage.

Imje Seon sectarians of Korean Buddhism argued that Taego went to China, inherited the Dharma lineage of Chinese Linji Chan Buddhism from Shiwu Qinggong (1272-1352) and became the first patriarch of the sectarian Dharma lineage of Korean Imje Seon Buddhism. If we absolutize the Dharma lineage and if we interpret the lineage from the Confucianism-like biological and genealogical perspective, we must logically negate the authenticity of Korean Seon Buddhism prior to Taego because he is officially the first patriarch. In addition, we cannot historically and socially contextualize him from both sides of Chinese and Korean Buddhism.

Again, if we accept the logic of this version of lineage, we must deny the history of Korean Seon Buddhism prior to Taego. Doui (b. 821) was the first who imported Chan Buddhism from Tang China and other Buddhists also introduced Chinese Chan Buddhism to their nation before Taego. If we establish Taego as the founding patriarch of Korean Seon Buddhism and say the Imje Seon sectarian lineage originated from him, we negate the long history of Korean Seon Buddhism from the time of Doui until that of Taego.

Unlike masters who officially and actively accepted the sectarian lineage, Lee Jungwoo did not accept the Dharma lineage

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<sup>4</sup> See Lee Jungwoo (Jeong'u seunim)'s *Nae eoril jeok kkum eun unjeonsu yeossne* (I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver When I Was a Child), 2 vols (Seoul: Iljumun, 2000) and *Gil leul mutneunda bul e dalgun dol eul mulgo* (I Ask Ways by Holding a Hot Stone between the Teeth), 2 vols (Seoul: Singu midieo, 1994).

of Imje Seon sectarianism that basically emphasized mind-to-mind transmission and the special transmission outside the orthodox teaching from masters to disciples. Linji Chan sectarians argued that they could trace their lineage back to the Buddha himself and the lineage has continued without interruption from masters to disciples. They strongly emphasized the unbroken tradition transmitting Dharma from masters to disciples through a master's recognition and his disciple's inheritance.

Lee Jungwoo included a number of eminent monks active since Śākyamuni Buddha throughout Buddhist history in making his Dharma lineage. He also did not hierarchically classify Buddhist texts.<sup>5</sup> He argued that the Buddha taught a variety of Buddhist texts and doctrines to his followers based on different situations.<sup>6</sup> He adopted the ecumenical Dharma lineage and loyally followed the ecumenical doctrinal classification systems devised by previous ecumenists such as Huiyuan (523-592) and Jizang (549-623) of Chinese Buddhism and Wonhyo and Uicheon of Korean Buddhism.

The ecumenical and inclusive Dharma lineage of Tongdo-sa Monastery beginning from Vinaya Master Jajang (590-658), its founder, and including major eminent monks active at the monastery is contradictory to the sectarian and exclusive Dharma lineage of Imje Seon Buddhism beginning from Taego. If we accept the sectarian Dharma lineage, we must negate the ecumenical Dharma lineage. Eminent monks of Tongdo-sa Monastery from the time of Jajang to that of Taego cannot be recognized. So, Lee Jungwoo seems to have inherited the ecumenical Dharma lineage of Tongdo-sa Monastery from his master Jin Hongbeop.

He also did not accept Imje Seon sectarianism along with the Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage. As his master Jin Hongbeop did, he did not accept Seon absolutism but equally located Seon Buddhism with other major Korean Buddhist traditions of Pure Land, doctrinal, vinaya and Tantric Buddhism. He advised Buddhists to practice Seon and other traditions jointly. Because

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<sup>5</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver*, 1: 187-188.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 1: 106-107.

ecumenism is more open-minded than sectarianism, I feel it might contribute to peacemaking more so than sectarianism in various ways, for example, on individual, societal, world, cultural and environmental levels. So, I have academically applied my master Lee Jungwoo's ecumenism in my peacemaking project and have been editing articles on peacemaking and publishing them in the serial volumes on Buddhism (religions) and peace.

After the early death of his master Jin Hongbeop in 1978, Lee Jungwoo relied on his grandmaster Yun Wolha until 2003, when he passed away. His grandmaster's ecumenical theory and practice influenced him heavily. Yun Wolha nurtured his grand-disciple Lee Jungwoo in the ecumenical tradition of Tongdo-sa Monastery as its spiritual leader for several decades. Lee Jungwoo inherited ecumenism from his master Jin Hongbeop and his grandmaster Yun Wolha. In addition to these two major masters, he also received strong influences from Kim Gyeongbong (1892-1982), a Dharma uncle of his grandmaster Yun Wolha and Kim Tanheo (1913-1983), a disciple of Bang Han'am (1876-1951).

Lee Jungwoo inherited Kim Gyeongbong's ecumenism between Seon and doctrinal traditions and hosted three times in 1991, 1992, and 1993 at his established Guryong-sa Temple in the Seoul metropolitan area a series of sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra* that Kim Gyeongbong along with Seo Haedam (1862-1942) began for twenty-one days at his Geungnak-am Hermitage of Tongdo-sa Monastery in 1927. He invited one hundred eminent monks, let them preach the scripture from the ecumenical perspective and popularize ecumenism in Korean Buddhism. Kim Gyeongbong guided modern Tongdo-sa Monastery with his elder Dharma brother Kim Guha (1872-1965). Both of them were disciples of Kim Seonghae (1854-1927). Disciples of Kim Guha and Kim Gyeongbong are mostly active at Tongdo-sa Monastery and its branch temples.

Lee Jungwoo also studied the *Huayan Sūtra* under Kim Tanheo, a renowned specialist in the scripture at Woljeong-sa Monastery. Kim Tanheo was traditionally trained in Confucianism before he became a monk. He syncretized Buddhism with other major East Asian religious traditions of Buddhism and Daoism after becoming

a monk. He utilized the scripture and ecumenized doctrinal Buddhism with Seon Buddhism. He preferred Li Tongxuan (646-740) to Fazang (643-712) in his understanding and interpretation of the scripture. While Li Tongxuan understood the scripture from the practical perspective, Fazang located the Huayan teaching over other Buddhist teachings. He added Korean suffixes to the classical Chinese scripture, translated Li Tongxuan's commentary on the scripture in Korean and published the translation in forty-seven volumes.

Jin Hongbeop inherited the tonsure and vinaya lineages from his master Yun Wolha and the doctrinal lineage from Yi Unheo (1892-1980), a renowned scholar of modern Korean Buddhism, who inherited the doctrinal lineage from Bak Han'yeong (1870-1948) and emphasized ecumenism between Seon and doctrinal traditions. Even though he did not vocally protest against the Imje Seon sectarianism and sectarian lineage, he seemed not to accept them. His doctrinal teacher Yi Unheo was not a resident monk of Tongdo-sa Monastery. The dharma descendants of Yi Unheo are mostly active in the Bongseon-sa Monastery and its branch temples.

Yun Wolha, master of Jin Hongbeop and grandmaster of Lee Jungwoo, inherited the tonsure lineage from Kim Guha, the vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Monastery's Diamond Platform from Seo Haedam and the dharma lineage from Bang Han'am, a renowned Seon master of modern Korean Buddhism who emphasized ecumenism between Seon and doctrinal traditions. He did not vocally advocate the Imje Seon sectarianism and sectarian lineage but accepted ecumenism between three traditions of Seon, doctrinal and vinaya traditions from Kim Guha, Seo Haedam and Bang Han'am. Bang Han'am was not the resident monk of Tongdo-sa Monastery and inherited the Dharma lineage from Song Gyeongheo (1848-1912), a revitalizer of Korean Seon Buddhism in modern times. The Dharma descendants of Bang Han'am are mostly active in the Woljeong-sa Monastery and its branch temples.

The Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage emphasizes a Chan master's recognition of enlightenment and his providing of a Dharma-transmission poem to his disciple. When we interpret

Buddhist Dharma lineages from the perspective of one-sided, Confucianism-like, biological and genealogical lineages, the contradictions of the Dharma lineages become maximized. Like Confucian biological and genealogical lineages, we cannot unilaterally define relations between masters and disciples in Buddhist Dharma lineages. The biological relation between parents and children are one-sided, not multi-lateral because children can be born only from their parents. However, relations between masters and disciples are not one-sided but multi-sided because disciples receive influences from a number of teachers and colleagues. Various people thus influence their thoughts.

We are not able to utilize the one-sided aspect of Buddhist Dharma lineages and analyze a master's actual and real thought. If we deconstruct the one-sided aspect of Dharma lineages, we might be able to comprehend his actual and real thought accurately and effectively. If we minimize the one-sided aspect and approach him from various social and historical contexts, we might understand him from broader and more accurate aspects. Even though we cannot ignore influences from a master to his disciple, we also cannot neglect influences from numerous figures including other masters and colleagues in the disciple's case.

If we adopt the Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage, we cannot properly locate relations between Yun Wolha, his disciple Jin Hongbeop and his grand disciple Lee Jungwoo because the three were not connected by the official recognition of enlightenment and the authentic providing of a Dharma-transmission poem to each disciple. I think that it is not natural for us to connect the Dharma lineage of Lee Jungwoo to one particular master but to other masters, colleagues, juniors, and even lay Buddhists. As shown above, Lee Jungwoo received influences from eminent masters, not only one master. Even though we cannot negate that he received strong influences from his master Jin Hongbeop, we also cannot deny strong influences from other masters including Yun Wolha, Kim Gyeongbong and Kim Tanheo.

Lee Jungwoo clearly defined his grandmaster Yun Wolha of Korean Buddhism, His Holiness the current fourteenth Dalai Lama (b. 1935) of Tibetan Buddhism and Hsing Yun (Xingyun) (b.

1927) of Sino-Taiwanese Buddhism as his three major masters in his monastic life.<sup>7</sup> Even though he received strong influences from the three major masters, he also received strong influences from other masters including Jin Hongbeop, Kim Gyeongbong and Kim Tanheo. Lee Jungwoo's Dharma lineage is very different from his master Jin Hongbeop's and his grandmaster Yun Wolha's Dharma lineages. While Jin Hongbeop's and Yun Wolha's Dharma lineages just include Korean masters, Lee Jungwoo's includes Korean and foreign masters.

Unlike his master Jin Hongbeop and his grandmaster Yun Wolha who received influences just from Korean Buddhism, Lee Jungwoo received strong influences from Sino-Taiwanese Buddhism and Indo-Tibetan Buddhism as well. He established a number of propagation centers in the Seoul metropolitan area and attempted to propagate Buddhism among lay Buddhists and in the society under the strong influences of Hsing Yun who adopted modern propagation skills and popularized Buddhism among Chinese and Taiwanese across the world. Hsing Yun loyally inherited the basic ideas of Humanistic Buddhism from Taixu (1890-1949), a representative reformer of modern Chinese Buddhism and attempted to modernize and popularize Buddhism among the masses.

Lee Jungwoo visited India, Nepal and Tibet so many times. He especially visited H.H. the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India many times and received teachings from him. Because Tibetan Buddhism is very different from Korean Buddhism, he did not receive strong influences from him in the philosophical context. The Geluk tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, with which the Dalai Lama is affiliated, is much more sectarian and doctrine-oriented than East Asian Buddhist traditions. Even so, he received impressive influences from the Dalai Lama on how to internationalize Buddhism and how to make Buddhism contribute to world peace. He has rendered aid to Indians, Nepalese and

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<sup>7</sup> Jeong'u seunim, "Siju eunhye leul saenggak hapsida" (Let Us Think the Importance of Donation), in the October 2004 issue of the monthly magazine *Butda* (The Buddha), <http://mbuddha.com.ne.kr> (accessed April 24, 2010).

Tibetans in need and has made efforts to contribute to world peace in his own way.

When he visited other Buddhist nations, he endeavored to understand the traditions properly and accurately as much as he could. Because he did not contend the superiority of Korean Buddhism to other Buddhist traditions, he was not a nationalist but attempted to objectively understand Korean Buddhism. Through learning other Buddhist traditions, he extensively broadened his view of Buddhism and came to see Korean Buddhism objectively. So, he has been eager to make bridges with and to accept positive aspects from other Buddhist traditions. He applied ecumenism and transmitted Buddhism in the national and international contexts.

He has had close relations with Tibetan, Japanese and Taiwanese Buddhism for a long time. Concretely speaking, he initiated religious exchanges with the Dalai Lama's office through the introduction of the office of His Eminency the Ling Rinpoche (b. 1984); he received strong influences from Hsing Yun; and he made sister relations with Kamata Kōmyō's (1914-1998) Kyōgan-ji Temple and his disciple Takehara Chimyō's (b. 1939) Shōgyō-ji Temple of the Eastern Hongan-ji Faction of Pure Land Shin Sect of Japanese Buddhism. After Kamata Kōmyō passed away in 1998, his son Kamata Tetsuo became the temple's abbot and has continued sister-ship with Lee Jungwoo's Guryong-sa Temple.

As seen above, Lee Jungwoo received strong influences from the Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, Hsing Yun of Sino-Taiwanese Buddhism and Takehara Chimyō of Japanese Buddhism to a certain degree and formed his thought. He also had influences upon them to a certain extent. When we receive influences from others, we are supposed to have influences upon them. He attempted to receive good points of Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism from the Dalai Lama, Hsing Yun and Takehara Chimyō respectively and to make up for weak points of Korean Buddhism.

Lee Jungwoo domestically succeeded to the ecumenism of Kim Gyeongbong, Yun Wolha, Kim Tanheo and Jin Hongbeop and internationally inherited the ecumenism of the Dalai Lama and Hsing Yun. Even though the Dalai Lama is officially affiliated

with the Geluk Sect, he has tried to harmonize and unite Tibetan Buddhism's sects under his leadership. He also actively participates in various interfaith activities. Hsing Yun sincerely inherited Chinese Buddhism's ecumenical and syncretic tradition and has been active to internationalize and modernize Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan and in the world. He is also very active in exchanging religious concerns with other Buddhist and religious traditions.

As Lee Jungwoo himself mentioned, influences of three masters Yun Wolha, the Dalai Lama and Hsing Yun on the formation of his philosophy was tremendously influential. Even so, we could not ignore influences of other masters such as Jin Hongbeop, Kim Gyeongbong, Kim Tanheo, Choe Chunmyeong (1918-2002), Kamata Kōmyō, Kamata Tetsuo, Takehara Chimyō, Hsin Ding (Xinding) (b. 1944), and the Ling Rinpoche on Lee Jungwoo. He became a monk through Choe Chunmyeong, former abbot of Wongak-sa Temple and the husband of his paternal aunt. He formed close friendship with Hsin Ding, former abbot of Fo Guang Shan Monastery. The former Ling Rinpoche (1903-1983) was the senior tutor to the current Dalai Lama. Lee Jungwoo has strong relations with the current reincarnate Ling Rinpoche.

Even though Lee Jungwoo received strong influences from the abovementioned masters, he also influenced them. He influenced numberless laypersons and monks at home and abroad and also received influences from them to some degree. So, if we accept the exclusive and sectarian Dharma lineage, we cannot completely and comprehensively explain the formation of Lee Jungwoo's thought. The inclusive and ecumenical Dharma lineage might help us understand his philosophy more properly and objectively than the exclusive and sectarian Dharma lineage because he formed his ecumenical philosophy under influences of countless masters and laypersons, not a particular eminent figure.

### **Peacemaking theory: Ecumenism**

Lee Jungwoo sincerely inherited ecumenism from his master Jin Hongbeop in particular and from a number of eminent Korean



Buddhist masters in general, advocated ecumenism and rejected sectarianism. He was an ecumenist between doctrinal and Seon Buddhism. He ecumenized three major Korean Buddhist traditions, those of Seon, doctrinal and vinaya Buddhism. He also harmonized five major Korean Buddhist traditions: Seon, doctrinal, vinaya, Pure Land and Tantric Buddhism. He did not treat a particular tradition as higher than other traditions.

He was also open-minded to the variety of Buddhist traditions, domestic and foreign, and other religious traditions.<sup>8</sup> He interpreted the Buddha as a religious pluralist and defined himself as a pluralist. He understood the Buddha as being open-minded to other religious leaders including six heretical teachers.<sup>9</sup> He suggested Buddhists should not discriminate but should treat other religious leaders like they have done to their religious teachers. He

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<sup>8</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver*, 1: 108-110.

<sup>9</sup> See the entry of "six non-Buddhist teachers" in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002), 610-611. "... (They are) influential thinkers in Indian during Shakyamuni's time who openly broke with old Vedic tradition and challenged Brahman authority in the Indian social order. Their names are usually listed in Pāli, rather than Sanskrit. They are as follows: (1) Pūrāṇa Kassapa (Skt., Pūrāṇa Kāśhyapa), who denied the existence of causality, rejecting the idea that one's good or bad deeds yield corresponding gain or loss. Therefore he rejected all concepts of morality. (2) Makkhali Gosāla (Maskarin Goshālin or Maskarin Goshālīputra), who asserted that all events are predetermined by fate, and that no amount of devotional effort or religious practice can alter them. He therefore advised people to resign themselves to the process of *samsāra*, or transmigration. (3) Sanjaya Belatthiputta (Samjayin Vairatīputra), a skeptic, who gave no definite answers to metaphysical questions. .... (4) Ajita Kesakambala (Ajita Keshakambala or Ajita Keshakambalin), who maintained a simple materialism according to which all things in the universe are formed of earth, water, fire, and wind. .... (5) Pakudha Kaccāyana (Kakuda Kātyāyana), who asserted that human beings are composed of seven unchangeable elements: earth, water, fire, wind, suffering, pleasure, and soul. He argued that one could not really kill another with a sword, since it would simply cut through the space between those elements composing the person. (6) Nigantha Nātaputta (Nirgrantha Jnātīputra), founder of Jainism, who sought liberation through rigorous asceticism and absolutely forbade the killing of any living being."

mentioned that Buddhists should not make conflicts with other religious believers but make harmony with them.

He did not absolutely prefer East Asian Buddhism. He also loved Tibetan Buddhism. He was not even a Buddhist absolutist. He did not dogmatize Buddhism. He argued that he was not a slave to Buddhism and was not an accessory of Buddhism.<sup>10</sup> He even contended that if he found a better religion, he would give up Buddhism and follow that religion.<sup>11</sup> He stated that if we believe in and learn Buddhism, we should not be alienated from Buddhism and we should learn Buddhism from our own perspectives.<sup>12</sup> Even though he was not a religion absolutist, he did not reject the necessity of religion.

Even though he strongly advocated ecumenism, he did not vocally reject Imje Seon sectarianism Korean Buddhists generally accept. It might have been difficult for him to clearly reject one of two major Korean Buddhist traditions and cause disputes among Korean Buddhists. Korean Buddhism has simultaneously two contradictory traditions of ecumenism and Seon sectarianism.<sup>13</sup> Even though he did not definitely criticize Imje Seon sectarianism, he strongly and clearly advocated ecumenism. So, I can safely conclude that he is an ecumenist, not a Seon sectarian.

I think that we can apply the Seon/doctrine paradigm of ecumenism and sectarianism and categorize all modern Korean eminent masters into three groups. The first group is constituted by the masters who advocated Imje Seon sectarianism in the Dharma lineage and ecumenism theoretically. The second group consists of the masters who follow Imje Seon sectarianism both in the Dharma lineage and in theory. The third group is composed of the masters who advocate ecumenism both in Dharma lineage and in theory.

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<sup>10</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Asked Ways*, 1: 122-125.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>12</sup> Jeong'u seunim, ed., *Jeong'u seunim i jeonhaneun gyeongjeon malsseum bucheonim puman ttatteuthan gajeong* (Buddhist Teachings Selected and Edited by Lee Jungwoo) (Seoul: Iljumun, 2004), 122-125.

<sup>13</sup> Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement*, 1-14, 23-79; and Chanju Mun, *Ha Dongsan and Colonial Korean Buddhism: Balancing Sectarianism and Ecumenism* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2009), 1-17, 269-452.

Modern Korean Buddhism can be characterized as an interconnection between Imje Seon sectarianism and ecumenism.<sup>14</sup> Of the three groups, Lee Jungwoo might belong to the third group.

The majority of modern Korean eminent masters are philosophically ecumenists, with the exception of a few such as Song Man'gong (1871-1946) and Yi Seongcheol (1912-1993). They equally emphasize doctrinal Buddhism (theory) and Seon Buddhism (practice). However, they prioritize Seon Buddhism to doctrinal Buddhism when they emphasize the necessity of enlightenment. Because they soteriologically located practical Seon Buddhism over doctrinal Buddhism, we can also safely define them as Seon sectarians. They have two aspects of ecumenism and Seon sectarianism in their philosophy and soteriology. Even though they soteriologically are Seon sectarians, because they do not completely negate doctrinal Buddhism, they are moderate Seon sectarians. They simultaneously have the logically contradictory Seon sectarianism and ecumenism in their philosophy and soteriology.

While ecumenists generally advocate moderate soteriology of sudden enlightenment and gradual praxis, Imje Seon sectarians support radical soteriology of sudden enlightenment and sudden praxis. Lee Jungwoo strongly disagreed with the radical subitist soteriology that Imje Seon sectarians advocate and developed the moderate Seon soteriology that ecumenists generally support. He, furthermore, applied the moderate Seon soteriology, emphasized the importance of monastic and bodhisattva precepts, and popularized the precepts among Korean Buddhists. If we are the radical subitists of Imje Seon sectarianism who make the immanent aspect of precepts and enlightenment to be extreme, we are naturally subject to be antinomians and easily to negate the necessity of enlightenment and of receiving and preserving precepts.

Lee Jungwoo contextualized scriptures and Seon texts and did not hierarchically arrange scriptures and Seon texts. Even though East Asian Buddhist ecumenists evaluated Mahāyāna texts over

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

early Buddhist texts, generally known as Hīnayāna texts, and equally considered Mahāyāna texts, he equally evaluated early and Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. He was not a Mahāyāna sectarian. So, he highly evaluated the importance of early Buddhist texts, including the *Āgama Sūtra*, which Korean Buddhists (Mahāyānists) generally looked down as Hīnayāna texts.

For example, he selected passages from a variety of early Buddhist texts and included them in his *Jeong'u seunim i jeonhaneun gyeongjeon malsseum bucheonim puman ttatteuthan gajeong* (Buddhist Teachings Selected and Edited by Lee Jungwoo, Seoul: Iljumun, 2004). For example, he included in his book some passages from the *Miscellaneous Āgama Sūtra*,<sup>15</sup> the *Medium-Length Āgama Sūtra*,<sup>16</sup> the *Long Āgama Sūtra*,<sup>17</sup> the *Increasing by One Āgama Sūtra*,<sup>18</sup> the *Samyutta-nikāya*,<sup>19</sup> the *Sūtra of One Hundred Parables*,<sup>20</sup> and others.

He extensively included in his book passages from a number of Mahāyāna texts. He did not hierarchically evaluate them but cited them from the ecumenical perspective. For example, he cited the passages from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*,<sup>21</sup> the *Lotus Sūtra*,<sup>22</sup> the *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Sūtra*,<sup>23</sup> the *Wisdom Sūtra*,<sup>24</sup> the

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<sup>15</sup> Jeong'u seunim, ed., 19-20, 146-147, 185.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 81, 133, 171.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 139-140.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 176-177, 177-178, 193, 216-218.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 218-219.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 18-19, 20, 21-23, 40-41, 43-44, 45, 47-48, 48-49, 49-50, 50-53, 62-63, 71, 72-73, 73-74, 75, 77-78, 78-79, 88-89, 97-98, 100, 101-103, 103-106, 107-108, 109-110, 126-127, 127-130, 130-131, 135-139, 141, 142-144, 154-155, 156-157, 163-165, 167, 169-170, 170-171, 179-181, 185-186, 187-188, 193-195, 198-199, 205-206, 208-209, 209-211, 212-213, 214-215, 233-234, 244-245, 247-248, 249-250), the *Huayan Sūtra* (pp. 19, 23-24, 27, 28-30, 35-36, 39-40, 42, 49, 54, 55, 56-57, 59-61, 61, 65, 83-83, 85-88, 89-92, 117-118, 121-126, 148, 158, 158-161, 161-162, 165-166, 174-176, 188-192, 199-204, 224, 229-230, 230-231, 237-241, 241-244, 250-251).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 41-42, 53, 59, 134-135, 151, 152-153, 153, 167-168, 235-237.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 58-59, 84-85, 92-93, 225-229, 231-232, 232-233.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 95-96, 132, 196-198, 207.

*Śūraṅgama Sūtra*,<sup>25</sup> the *Complete Enlightenment Sūtra* (pp. 24, 107), the *Diamond Sūtra*,<sup>26</sup> the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*,<sup>27</sup> the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*,<sup>28</sup> the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*,<sup>29</sup> the *Amitābha Sūtra*,<sup>30</sup> and others.

He cited the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, the *Huayan Sūtra*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Sūtra* and the *Wisdom Sūtra* in the descending order. He referred to most of the Mahāyāna scriptures with which Korean Buddhists are familiar. Even though Korean Buddhists generally and highly emphasized the *Huayan Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, he uniquely cited the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* more often than the two scriptures. Because he was active to popularize Buddhism among laypersons, he emphasized and seemed to cite the *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* and the *Amitābha-sūtra* for them. Even though he cited the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* more often than the *Huayan Sūtra*, he did not mention that the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is superior to the *Huayan Sūtra*. Even though he also referred to the *Huayan Sūtra* more often than the *Lotus Sūtra*, he also did not contend that the *Huayan Sūtra* is superior to the *Lotus Sūtra*. He was an ecumenist and equally classified all Buddhist texts.

He admitted the variety of practices and argued that lay Buddhists need very much repentance.<sup>31</sup> He did not prioritize any practice over other practices but practiced repentance with lay Buddhists as his daily practice. He also emphasized Seon practice and cited in his book passages from the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng* (638-713),<sup>32</sup> Hyujeong's *Seon'ga gwigam* (The Standard Teaching of Seon Buddhism),<sup>33</sup> Zhuhong's (1535-1615) *Zhuchuang suibi* (Jottings under a Bamboo Window),<sup>34</sup> Song

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 118, 223.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 33, 44.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 45-47.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>31</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Ask Ways*, 1: 235.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 31-33, 248-249.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 76, 98-100, 147-148, 174, 199, 206-207.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 75-76, 196.

Gyeongheo's *Seonmun charyo* (Selected Collection of Important Seon Texts),<sup>35</sup> and so on. Because Hyujeong, Zhuhong and Song Gyeongheo ecumenized Seon and doctrinal Buddhism, he inherited their ecumenism and cited the passages from their major works.

From the ecumenical perspective, he hosted a series of sermons for one hundred days on the *Huayan Sūtra* three times in 1991, 1992 and 1993. While he invited one hundred eminent monks and let each of them preach on the scripture each day, he preached by himself sermons on other Mahāyāna texts such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Śūramgama Sūtra*, the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Complete Enlightenment Sūtra*. Because he accepted ecumenism and did not discriminate other texts from a particular and sectarian text, he adopted various Mahāyāna texts popularly accepted in Korean Buddhism and taught them to his temple members.<sup>36</sup> Even when he hosted the series of sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra*, he jointly practiced vinaya (repentance), Seon and Pure Land Buddhism (prayer) with his temple members.<sup>37</sup>

Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1238-1295) introduced three essentials for Kōan Chan Buddhism, (1) great faith, (2) great courage and (3) great doubt, in his *Essentials of Chan Buddhism (Chanyao)*.<sup>38</sup> Hyujeong summarized the essentials in the *Standard Teaching of Seon Buddhism* as follows:

Three things are essentials in Seon meditation. The first is great faith, the second is great courage and the third is great doubt. If any of these is missing, it becomes like a tripod cauldron that is missing one leg – it is of no use at all.<sup>39</sup>

Hyujeong commented on the above-cited paragraph, “The Buddha said, “Faith is the ground for attaining Buddhahood.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver*, 1: 156, 169.

<sup>37</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Ask Ways*, 1: 255.

<sup>38</sup> X.70.1401.708b5-10.

<sup>39</sup> H.7.638c10-12 and Hyon Gak, trans., *The Mirror of Zen: The Classic Guide to Buddhist Practice by Zen Master So Sahn* (Boston and New York: Shambhala, 2006), 25.

<sup>40</sup> I could not identify the quote in the Buddhist texts.

Yongjia Xuanjue (665-713) said, “Those would attain the Way must firmly establish their will.”<sup>41</sup> Mengshan Deyi (1231-1308) mentioned, “To one who practices Seon meditation, the gravest disease is a *hwadu* (Kōan techniques) without great doubt.”<sup>42</sup> And he also said, “If you strongly keep great doubt, always and everywhere, you will surely attain great enlightenment.”<sup>43</sup>

Lee Jungwoo cited the abovementioned quote<sup>44</sup> and also very uniquely interpreted the reliable masters who are very important in transmitting Buddhist teachings in Seon Buddhism.<sup>45</sup> A master guides his disciples to obtain enlightenment and verifies their enlightenment in Seon Buddhism. However, Lee Jungwoo considered the master as a teacher who helps other needed persons and understood him as a bodhisattva. Even though Seon Buddhists understood the masters in the individual context, Lee Jungwoo interpreted them in the social context.<sup>46</sup>

He also cited another passage from Hyujeong’s *Standard Teaching of Seon Buddhism* that interprets and emphasizes repentance from the Seon perspective.<sup>47</sup> The passage that Lee Jungwoo cited says, “Repent immediately when you commit a misdeed, feeling shame when you realize that you have done something wrong: this is the character of a great person. When you correct your failings in this way, constantly renewing yourself by

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<sup>41</sup> T.51.2076.241b17 and X83.1578.467a16-17.

<sup>42</sup> Seon masters use the sentence as an idiom. The sentence is not the unique one used by Mengshan Deyi. Refer to T.51.2077.649c20, X.66.1296.262b13, X.72.1443.760b20-21, X.79.1557.144b17, X.79.1563.726a15, X.80.1565.402c21-22, X.82.1571.401a13, X.83.1578.731c13, X.84.1583.608b3, X.85.1593.539b8, X.85.1594.752a19, X.86.1600.247a24, X.86.1600.235b6-7, X.87.1626.293b24, and others.

<sup>43</sup> H.7.638c13-16 and Hyon Gak, trans., 25. Seon masters use the sentence as an idiom. The sentence is not the unique one used by Mengshan Deyi. Refer to T.49.2038.948c21, X.37.674.792b19, X.62.1208.819a2, X.63.1259.777b21, X.69.1355.363c13, X.72.1435.254c18, X.72.1443.743b1, X.73.1457.860c10, X.85.1594.781a17, and others.

<sup>44</sup> Jeong’u seunim, ed., 76.

<sup>45</sup> Jeong’u seunim, *I Asked Ways*, 1: 141-146.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 1: 147.

reflecting on your mind, bad karma will disappear and you will always live in accordance with your true nature.”<sup>48</sup>

Hyujeong commented on the above-cited quote from the Seon perspective, “True repentance means first to regret the misdeed you have committed and then to vow not to repeat it in the future. Being ashamed of yourself means to objectively reflect on yourself inside and to manifest some change on the outside. In any event, mind is originally empty and completely still, so there is actually no place where bad karma can remain.”<sup>49</sup>

Lee Jungwoo loyally inherited Hyujeong’s ecumenism and equally emphasized Seon and Pure Land Buddhism.<sup>50</sup> Hyujeong discussed the gate of recollecting the Buddha from the Seon Buddhist perspective and considered the single-minded chanting as the ideal chanting in *The Standard Teaching of Seon Buddhism*, “If we chant the Buddha’s name just with our lips, the chanting is nothing more than the recitation of the Buddha’s name. If we chant it with the single-minded attention, the chanting is true chanting. If we just chant without attention and lose our thought, we will not have any benefit for our practice.”<sup>51</sup> He commented on the abovementioned sentences as follows:

The six-character dharma gate of chanting “*namu amita bul*” (Chinese, *namu amituo fo*; Japanese, *namu amida butsu*)<sup>52</sup> should be a shortcut way for cutting through the cycle of birth and death. You should think of the Buddha’s realm and not forget it in your minds. You should chant the Buddha’s name and clearly articulate it in your mouths. As mentioned above, when your minds completely match to your sounds, you can name it as the true chanting of the Buddha’s name.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> H.7.643a16-17 and Hyon Gak, trans., 96.

<sup>49</sup> Jeong’u seunim, 147-148; H.7.643a18-20; and Hyon Gak, trans., 96.

<sup>50</sup> Jeong’u seunim, *I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver*, 1: 64-66.

<sup>51</sup> H.7.640b5-6, 650a16-17.

<sup>52</sup> The Sino-Korean transliteration for the six characters, *namu amita bul*, literally means the Refuge to Amitāyus Buddha.

<sup>53</sup> H.7.640b7-10, 650a17-20.



In his lengthy sub-comments on the above-cited comments,<sup>54</sup> Hyujeong referred to his preceding famous masters such as Āśvaghoṣa (c. 100-160), Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250), Lushan Huiyuan (334-416),<sup>55</sup> the fifth patriarch Hongren (601-674) of Chinese Chan Buddhism,<sup>56</sup> the sixth patriarch Huineng of Chinese Chan Buddhism, Zongmi (780-841), and Ruiyan Shiyan<sup>57</sup> to back up his ecumenism between Seon and Pure Land Buddhism. Of them, he especially strongly agreed with Zongmi's moderate soteriology of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice and used it to support his ecumenism between Seon Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism.

In particular, Hyujeong incorporated to his ecumenism the ecumenical perspective of Zongmi, one of the representative ecumenists of Chinese Buddhism and Jinul, his faithful follower of Korean Buddhism. He vehemently criticized the interpretation of radical subitists on Pure Land Buddhism who argue that because all beings are originally endowed with Amitāyus Buddha in their nature and the Pure Land in their mind, they do not need to become the Buddha and to be born in the land. He, rather, suggested that even though we should theoretically accept the universality of Buddha nature and the Pure Land in all beings, we should practically make endeavors to attain Buddhahood and to be born in the Pure Land.

Therefore, Hyujeong loyally inherited the perspective of preceding moderate subitists of Sino-Korean Buddhism such as Chengguan (738-839), Zongmi, Yanshou (904-975), and Jinul, all of whom advocated the soteriological theory of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice, not the perspective of preceding radical subitists who enthusiastically supported the soteriological theory of sudden enlightenment and sudden practice, and emphasized the importance of practice in his ecumenical

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<sup>54</sup> H.7.640b11-641a19.

<sup>55</sup> Huiyuan (336-416) was the important Chinese master who practiced Amitābha cult at the White Lotus Society.

<sup>56</sup> Hongren (601-674) was the disciple of Daoxin (580-651) and the master of Shenxiu (605?-706) and Huineng (638-713).

<sup>57</sup> Ruiyan Shiyan (d.u.) was active in the ninth century in Chinese Buddhism and was a disciple of Chan Master Yantou Chuanhuo (828-887).

viewpoint. We can see his moderate subitist perspective in his lengthy sub-comments introduced in full and without abridgement as follows:

The fifth patriarch (Hongren) said, “It is better for you to preserve your original true minds than to recollect the Buddhas of the ten directions.”<sup>58</sup> The sixth patriarch (Huineng) mentioned, “If you just contemplate other Buddhas, you cannot transcend the cycle of birth and death. If you keep your own original minds, you can arrive on the other shore.”<sup>59</sup> He also stated, “You should search the Buddha in your own nature but not seek him outside yourselves.”<sup>60</sup> He, furthermore, mentioned, “The deluded practitioners want to invoke the Buddha and to be born in a Pure Land. However, the enlightened ones just purify their own minds.”<sup>61</sup> (A scripture) says, “Because sentient beings should enlighten their own minds and save themselves, the Buddha cannot save them....”<sup>62</sup>

The abovementioned eminent masters straightforwardly pointed to their original minds but did not display any other skillful means. If we explain the fact from the perspective of principle, we do not absolutely have any skillful means. However, if we see it from the perspective of phenomena, we have actually the Pure Land, Amitābha Buddha and his forty-eight vows.<sup>63</sup> All the Buddhas of the three periods, (i.e, the past, present and future), unanimously say that if we recite the Buddha’s name even ten times, we are subject to be born in a lotus flower and transcend the cycle of birth and death based on the power of those vows. All the bodhisattvas of the ten directions also vow to attain such a rebirth. Furthermore, we can see many stories of those who have been born in a lotus flower either in the past or in the present, which have faithfully been transmitted to us. So, we hope that all practitioners should not make wrong views but continuously make endeavors (to be born in the flower).

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<sup>58</sup> T.48.2011.377b20. The ten directions consist of the four directions, the four corners, and the zenith and nadir.

<sup>59</sup> T.48.2011.377b18.

<sup>60</sup> T.48.2007.341b27-28, and T.48.2008.352b9-10.

<sup>61</sup> T.48.2007.341b11 and T.48.2008.352a20.

<sup>62</sup> T.48.2011.378c1.

<sup>63</sup> See the entry of “forty-eight vows” in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., 212-213. “The vows that Amida Buddha is said to have made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury. They are listed in the *Buddha Infinite Life Sūtra*.” (p. 212)

Amitā(yus) or Amitā(bha) is a Sanskrit word, literally meaning “infinite life” and “infinite light.” It is also used as the first and most important name for the Buddha of the ten directions and the three periods. Dharmākara Bhikṣu made the forty-eight vows in front of Lokeśvarāja Buddha and declared, “When I attain Buddhahood, if any of limitless heavenly and human beings in the ten directions including even the tiniest insects chant my name only ten times, I will cause them to be born in my heavenly realm. I hereby vow not to fully attain Buddhahood until this vow is completed....”<sup>64</sup>

Ancient sages said, “Even though we chant the name of a Buddha just once, we can weaken demonic forces. (When we die), we will not be registered in the list of denizens in a hell. Instead, we will be born as a lotus flower in a golden pond.”<sup>65</sup> The *Chanfa* (Repentance Manual)<sup>66</sup> says, “While the practice based on the self power is slower, the practice depending on the other power is faster. If someone wants to cross the ocean, he should plant trees and make a boat with the trees. It can be likened to the slower method of self-power. If someone simply borrows the other person’s boat and crosses the ocean immediately, he adopts the faster method of the other power. It can be figured to the power of the Buddha.”<sup>67</sup> The *Chanfa* also continues, “If a child terrified with a fire and a flood loudly cries out, his parents might hurry to save him. If a man chants the name of the Buddha even in his dying hour, the Buddha might definitely greet him with his miraculous powers. The great sage (Buddha’s) compassion is superior to the parental love for their child. The cycle of birth and death of sentient beings is more serious than the natural disaster such as fires and floods.”<sup>68</sup>

Someone said, “Because my mind is the Pure Land, I cannot be born in the land outside my mind. Because my nature is Amitāyus Buddha, I cannot see him outside my nature.”<sup>69</sup> Even though his abovementioned sayings seem to be true, those are not true. (For example), because the Buddha does not have greed and anger, do I also have not greed and anger? The Buddha very easily transforms a hell to a lotus flower just as he might turn his hand over. However, while I always worry about falling down to a hell based on my previous actions, how can I transform a hell to a lotus flower just as the Buddha does? The Buddha sees limitless worlds just as he can see them just in front of his eyes. However, while I cannot see the things just outside the thin

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<sup>64</sup> T.12.360.268a24-25.

<sup>65</sup> I could not identify the quote in the Buddhist texts.

<sup>66</sup> X.74.1467.76a2-126b19.

<sup>67</sup> I could not identify the quote in the *Chanfa*.

<sup>68</sup> I could not find out the quote in the *Chanfa*.

<sup>69</sup> X.74.1467.91b16.

walls of this very room, how can I see the worlds of the ten directions just as I can see them in front of my eyes? Even though all people are the Buddha in nature, they are sentient beings in their deeds. If we discuss their characteristics and functions, they are totally different as far apart as heaven and earth. Guifeng (Zongmi) said, “Even though someone actually obtained sudden enlightenment, he should continuously do gradual practice.”<sup>70</sup> I completely agree with him.

I will ask the person who claims that he is Amitāyus Buddha in his nature, “How can you have Śākyamuni Buddha as a natural manifestation and Amitāyus Buddha as a spontaneous appearance?” If we carefully examine the fact, how cannot we naturally understand it? When we are nearing our end and face the suffering of the cycle of birth and death, how can we be free from (the suffering)? If so, we should not trick ourselves into a lower realm after exercising our foolish arrogance. Patriarchs Āśvaghōṣa and Nāgārjuna all revealed the (Pure Land) teaching and encouraged (practitioners) to make efforts to be born in a Pure Land. How can we negate the rebirth in a Pure Land? The Buddha said, “The Western Paradise is far from here. You should pass 10,000 lands (standing for ten evil acts)<sup>71</sup> and additional 8,000 ones (symbolizing eight wrong actions).”<sup>72</sup> Thus, he expressed the teaching (of characteristics) for the sake of those of dull capacity. (The Buddha) said, “The Western Paradise is not far from here. The mind (sentient beings) is identical to the Buddha (Amitāyus Buddha).”<sup>73</sup> He expounded the teaching (of essence) for the sake of those of sharp capacity.

The (Buddhist) teaching has the provisional and the actual and the (Buddha’s) expressions have the exoteric (teaching) and the esoteric (teaching). If theory and practice are well matched, the near and the distant are well penetrated. Therefore, among the practitioners who practice Chan Buddhism, some including the Chan patriarch Huiyuan

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<sup>70</sup> T.48.2015.411b7.

<sup>71</sup> See the entry of “ten evil acts” in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., 666-667. The ten evil acts constitute the three physical evils of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; the four verbal evils of lying, flattery, defamation, and duplicity; and the three mental evils of greed, anger and foolishness.

<sup>72</sup> I found the similar sentence in T.12.360.270a5. See the entry of “eight errors” in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., 146. Eight wrong actions are wrong views, wrong thinking, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong way of life, wrong efforts, wrong mindfulness, and wrong meditation.

<sup>73</sup> See T.47.1963.92b26, and T.47.1959.27b29.

chanted the name of Amitāyus Buddha and some including the Chan patriarch Ruiyan Shiyān directly searched his own nature.<sup>74</sup>

Lee Jungwoo loyally inherited the ways of ecumenists of Sino-Korean Buddhism such as Chengguan, Zongmi, Yanshou, Jinul, Hyujeong and Zhuhong and their moderate Seon soteriology and advocated ecumenism between Seon and Pure Land Buddhism. Because ecumenists did not exclude doctrinal, vinaya, Pure Land and Tantric traditions except Seon Buddhism, they supported moderate Seon soteriology of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice. However, because radical Imje Seon sectarians advocated exclusive Kōan Seon practice, they advocated radical Seon soteriology of sudden enlightenment and sudden practice.

As ecumenists accepted moderate Seon soteriology, Lee Jungwoo accepted the soteriology. He put stress on three kinds of learning, i.e., precepts, meditation, and wisdom and also emphasized the roles of a bodhisattva (a religious guide) in guiding sentient beings to enlightenment. He stated that a bodhisattva should conduct ten wholesome precepts by not committing ten unwholesome acts: (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) irresponsible speech, (7) defamation, (8) duplicity, (9) anger, and (10) mistaken views. Buddhists should transform ten unwholesome acts to ten wholesome acts.<sup>75</sup>

He argued that because everyone is fundamentally good, s/he is originally a bodhisattva. He also stated that even so, s/he should gradually remove extrinsic unwholesome evil and recover intrinsic wholesome good.<sup>76</sup> He also referred to the *Huayan Sūtra*'s "Chapter on Entering Dharma Realm" and emphasized the importance of bodhisattvas (religious guides) and suggested Buddhists to search after them near themselves.<sup>77</sup> He also

<sup>74</sup> See Jeong'u seunim, ed., 98-100 and H.7.640b11-641a19.

<sup>75</sup> Jeong'u seunim, "Jagi ui geunbon ilji atneun jihyeroun bulja ro geodeupnaneun bucheonim osin nal" (We should be reborn as wise Buddhists in the Buddha's Birthday), in the May 2009 issue of *The Buddha*: 5.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Jeong'u seunim, "Naro buteo jayurowojeoya cham jayu noraehal su isseo" (When I become liberated from myself, I can be free.), in the February 2009 issue of *The Buddha*: 5-6.

emphasized the importance of good friends and good temples in which each person can easily meet with good friends.<sup>78</sup>

He defined a religious guide (a bodhisattva) as a practitioner of (ten) perfections, (1) almsgiving, (2) the keeping of precepts, (3) endurance, (4) assiduousness, (5) meditation, (6) wisdom, (7) skillful means, (8) the vow, (9) power, and (10) knowledge. He asked Buddhists to become bodhisattvas respectively and practice two objectives of Mahāyāna Buddhism. They are required to obtain enlightenment and to educate sentient beings.<sup>79</sup>

Lee Jungwoo rejected extremism and accepted ecumenism. He seemed like to reject Seon absolutism and also doctrine absolutism. He emphasized the middle path that the Buddha strongly advocated. He unitedly approached opposite aspects, for example, body and mind, the secular and the transcendental, benefiting ourselves and benefiting others, and other sets.<sup>80</sup> Because he regarded Buddhism as multi-vitamins and lubricants to the society, he did not dogmatize Buddhism. He also suggested Buddhists not to absolutize a particular Buddhist tradition and prioritize it to other traditions.<sup>81</sup>

He also applied ecumenism and attempted to unite Buddhism with arts. Kim Sang'yeol (1941-1998) established a theatrical company named Seensee (Sinsi) meaning "Divine City" in 1987. Upon its establishment, Lee Jungwoo became the president of the association of its supporters. When Kim Sang'yeol successfully performed in the Madang Sesil Theater a play named after a famous poem entitled "Nim ui chimmuk" (Lover's Silence) written by Han Yongun (1879-1944), a renowned Buddhist reformer, Lee Jungwoo watched the performance and began relationship with him in 1984.

When Kim Sang'yeol died in 1998, Bak Myeongseong (b. 1963), one of its founding members, represented the Seensee. He later changed the theatrical company's name from the Seensee to

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>80</sup> Jeong'u seunim, ed., 294.

<sup>81</sup> See Lee Jungwoo's interview with Kim Eungcheol in the February 2008 issue of the monthly magazine *The Buddha*: 16-17.

the Seensee Musical Company and began to import famous musicals from foreign nations to and put them on the stage in Korea. The musical company currently might be the biggest one in Korea. Lee Jungwoo allowed the company to be housed in the Guryong-sa Temple and in Yeorae-sa (Buddha) Temple, both of which he established. He wanted to unite arts with Buddhism. He attempted to reveal Buddhism through musical and theatrical performances. He syncretized Buddhism and arts.

Except a few of Imje Seon sectarians, even though the majority of Korean Buddhists accepts Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage, Korean Buddhists theoretically advocate ecumenism between Seon, doctrinal and vinaya traditions. They seek after enlightenment at their individual level and attempt to save other beings at their social level. While they syncretized Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in pre-modern times, they attempt to syncretize Buddhism with Christianity in modern times. Lee Jungwoo also responded to Christianity, an influential religion, and made efforts to harmonize Buddhism with the religion.

Korean Buddhists used Seon Buddhism and harmonized the tea ceremony, literature (poetry), music, calligraphy and art with Seon Buddhism. They did not separate Seon Buddhism from the tea ceremony, literature, music, calligraphy and art but tried to reveal Seon Buddhism through them. Lee Jungwoo loyally inherited harmonious attitudes of Seon Buddhists towards the aforementioned different subjects, harmonized arts (musicals and plays) with and tried to reveal Buddhism through them. He seemed to use them and effectively propagate Buddhism among the masses.

When he established Yeorae-sa Temple, he included the Seensee Musical Company's theater in the temple's first basement. So, when Lee Jungwoo hosted the opening ceremony of Yeorae-sa Temple on February 2, 2002, he held the special performances to commemorate the theater's opening for two days on February 3-4, 2002. The musical company presented two famous western musicals, "Rent" and "Chicago" at the newly-opened theater. More than 500 people attended the opening ceremony of the musical

theater on February 3 and more than 1,000 people attended the performances for two days.<sup>82</sup>

### Peacemaking Activities

When he became the abbot of his parish Tongdo-sa Monastery in 2007, he composed a following poem entitled “Coming back to my home temple.” We can easily notice in the poem that he firmly and seriously located himself in the context of Tongdo-sa Monastery.

I came back to my home temple,  
Like a salmon which ran without stop  
Came back to his comfortable place and did what he should do.

From a field for endlessly propagating Buddhist teaching to the public,  
I came back to my home temple  
In which my colleagues, juniors and seniors reside,  
And I want to breathe with them and to walk with them.

For now, I wish to transform my desire for propagating Buddhism in cities  
and to develop my home Tongdo-sa Monastery for the future’s prosperity.  
I greet all Buddhists who love Tongdo-sa Monastery.

Tongdo-sa Monastery, one of three major monasteries in Korean Buddhism,  
Enshrines the Buddha’s relic,  
and has shared glory and pains with the history of Korean Buddhism.  
Tongdo-sa Monastery that has stood high with the monastic community’s  
harmony and spirituality  
Even in troubled situations  
Will overcome recent problems without any problems,  
And again lead the future of Korean Buddhism as it has usually done.

The Most Venerable Master Wonmyeong Jijong,  
(current spiritual leader of Tongdo-sa Monastery),  
Who can embrace the sufferings of all laymen and monastics,  
Became the spiritual leader of my home Tongdo-sa Monastery,  
and is guiding all members of our monastery.

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<sup>82</sup> See the February 15, 2002 issue of *Bulgyo sinmun* (Buddhist Newspaper), the official weekly newspaper of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism.



I and other member monks at the monastery  
 Have worried about the future of Korean Buddhism,  
 And we will take efforts to harmonize among its members and to develop it.

Like a proverb that the land's surface is stronger than before after it rains,  
 Tongdo-sa Monastery will be strengthened after recent pains,  
 Be harmonized and united  
 under the directions of the Most Venerable Master Wonmyeong Jijong.  
 Based on the cooperation and harmony  
 between members of Tongdo-sa Monastery,  
 I want to open a new field  
 for the development of Korean Buddhism and the happiness of all sentient  
 beings.

Tondo-sa Monastery is becoming younger and already became younger.  
 I will make the voices of the Buddha prevailed over Tongdo-sa Monastery.

On a tree of more than 1,000 years old,  
 I will make a beautiful flower bloom with my efforts.  
 I will continuously endeavor for all of you to smell the scent of the flower.

He became a novice practitioner under his master Jin Hongbeop on January 30, 1965 and received the set of novice monk precepts at the Diamond Platform of Tongdo-sa Monastery, generally considered as the most prestigious ordination site in Korean Buddhism, on January 15, 1968. He received the set of full monk precepts from his grandmaster and vinaya master Yun Wolha at the same platform on April 15, 1971. He studied Huayan/Hwaeom/Kegon philosophy under Kim Tanheo from November 25, 1977 to early 1978 for two months at Woljeong-sa Temple on Mt. Odae. He finished courses in the Graduate School of International Information at Dongguk University, the major Buddhist mission university, in 1998. He also completed courses in the program for the highest Buddhist managers of the Graduate School of Buddhist Studies at the university in 2004. He received the prestigious Manhae Grand Prize for Buddhist propagation in 2001 and the sixtieth grand prize for correction from the Prime Minister in 2005.

He also contributed to the order's administration and politics. He served as the bureau directors of justice and financial affairs in

the headquarters of Tongdo-sa Monastery in 1980. He served the bureau directors of education affairs and investigation from 1983 to 1984 in the order's headquarters. He served as the order's ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth central assemblyman from 1988 to 1998 for ten years. He also served as the order's secretary of general affairs for four years from 1994 to 1998. While he served as the assemblyman in the order's eleventh central assembly, he acted as the chair of the General Affairs Committee.

When he served as a soldier, he established Hoguk Hwangnyong-sa Temple in the seventy-third regiment of the infantry twenty-sixth division in 1974 and Hoguk Irwol-sa Temple in the division's headquarters in 1975. He established the publication company named Iljumun and began to propagate Buddhism among Korean Buddhists from 1988. He issued the founding issue of the monthly magazine *Guryong* (Nine Dragons) in March 1988, changed its title to *Butda* (The Buddha) in the March 2003 issue and has educated Buddhists through the magazine without stop until now.

He was a pioneer to propagate Buddhism among lay Buddhists in the Seoul metropolitan area. He became the abbot of Guryong-sa Temple, the Seoul propagation center of Tongdo-sa Monastery, on June 18, 1985. Since then, he has established a number of propagation centers (temples) in the metropolitan area and made them officially affiliated with his parish Tongdo-sa Monastery. The temples which he established mostly in the metropolitan area and also across the nation include Guryeong-sa Temple, Yeorae-sa Temple, Wongak-sa Temple, Banya-sa Temple, Seorae-sa Temple, Bongguk-sa Temple, Unjo-am Hermitage, Jisan-sa Temple, Borim-sa Temple, Jangan-sa Temple, Bomyeong-sa Temple, and so on. Of them, Guryong-sa Temple and Yeorae-sa Temple are two of the most representative propagation centers in the metropolitan area. He became the abbot of Yeorae-sa Temple, the Ilsan propagation center of Tongdo-sa Monastery, in 1997.

He detailed his short autobiography since 1983 to 1999 in the May 1999 issue of the monthly magazine *The Buddha*.<sup>83</sup> According to it, he actively participated in the National Conference for Monastics and initiated the order's Emergency Administration along with the conference participants in 1983. He actively attended massive meetings, entered a hunger strike for sixteen days and reformed the order's undemocratic administration in 1994. He received the first grand prize for Buddhist propagation from Director Kim Mujinjang (b. 1933) of the order's Board of Propagation. He established fourteen kindergartens and preschools in the metropolitan area. He established two huge temples of Guryong-sa and Yeorae-sa. He managed the Buddhist TV Station. He received a medal for his distinguished services from the order's Secretary-General O Nog'won (b. 1928).

He has been a resident monk at Guryong-sa Temple since 1985 except the term he served as his parish temple's abbot for four years from 2007 to 2011. He has guided his established propagation centers while residing at the temple. He outlined the temple's characteristics in nine items and explained how the temple contributed to the development of modern Korean Buddhism as follows:

First, we were the first who moved the Buddha's and Vinaya Master Jajang's golden robes from Tongdo-sa Monastery to Guryong-sa Temple (in 1987) since the monastery's foundation more than one thousand three hundred years ago and displayed them for lay Buddhists (for one hundred days) at Guryong-sa Temple.

Second, Koreans accepted Buddhism more than one thousand six hundred years ago. We were the first who enshrined ten thousand Buddha images in one temple throughout the history of Korean Buddhism.

Third, we began the series of sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra* for one hundred days with the slogan of warm Buddhist homes in the Buddha's bosom (in 1991) at Guryong-sa Temple. We hosted the finale ceremony at the Olympics Gymnastic Stadium with around forty thousand lay Buddhists attended.

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<sup>83</sup> The autobiography was re-included in Jeong'u seunim's *I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver*, 2: 151-152.

Fourth, we began Guryong-sa Temple with the establishment of a tent of 20 *pyeong*<sup>84</sup> (in 1987). We established the temple with a floor space of 1,800 *pyeong* three years later (in 1990). The temple became a holy site in Korean Buddhism. Thirteen thousand families became members of our temple.

Fifth, even though the temple was recently established, a number of Buddhists visit the temple, hold two hands together, repent of their wrong doings and prostrate themselves in front of the Buddha images for twenty four hours. The Buddhists have prayed to the Buddha for themselves and others.

Sixth, the temple members accomplished together from equal positions what the temple should do and wanted to do. They are greatly pleased with the accomplishments in their comfortable minds. They did those things for others, not for their own interests.

Seventh, the temple location and name originate from the Nine Dragon Pond of Tongdo-sa Monastery. When I moved the temple from Gahoe-dong (Block) of Jongno-gu (Ward) in downtown Seoul to and established it at the current location in 1985 six years ago, I realized the name of mountain at the back of the temple is Mt. Guryong (Nine Dragon). The fountain is gushing out here and its water became nectar for all villagers.

Eighth, even though each of the temple members considers himself or herself as its owner, he or she serves other members as his or her masters. Even though a number of temple members finished the finale ceremony at and returned to their homes from the stadium, even a piece of waste was not left over in it.

Ninth, Guryong-sa Temple does not have the association that hierarchically arranges its members. Even though secular associations should be vertically organized, religious ones should be horizontally organized. Relations among monks, between monks and lay persons and among laypersons should not be vertically arranged in religious organizations.<sup>85</sup>

As seen above, Lee Jungwoo strongly emphasized the ecumenical tradition of his parish Tongdo-sa Monastery that equally evaluates various traditions of doctrine, (Seon, Tantric), Pure Land and vinaya Buddhism and made lay Buddhists realize the tradition in their everyday lives. He also attempted to manage his established Guryong-sa Temple horizontally, not vertically.

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<sup>84</sup> *Pyeong* is a unit of area of 3.954 square yards.

<sup>85</sup> Jeong'u seunim, *I Ask Ways*, 2: 193-195.

When he established the temple building at a new site, he moved the Buddha's golden robe which Vinaya Master Jajang, founder of the Tongdo-sa Monastery, took from China and enshrined at his established monastery, and allowed lay Buddhists to see the robe for one hundred days from August 12, 1987 on which he hosted the ground-breaking ceremony. A number of Buddhists visited the new site to see the robe. Some of them enshrined their Buddha images in the temple's main hall, making the number of images ten thousands. He established the temple's Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall and hosted its completion ceremony on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (the Buddha's birthday) in 1990.<sup>86</sup>

He designed the temple's building based on Tongdo-sa Monastery's Stūpa for the Buddha's Relics that Jajang took from China. The building's ground is seven hundred *pyeong* and the building consisting of seven stories above and two stories under the ground has a floor space of two thousand two hundred *pyeong*. He opened the three stories from the second to the fourth story without pillars and made the Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall. He located the Repentance Hall in the corner of the building's fourth floor above the ground, the Nirvāṇa Hall in the fifth floor above the ground, the Seon Center for lay Buddhists in the sixth floor above the ground, the additional Seon center in the seventh floor above the ground, the temple's offices, a kindergarten, and a cultural center in the first floor above the ground, the Paradise Hall, a dining hall and the musical company's office in the first floor under the ground and the parking lot in the second floor under the ground.

He installed high-tech sound, video and computer facilities in the building. He also enshrined ten thousand gilded Buddha images of 30 centimeters high in it. Even though some temples enshrined one thousand or three thousand images, there was no temple in Korean Buddhism at the time that enshrined ten thousand images

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<sup>86</sup> See the Buddhology Institute of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, ed., *Hanguk geun-hyeondae bulgyo-sa yeonpyo* (A Chronological Table for Modern and Present Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Board of Education of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2000), 128.

in a main hall. He received ideas from Fo Guang Shan Monastery which Hsing Yun established in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and established the Ten Thousand Buddhas Hall at Guryong-sa Temple. He also received influences from Ajanta Caves, where seven Buddhas are enshrined, and installed the Buddhas in the hall accordingly. The installation of seven Buddhas<sup>87</sup> in a main hall was very unique in Korean Buddhism.<sup>88</sup>

He incorporated Tongdo-sa Monastery's stūpa, Fo Guang Shan Monastery of Taiwanese Buddhism and Ajanta Caves of Indian Buddhism in his established temple's building. He based his philosophy on ecumenism of Tongdo-sa Monastery in particular and of Korean Buddhism in general, accepted advanced propagation skills from Taiwanese Buddhism and actively spread Korean Buddhism at home and abroad. He was the first monk of the Tongdo-sa Monastery, who established a number of propagation centers in the metropolitan area and in the foreign nations and popularized Korean Buddhism. He secularized Buddhism among lay Buddhists and internationalized Korean Buddhism.

Kim Gyeongbong (1892-1982) initiated a series of sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra* at Geungnak-am Hermitage of Tongdo-sa Monastery for twenty-one days in winter 1927 under the Japanese occupation, 1910-1945. Tongdo-sa Monastery has continued the series to this day. Lee Jungwoo inherited the tradition and hosted the series three times in 1991, 1992 and 1993. On September 8, 1991 six years after the temple's establishment in 1985, he held the first series of the sermons in the scripture for one hundred days at the temple. He invited one hundred eminent monks and let each of them deliver the sermon on the scripture each day. He was the first monk in modern Korean Buddhism who hosted the series of the sermons in the particular scripture for lay Buddhists in a propagation center.

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<sup>87</sup> The seven Buddhas constitute "Vipashyin, Shikhin, Vishvabhū, Krakucchandra, Kanakamuni, Kāshyapa and Shakyamuni." See the entry of "seven Buddhas of the past" in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., 575.

<sup>88</sup> See the July 4, 2007 issue of *Bulgyo sinmun*.

Lee Jungwoo became the twenty-seventh abbot of Tongdo-sa Monastery on May 29, 2007. As usual, he hosted the series at the monastery for one month in 2007. He extended the duration from one month to fifty-three days in 2008 and continued the series for fifty-three days for next two years, 2009 and 2010 at the monastery based on the scripture's "Chapter on Entering Dharma Realm." According to the chapter, a businessperson's son named Sudhana visited fifty-three religious guides of various occupations and searched for enlightenment on Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's advice.

Chanju Mun (Seongwon), his scholar disciple, summarized Lee Jungwoo's thought in the following three items in the February 2008 issue of the monthly magazine *Butda* (The Buddha), the official magazine of his established propagation centers, pp. 30-35. He also suggested in the article that Lee Jungwoo should successfully educate monks and lay Buddhists in Buddhism and other disciplines and let them accomplish his thought with their help in his propagation centers and in society.

First, Lee Jungwoo intended to guide lay Buddhists to live like the Buddha actually and concretely and established a number of propagation centers in towns, not in mountains. Lee Jungwoo argued that if Korean Buddhists do not live like the Buddha, they could not contribute to the society very well. He stated that the success of Buddhism is entirely based on people's behavior, not their superficial knowledge.

Second, he guided lay Buddhists to approach Buddhism through culture. He arranged a variety of cultural programs and taught calligraphy, Korean traditional music and dance, flower arrangements and others in propagation centers. He established a number of kindergartens and preschools, a pilgrim tour company, a publication company, a monthly magazine, a theater, a musical company and others and propagated Buddhism among lay Buddhists from children to adults.

Third, he internationalized Korean Buddhism. He made strong connections with Indo-Tibetan, Sino-Taiwanese, Japanese and American Buddhism. He visited India and Tibet numberless times and supported Tibetan refugees in India and needed Indians in India and needed Tibetans in Tibet. He made his Guryong-sa

Temple have sister relations with Fo Guang Shan Monastery of Taiwanese Buddhism and Kyōgan-ji Temple and Shōgyō-ji Temple of Japanese Pure Land Shin Buddhism. He established several propagation centers (temples) in the United States, India, Canada and Australia and transmitted Korean Buddhism among overseas Koreans and local people.



## **CHRISTIANITY**

### **CULTURE WAR BATTLES OVER THE FUTURE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM**

**Kathleen Kautzer**

#### **Divergent Responses to Vatican II**

During the last two papacies, the Vatican has moved increasingly to the right, which in turn has evoked a Reform Movement among liberal Catholics intent on preserving and expanding the progressive reforms adopted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). These reforms favored more democratic church structures and an open, receptive attitude toward the modern world.<sup>1</sup>

This conflict between liberal reformers and church hierarchs reflects opposing interpretations of Catholic identity and theology. For their part, liberal reformers interpret their activism and demands for reform as validated and inspired by Vatican II documents, especially *Lumen Gentium*, which declares that the Church is primarily a “community” in which all of its members

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Kautzer, *The Underground Church: Nonviolent Resistance to Vatican Empire* (Netherlands: Brill, 2012). Generalizations in this article about the liberal Catholic reform movement and its interaction with the Roman Catholic hierarchy are based on research documented in this book.

share in the “gifts of the Holy Spirit,” and are obliged to participate in the “life and mission” of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the two future popes who attended the Council, Karol Wojtyla and Joseph Ratzinger, were shocked and dismayed by the anti-authoritarian and democratic spirit evoked by Vatican II. After becoming Pope, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI developed reputations as staunch conservatives who reasserted the importance of a strong papacy to preserve what they regard as the “divine, unchanging, and uncompromising truths” of church teachings, which are threatened by the misguided relativism of the modern and post-modern era.<sup>3</sup> In the face of the abuse crisis and dramatically changing cultural norms, conservative hierarchs continue to expect the same level of deference and obedience that their predecessors had enjoyed for centuries. Far from extending an olive branch or conciliatory gestures to reformers, Pope Benedict XVI has repeatedly expressed preference for a “smaller, purer church,” in which those who reject church teachings would simply leave.<sup>4</sup>

In response to these admonishments from conservative hierarchs, liberal reformers assert that the credibility and viability of Roman Catholicism among Americans has been severely undermined by the intransigence and arrogance of recent leaders, whose backward looking focus and denial of accountability for the abuse crisis and other failings have generated a massive exodus of members and a dispirited and dysfunctional institution.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard McBrien, “Vatican II themes: The people of God. Essay in theology,” *National Catholic Reporter*, July 25, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/print/25855> (accessed October 4, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> David Gibson, *The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006), 271. Benedict expresses his criticism of relativism as follows: “Absolutizing what is not absolute but relative is called totalitarianism. It does not liberate man, but takes away his dignity and enslaves him,” 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

## **Societal Context of the Reform Movement**

The widening polarization between the views of liberal and conservative Roman Catholics is consonant with Wuthnow's findings regarding the increasing prevalence and significance of conflicts between liberal and conservative factions within religious denominations.<sup>5</sup> It also reflects Hunter's prediction regarding the increased polarization of liberals and conservatives within society at large, whereby conservatives move increasingly to the right while liberals move increasingly to the left.<sup>6</sup> These conflicts within Catholicism reflect the same culture war issues that Hunter identifies as pivotal in society at large, namely, sexuality and reproductive issues, homosexuality, women's rights, divorce, and democratization of social institutions.

## **A Nonviolent Struggle**

A noteworthy feature of the conflict within Roman Catholicism is that both sides have publicly expressed a commitment to nonviolence, not only for resolving their own struggles but also for addressing national and international conflicts. Within the Reform Movement, many early participants refer to themselves as *peaceniks*, based on their involvement in a range of anti-war activities against wars in Vietnam and Iraq. Liberal American Catholics have their own peace organizations including Pax Christi (primarily focused on peace education and advocacy) and the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) (which sponsors annual demonstrations aimed at shutting down the School of the Americas, which SOAW alleges is a training ground for terrorists who were responsible for the assassinations of Archbishop Oscar Romero and other Catholic martyrs).<sup>7</sup> Gatherings of Catholic reformers

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> James Davidson Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> For more information on these organizations, consult their websites (<http://paxchristiusa.org>) and (<http://soaw.org>). It should be noted that the U.S.

often feature training in nonviolence and presentations by notable peace activists (such as the Reverend James Lawson of the American Civil Rights Movement, Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, and John Dear, former Director of Fellowship of Reconciliation).

Moreover, most participants in the Reform Movement are primarily near or past retirement age and were shaped by the “pay, pray, and obey” norms of 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholicism in which lay persons played a passive, subservient role. Consequently, reform groups have been very slow to publicly challenge or condemn church hierarchs, or to engage in strategies that would undermine the legitimacy and public image of the institution. Following the eruption of the clergy abuse crisis in 2002, the Reform Movement has increasingly adopted a more confrontational approach, but its strategies remain nonviolent and include the full range of options outlined in the landmark research of Gene Sharp, which includes protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and parallel institutions.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the Vatican has a long history of engaging in violence to win converts or punish dissidents, including the Crusades, the Inquisition, witch hunts, and anti-Semitism. Reflecting contemporary norms, the Vatican has disavowed overt physical violence, which would evoke public outrage and violate national and international law. In an unprecedented move, Pope John Paul II issued a public apology for the “violence, persecutions and blunders” committed by the Church for over two centuries that imposed suffering on “Jews, heretics, women, Gypsies and native people.”<sup>9</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican has taken

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Defense Department renamed the School of the Americas the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. However, SOAW contends that the name change is merely “cosmetic,” and the organization remains a training ground for terrorists.

<sup>8</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) and *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Practice and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Potential* (Manchester, N.H.: Extending Horizons Books, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Rory Carroll, “Pope says sorry for sins of the church,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/mar/13/catholicism.religion> (accessed August 21, 2011).

public positions favoring nonviolent resolution of conflict and opposing the nuclear arms race and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, however, the two most recent Papacies have imposed highly punitive policies on dissenting Catholics, including various forms of censure and excommunication. In fact, 107 theologians were censured during the Papacy of John Paul II.<sup>11</sup> Some analysts have categorized the Vatican's harsh treatment of dissidents and its failure to address systemic injustices within the institution as violent in nature. Most notably, Father Camilo Macisse, former Superior General of Discalced Carmelites, accuses the Roman Curia of violence based on its extreme centralism in governance, its patriarchal authoritarianism "that denies women any voice in policy making," its judicial system that does not grant accused persons basic rights of self-defense, and its policies of repression of progressive theologians and biblical scholarship.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, Father Gerald Arbuckle, a New Zealand Marist and social anthropologist, insists that the form of power exercised by the Vatican reflects violent characteristics in that it is unilateral, rejecting dialogue by "refusing to receive the influence of others."<sup>13</sup> Echoing the concerns of Catholic reformers,

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<sup>10</sup> James Muller and Charles Kenney, *Keep the Faith, Change the Church*, (New York: Rodale, 2004). Interestingly, Dr. James Muller, a co-founder of the reform group Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), won a Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership role in International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), which opposed the nuclear arms race. Muller persuaded Pope John Paul II to sign a letter in support of IPPN. Notable Vatican statements on issues of peace include *Pacem in Terris*, the encyclical of Pope John XXIII issued in 1963, which advocates peaceful resolution of international conflict and respect for human rights. Pope John Paul II publicly opposed the Gulf War in 1991 and the Invasion of Iraq in 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Fox, *A New Reformation: Creation Spirituality and the Transformation of Christianity* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Camilo Macisse, "Violence in the Church," *The Tablet*, November 22, 2003, 8-9. Macisse defines violence as "the application of physical, moral or psychological force to impose or coerce," which he claims "should be unthinkable in the community of believers founded by Jesus, the Prince of Peace," 8.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *Violence, Society and the Church: A Cultural Approach* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), xiii.

Arbuckle asserts that a number of Vatican officials have engaged in “theological and administrative violence” to thwart Vatican II reformers, while favoring “restorationist and fundamentalist movements.”<sup>14</sup>

Church hierarchs would likely term the action of reformers as violent, given that they consider rejection of Vatican doctrine a denial of their obligation as Catholics and participation in unsanctioned communities “schismatic,” because it fractures the unity among the faithful they consider essential to Catholicism. Thus, the conflict between the Vatican and liberal reformers centers on contrasting definitions of the term “violence” and the conditions necessary for resolving conflicts within Roman Catholicism and beyond.

### **Restrained Rhetoric**

Predictably, both liberal reformers and conservative church hierarchs claim to represent the authentic Catholic tradition, which each charge is undermined and defiled by their opponents. Despite the antagonism between reformers and conservative hierarchs, the overriding tendency on both sides is to use rather moderate, pastoral sounding rhetoric rather than insulting or dehumanizing labels. This tendency reflects the fact that this conflict occurs in a religious and Christian context, in which expressions of hostility and harsh rhetoric are considered “profane” and inconsistent with the gentle, loving spirit claimed by Christianity.<sup>15</sup>

In this regard, liberal reformers use biblical metaphors to characterize the monopolistic power and punitive practices of church hierarchs, whose actions they liken to the tyranny of Egyptian Pharaohs or Roman rulers, or to the pompous, rules-minded scribes and Pharisees who rejected Jesus. They also insist

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, xviii.

<sup>15</sup> The harshest language I observed in my research on reform groups was voiced by members of advocacy groups for clergy abuse victims, especially Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Bishop Accountability.org. These victims groups are not Catholic reform groups—they focus solely on advocacy for victims.

their efforts to promote the rights of previously oppressed groups (especially GLBTs and women) are in keeping with the inclusive, compassionate spirit of Jesus, whom they claim “welcomed everyone to the table.” Reformers defend their right to reject or reinterpret church dogma by referring to Jesus’ flexible, judicious interpretation of many religious teachings that emphasize the spirit over the letter of the law.

In contrast, church hierarchs ground their charges against reformers in Catholic dogma, charging that actions of reformers constitute mortal sins (refusing to respect the authority of local bishops), heresy (rejecting church teachings on culture war issues), and schism (creating independent worship communities).

Ironically, it was not liberal reformers but Frank Keating, Republican Governor of Oklahoma, whose rhetoric evoked the most hostile response from church hierarchs during the abuse crisis. As a member a review board appointed by the bishops to examine the crisis in 2002, Keating called for criminal prosecution of bishops who engaged in cover-ups, and later claimed that stonewalling by some bishops resembled tactics “more suited to an organized crime entity than a church.”<sup>16</sup> Following the backlash created by his remarks, Keating resigned but refused to apologize, insisting his comments were “deadly accurate.”<sup>17</sup> Many reformers privately lauded Keating’s remarks, but only a few expressed their approval publicly.

Although church documents and press statements usually contain highly abstract academic language, church officials have seemingly intentionally stepped on the toes of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons (GLBT) and feminists on a number of occasions. Not surprisingly, GLBT reformers strongly objected to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s (CDF) statement on homosexual unions, issued in July 2005, which describes homosexual acts as “intrinsically disordered” and

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<sup>16</sup> Joe Feuerherd, “Keating recalls service on review board,” *National Catholic Reporter*, August 14, 2009, <http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/keating-recalls-services-review-board> (accessed July 14, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

homosexual persons as “objectively disordered.”<sup>18</sup> In a famous 1986 document, then Cardinal Ratzinger used even harsher language that defined homosexuality as “a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil.”<sup>19</sup>

Catholic feminists reacted with outrage to a CDF statement listing the attempted ordination of women alongside clergy abuse as “grave crimes” under Church law.<sup>20</sup> Responding to controversy over this ruling, CDF spokesperson Monsignor Charles Scicluna explained that the ruling was not intended to “equate” clergy abuse and women’s ordination, since unsanctioned ordinations are a “sacramental crime” and sexual abuse is a “moral crime.”<sup>21</sup>

### **No Seat at the Table for Reformers**

Since church hierarchs and reformers rarely engage in face-to-face meetings, the positions of both groups are usually voiced in public statements and media interviews. During the 1970s and 1980s, some members of reform groups did occasionally engage in dialogue with receptive bishops and were included in some diocesan gatherings, but these meetings failed to achieve concessions or fruitful dialogue.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, these opportunities

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<sup>18</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, July 13, 2005, [http://www.vatican.va/.../rc\\_com\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20030731\\_homosexualunio](http://www.vatican.va/.../rc_com_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexualunio) (accessed June 25, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> John L. Allen, *The Rise of Benedict XVI: The Inside Story of How the Pope Was Elected and Where He Will Take the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 155.

<sup>20</sup> John L. Allen, “Vatican revises law on sex abuse,” *National Catholic Reporter*, July 15, 2010, <http://ncronline.org/print/19202> (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Women’s Ordination Conference, History, the WOC Story, n.d., <http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/8/59/> (accessed July, 2005). According to this document, in 1979 the Bishop’s Committee on Women in the Church invited members of the Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC) to meet. Although these discussions continued for three years, WOC eventually described these meetings as a “non-meeting of the minds,” as



largely disappeared over the past two decades as liberal and moderate bishops retired and were replaced by conservatives. More recently, most church hierarchs have rebuffed requests for meetings with reformers and usually do not even acknowledge petitions and other correspondence from reform groups. During the clergy abuse crisis, however, some pastors and bishops did organize discussions sessions with parishioners and allowed laypersons (including members of reform groups) to voice recommendations.

### **Liturgies Reflect Culture War Themes**

Both reformers and church officials sometime include references to culture war issues in their liturgies, although these references are usually raised only in the “prayers of the faithful” or the homily. Conservative pastors are most likely to voice pleas to end abortion in prayer petitions and homilies, but may also include references to Church teachings on homosexuality or women’s ordination. In a few instances, some of the most controversial conservative bishops have even engaged in overtly political activity such as circulating petitions regarding political issues during or after Mass. For example, church officials in Massachusetts encountered some resistance to their petition campaign opposing gay marriage in 2005. In one parish an organist was fired for challenging the pastor’s decision to circulate the petition during Mass, which in turn evoked a resignation by a cantor in support of the organist.<sup>23</sup> In another parish, a priest was “pulled from the altar” during Mass by the presiding bishop, who made a surprise visit to the parish upon learning that the priests in this parish were refusing to circulate the petition.<sup>24</sup>

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theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether put it, due to the bishops’ unresponsiveness .

<sup>23</sup>Philocrites, “Organist walks out on priest’s anti-gay marriage appeal,” October 27, 2005, <http://philocrities.com/archives/002282.html> (accessed May 14, 2008).

<sup>24</sup>Michael Levenson, “Westborough priest pulled from the altar: Bulletin raps call for gay union ban,” Associated Press, September 30, 2005,

A few pastors have denied Communion to dissidents, especially Mass-goers who wear rainbow sashes on Pentecost Sunday as a protest against homophobia in the Church.<sup>25</sup> When he served as Archbishop of St. Louis, Raymond Burke attracted considerable media attention by proclaiming he would refuse communion to John Kerry (when he was a presidential candidate), and to other politicians who supported the right to abortion.<sup>26</sup> Liturgies sponsored by reform groups increasingly include cautiously worded “laments” over the sorry state of the contemporary Church and collective appeals for a renewed Church. For example, at the opening prayer session of the American Catholic Council (ACC) in 2011, the presider proclaimed “Our Church is filled with dried bones in a world hungering for your Life.”<sup>27</sup> The “dry bones metaphor is a biblical reference (Ezekiel 37: 1-14), in which Yahweh orders the prophet Ezekiel to breathe life back into dry bones that symbolize the dispirited people of Israel. Obviously, this metaphor is a negative one, emphasizing the lack of vitality in Roman Catholicism. The list of ACC laments included the following: “Angered by church leaders who protect pedophiles and persecute prophets, we cry ...” and “Dismayed by our own guilt and failure to confront the structures of abuse, we cry....” This rather bold liturgical language contrasts with the more

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<http://www.boston.com/news/local/.../westborough-priest-pulled-from-the-altar> (accessed February 20, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Brian McNeill, *History in the United States, Australia, and England*, March 2007, <http://www.rainbowsashallianceusa> (accessed December 12, 2009). The Rainbow Sash Movement, which sponsors the rainbow sash action on Pentecost Sunday, describes itself as an “organization of Gay and Lesbian Catholics, their families and friends, who are calling for conversion of heart around the issue of human sexuality.”

<sup>26</sup> John Thavis, “Archbishop Burke says he’ll continue politics-abortion campaign,” *Catholic News Service*, November 29, 2004, <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/040652.htm> (accessed September 12, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> The American Catholic Council (ACC) was organized by Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), which describes itself as a “centrist reform group;” FutureChurch, a parish-based reform group; and Corps of Priests United for Service (CORPUS), an organization of resigned Roman Catholic priests (<http://americancatholiccouncil.org>).

deferential language evident earlier in the history of the reform groups involved in the ACC.

### **Overview of the Movement**

The Reform Movement includes several hundred organizations, including single-issue groups such as Save Our Sacrament (SOS) (which opposes annulment for divorced persons) and local groups such as Send the Bishops a Message (a Los Angeles based group that promotes withholding contributions as a protest against clergy abuse). Despite its long history and diverse composition, the movement includes at most 100,000 members, reflecting the fact that most groups are small and have overlapping memberships.

Inspired by the Second Vatican Council, the first wave of the Reform Movement emerged in the 1970s and includes the following:

- Call to Action, founded in 1977, is clearinghouse for reform groups.
- DignityUSA, founded in 1969, advocates for GLBT Catholics.
- The Corps of Reserve Priests United for Service (CORPUS), founded in 1974, represents resigned priests opposed to mandatory celibacy.
- Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), founded in 1975, promotes equality for women within the Church, including women's ordination.

First wave activists are primarily persons who came of age in the optimistic period of the 1960s, when even an organization as tradition-bound as the Roman Catholic Church seemed like a feasible reform target.<sup>28</sup> A second wave of reform emerged in response to the clergy abuse crisis which erupted in Boston in 2002

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<sup>28</sup> Kautzer, *Ibid.* My research revealed that many of the activists in this first wave of the Reform Movement were current or resigned members of religious orders who had a deep identification with Roman Catholicism.

and exposed widespread cover-ups of abuse incidents by church hierarchs who protected abusive clergy from censure. The largest and best-known second-wave reform group is Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), whose agenda includes support for clergy abuse victims and “priests of integrity,”<sup>29</sup> as well as the creation of more accountable, democratic, and participatory church structures. Following the advice of several experts, VOTF proclaimed that it “accepted the teachings on the Church,” and distanced itself from first wave reformers whom hierarchs had labeled “strident” and “divisive.” Although VOTF described itself as “centrist,” its members are primarily moderate and liberal Catholics.<sup>30</sup> Despite VOTF’s conciliatory approach, it has encountered the same hostility and unresponsiveness from church officials as first-wave reform groups, in that requests for meeting space and a “seat at the table” in parish and diocesan councils are usually rejected or ignored.<sup>31</sup>

### Theological Influences

The Catholic Reform Movement has become a supportive community and a captive audience for many Roman Catholic theologians who have been censured by the Vatican for supporting the very positions favored by the Reform Movement. These censured theologians often face a range of penalties within Catholic colleges or organizations, including denial of speaking engagements, and loss of jobs and career titles.<sup>32</sup> For decades, first

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<sup>29</sup> The term “priests of integrity” refers to priests who exhibit high standards of moral behavior and have not engaged in sexual abuse or cover-ups of abuse (<http://votf.org>).

<sup>30</sup> William V. D’Antonio and Anthony Pogorelc, *Voices of the Faithful, Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* (New York: Crossroads, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Kautzer, *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> Some of the most well-known examples of censured theologians include Swiss Vatican II theologian Hans Küng who was banned from teaching Catholic theology at Tübingen University in 1979 due to his rejection of papal primacy and other teachings; moral theologian Charles Curran who in 1986 was fired from Catholic University due to his challenges regarding church teachings on contraception and a range of other issues; Dominican priest Matthew Fox who

wave reform groups have featured censored theologians as keynoters or presenters at reform gatherings and their books are widely read by reformers. Initially, second wave reform groups bypassed some of the more controversial liberal theologians, but they have more recently featured censored theologians Matthew Fox and Hans Küng as speakers at the 2011 ACC conference.<sup>33</sup>

Generally speaking, most liberal Catholic theologians support more democratic church structures (consistent with Vatican II teachings) and endorse, or at least urge consideration of, married clergy, women's ordination, access to the Eucharist for non-Catholics and divorced persons, and acceptance of homosexuality and contraception. They also affirm the Vatican II principle of "primacy of individual conscience," whereby Catholics have the right to reject certain church teaching based on a thoughtful examination of their conscience.<sup>34</sup>

A smaller network of the most left-leaning theologians plays central leadership roles in reform groups that match their expertise. For instance, feminist theologians Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Mary Hunt not only speak at feminist gatherings, but also attend organizing meetings and consult on strategy for groups such as WOC, Women-Church Convergence (W-CC) and Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP). As an organization composed of resigned priests,

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chose to become an Episcopalian priest in 1994 after being silenced by the Vatican for one year and expelled from the Dominican order as a result of his controversial teachings called *Creation Spirituality*; and Father Thomas Reese of Society of Jesus who resigned as editor of the Jesuit monthly magazine *America* in 2005 due to pressure from Vatican officials, who were concerned over his editorial policies that allowed coverage of opinions contrary to church teachings.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Küng was unable to attend this conference due to health problems, but ACC board member Anthony Padovano presented a videotaped interview he conducted with Küng focused on the Reform Movement. Matthew Fox, who left the Catholic Church following censure, was not originally on the ACC program, but he agreed to substitute for Kathleen Kennedy Townsend who cancelled shortly before the conference.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the historical development of the doctrine of individual primacy, see James L. Carroll, "On authority, How American ideals have changed the Catholic Church," *Boston College Magazine*, Spring, 2007.

CORPUS includes many members with theological credentials, especially Anthony Padovano, who is a principal leader of the reform movement as a whole, and whose periodic essays provide a theological foundation and strategic analysis for the movement's evolving focus and priorities. DignityUSA draws on the work of a range of gay theologians who defend the morality of GLBT lifestyles, especially Daniel Helminiak and John J. McNeill, both of whom are resigned Roman Catholic priests.

Protestant New Testament theologian Walter Wink's landmark biblical scholarship offers an important theological justification for the Reform Movement by interpreting the teachings of Jesus as advocating nonviolent resistance to injustice. Most notably, Wink claims that Jesus' admonition to "turn the other cheek" has been misinterpreted as advocating passivity in the face of a hostile attack.<sup>35</sup> Wink explains that in Hebrew culture, the use of the left hand was restricted. Hence, a person struck on the right cheek would weaken the blow of the assailant by turning the other cheek because the assailant would be forced to strike with the back of his/her right hand. Consequently, the blow would have less force, and this gesture would evoke less hostility from the assailant than a counter-attack.<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that Wink's work has such obvious relevance for the Reform Movement, it is only occasionally cited at reform gatherings, but it is often referenced by liberal Catholic theologians in publications on peace and justice issues.

In contrast to reform groups, church hierarchs are less likely to cite theologians in their position statements. Since popes represent the ultimate authority on church doctrine and governance, they generally cite historical church documents to bolster their positions rather than the work of contemporary theologians. Papal encyclicals and rulings usually receive strong support from

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<sup>35</sup> Walter Wink, *The Third Way: Reclaiming Jesus' Nonviolent Alternative* (The Netherlands: International Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Wink's work reinterprets numerous teachings of Jesus in a similar manner, emphasizing that Jesus was advocating, not passivity, but strategies that allowed some ability to resist injustice, while also providing a measure of protection against retribution.

conservative Catholic organizations such as the Cardinal Newman Society or the Catholic League.<sup>37</sup>

### **Who Is Winning the Culture Wars within Catholicism?**

At first glance one could easily conclude that the Vatican is winning its struggle to suppress liberal reformers, given that the Reform Movement is in decline and that Vatican policies increasingly reflect ultra-conservative principles. Predictably, the power of conservative factions within the Church has strengthened as the two most recent popes have appointed almost exclusively conservative cardinals and bishops to replace liberals who have died or retired.<sup>38</sup> The high media profile of the conservative Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI has likely heightened the impression of the American public that Roman Catholicism is a staunchly conservative institution. In contrast, many Americans are unaware of the Catholic Reform Movement, which is composed of small, poorly-funded organizations that receive media coverage only during attention grabbing events such as the clergy abuse crisis.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Although conservative Catholics support most Vatican policies, many disagree with the Vatican's opposition to capital punishment, the War in Iraq, and its support for many social welfare programs. Conservatives often use the label "cafeteria Catholics" to describe liberal reformers who reject Church teachings on celibacy, women's ordination, homosexuality, etc. Liberal reformers respond to these criticisms by noting that conservatives have their own brand of "cafeteria Catholicism" that cherry picks which church teachings it accepts.

<sup>38</sup> David Gibson, 2006, *Ibid.* Pope John Paul II appointed all but three of the 117 cardinals who elected Benedict. See also Philip Pullella, "Pope puts stamp on church future with new cardinals," November 20, 2010, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40270553/ns/world\\_news/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/40270553/ns/world_news/) (accessed January 5, 2011). According to Pullella, Pope Benedict has already appointed 50 of the 121 cardinals who will select his successor, thereby all but ensuring that his successor will be a conservative pontiff.

<sup>39</sup> This assertion is supported by my own interaction with professional colleagues and friends, who often are unaware of Catholic reform groups and social movements of Catholic liberals inspired by liberation, feminist, and environmentalist theologies.

In many respects, the rightward shift of the Vatican has been accompanied by a decline of its influence over American Catholics, who express increasingly liberal views. Opinion polls of American Catholics reveal ever-increasingly levels of support for most of the reform agenda of liberals, including married priests, women's ordination, contraception, GLBT rights, and an increased role for laity in church governance.<sup>40</sup> Conservative prelates were probably dismayed by a recent poll indicating American Catholics are more supportive of gay rights and gay marriage than other denominations and Americans overall, despite the fact that the Vatican is staunchly opposed to homosexual lifestyles and same-sex marriage.<sup>41</sup>

The growing divergence of views between the Vatican and American Catholics has contributed to the growing exodus of American Catholics. According to a Pew Forum poll of 35,000 Americans, religiosity among younger Catholics is on the decline, and Catholicism nationwide is experiencing the sharpest decline in membership of all denominations.<sup>42</sup> This poll revealed that defecting Catholics (who constitute 10% of American adults) cite dissatisfaction with church teachings and lack of spiritual nourishment as reasons for their choice.<sup>43</sup> In some measure, the rapidly declining support for Vatican teachings on social issues

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<sup>40</sup> William D'Antonio et. al., *American Catholics Today, New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Public Religion Research Institute, Report. Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait from Recent Research, March 22, 2011, <http://publicreligion.org/research/2011/03/for-catholics-open-attitudes-on-gay-issues> (accessed July 1, 2005).

This poll revealed that 43% of Catholics favor marriage for gay and lesbian couples and 31% favor civil unions. A majority of Catholics (56%) do not consider sexual relations between homosexuals a sin, while only 46% of the U.S. population do not regard it as sinful.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Reese, "The hidden exodus: Catholics becoming Protestants," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 15, 2001, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. More specifically, 65% of those former Catholics who have become disaffiliated cite "stopped believing in religious teachings" as a reason for leaving Catholicism. In contrast, Catholics who join Evangelical and mainline Protestant churches placed more emphasis on "unmet spiritual needs" than doctrinal issues.



reflects the effectiveness of reform groups, whom several scholars credit with cultivating more liberal social views among American Catholics.<sup>44</sup> Thus, while conservative papacies have tightened their control over internal church governance, their influence over the views of American Catholics is exhibiting a steep decline.

For its part, the Reform Movement can point to a few modest but significant victories vis-à-vis the Vatican, thereby contradicting the cliché “No one takes on the Vatican and wins.” These accomplishments can be categorized according to the three types of resistance strategies identified by Sharp.<sup>45</sup> The first type is protest and persuasion, which includes direct appeals to the conscience and intelligence of Church officials. Virtually every reform organization has made frequent use of this method by circulating petitions, requesting meetings with church hierarchs, and publishing petitions in major American newspapers, including full-page ads in the *New York Times* signed by diverse lists of distinguished American Catholics willing to express support for controversial policies, including reproductive rights, a more inclusive priesthood, and greater accountability and responsiveness to clergy abuse victims.<sup>46</sup> Although many reformers now acknowledge the futility of outreach to church officials, they still feel compelled to formally protest particularly egregious acts such as censure of prominent reformers or objectionable statements such

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<sup>44</sup> David Van Biema, “Is Liberal Catholicism Dead?” *Time Online Edition*, May 23, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1737323,00.html> (accessed July 1, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Gene Sharp, 1973, *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Angela Bonavoglia, *Good Catholic Girls: How Women Are Leading the Fight to Change the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005). The most famous of these ads was sponsored in 1984 by Catholics for Choice (CFC), which “serves as a moral voice for Catholics who believe that the Catholic tradition supports a woman’s right to follow her conscience in matters of sexuality and reproductive health” (<http://catholicforchoice.org>). CFC’s ad “A Diversity of Opinion Regarding Abortion Exists among Committed Catholics” was signed by 97 prominent Catholics. Predictably, the ad evoked a harsh response from the Vatican and of the two priests, two religious brothers, and twenty-six nuns who signed the ad, only two nuns refused the Vatican order to recant or leave their religious order.

as the Vatican statement (cited above) equating the sinfulness of clergy abuse and women's ordination.

Despite reformers persistent use of protest and persuasion strategies, the Reform Movement has lost considerable ground on their reform agenda since the movement began over four decades ago. In the early 1970s, Pope John Paul II had not yet issued his 1994 statement *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* which ruled out even the discussion of women's ordination; the Vatican had not yet forbidden GLBT groups from meeting in Catholic parishes; the CDF had not yet censured Vatican II theologians such as Hans Küng and Leonardo Boff; and the Vatican's campaign to roll back the reforms of Vatican II was not fully apparent.<sup>47</sup> In fact, in the 1980s, liberal bishops in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) still held a slight edge over conservatives.<sup>48</sup> During this period liberal bishops in the United States halted a Vatican effort to depose Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, an unrepentant liberal who took bold stances on issues of peace and justice, including withholding half of his income tax in 1982 to protest the stockpiling of nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup>

Reformers can claim a few modest victories resulting from their use of noncooperation, the second type of nonviolent resistance, which is more intense and confrontational than mere protest because it involves deliberate forms of disobedience or defiance. Acts of noncooperation represent a dramatic about-face by reformers who chose to breach long-standing norms that protected the church's reputation at all costs. Reformers' new-found courage and boldness were stoked by their discovery that the church's codes of loyalty and secrecy enabled bishops to transfer

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<sup>47</sup>See David Gibson, 2003, *Ibid*, 57. For example, Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs), which Vatican II documents designed to become "deliberative bodies" in parish governance, were scaled back in 1983 to give PPCs a "consultative vote only," and in 1997 they were required to have a priest preside at all PPC meetings.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth A. Briggs, *Holy Siege: The Year that Shook Catholic America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid*.

abusive priest from parish to parish, thereby facilitating their access to victims.

One significant example of noncooperation is the advocacy of reform groups, especially VOTF, in support of legal settlements for clergy abuse victims and legislation to extend statutes of limitations at the state level for filing abuse claims. Church hierarchs cannot dismiss court orders for testimony and for internal documents in the same fashion that they ignored the appeals of reform groups. Lytton asserts “clergy abuse litigation was essential in bringing the [clergy abuse] scandal to light in the first place, focusing attention on the need for institutional reform, and spurring church leaders and public officials into action.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the costs of clergy abuse settlements are estimated to surpass \$3 billion in the United States alone.<sup>51</sup> These mounting costs have created a strong incentive for church officials to adopt preventative measures. Reform groups have also solicited extensive media coverage of the abuse crisis by issuing press releases, speaking out in media interviews, and holding demonstrations outside diocesan headquarters or cathedrals. Several analysts argue that pressure generated by media coverage became a critical factor in convincing bishops to reform policies regarding abusive priests, especially USCCB’s Dallas Charter for the Protection of Children.<sup>52</sup>

Another instance of noncooperation is the vigiling campaign originating in Boston in 2004, whereby parishioners defied Archdiocesan closure decrees by occupying their parishes on a twenty-four hour basis so that church officials could seize control of parish property only by calling on police to arrest vigilers.

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<sup>50</sup> Timothy Lytton, *Holding Bishops Accountable: How Lawsuits Helped the Catholic Church Confront Clergy Sexual Abuse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>51</sup> Robert J. McClory, “Battle fatigue: five years into the sex abuse crisis; some Catholics are growing weary, while others are cautiously optimistic,” *The American Catholic*, August 2007.

<sup>52</sup> See Thomas Doyle, Richard Sipe, and Patrick Wall, *Sex, Priests and Secret Codes: The Catholic Church’s 2000-year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse* (Los Angeles: Volt Press, 2006). See also Leon J. Podles, *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church* (Baltimore: Crossland Press, 2008).

Following the negative fallout from the abuse crisis, Boston Archbishop Sean O'Malley was reluctant to engage in a high-profile confrontation with vigiling parishioners, and consequently, postponed selling parish buildings until vigilers appealed closure through Vatican courts. The Boston vigils, which occurred in twelve parishes, had a contagious effect as similar vigils were organized in western Massachusetts and at least five other states. These vigiling campaigns can claim a few victories, especially in Boston where a review board convinced the archdiocese to reverse roughly one-quarter of its closure decrees.<sup>53</sup> In 2010 parishioners from the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Parish in Springfield, Massachusetts and the San Martin de Porres Mission in Dayton, Oregon convinced their bishops to lift closure decrees. Another notable victory occurred in 2011 when the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy ruled that bishops had not adequately justified their decision to sell twelve parish buildings in several dioceses.<sup>54</sup> The ruling required eleven buildings in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania to remain open, but their status as a parish remains uncertain.<sup>55</sup> The vigiling movement is hopeful that this decision will inhibit future parish closures, which many have predicted will increase in dioceses throughout the United States, given ongoing demographic shifts in the Catholic population and financial difficulties resulting from abuse settlements, the economic recession, and defections by disaffected Catholics. Hence, the anti-closure movement may attract new supporters among Catholics eager to preserve their parishes. Unlike other reform groups, the vigiling movement attracts a diverse group of conservative, moderate, and liberal Catholics who seem more concerned with the fate of their parish than Vatican politics.

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<sup>53</sup> This decision represented a partial victory for many of these parishes because some were merged with other parishes or allowed to remain open as a chapel rather than as a full-service parish.

<sup>54</sup> Jerry Filteau, "Appeals to reopen closed U.S. parishes see partial victories: Vatican ruling on closed churches called landmark," *National Catholic Reporter*, March 18, 2011, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. The order prohibited selling or demolishing eleven church buildings, but did not require they remain parishes. Bishops also have the right to appeal.

Increasingly, reformers are crafting parallel institutions, the third type of nonviolent resistance, which represent prefigurative models of a future church by embodying and expanding on the visions and objectives of Vatican II.<sup>56</sup> These parallel institutions represent a range of worship communities and educational centers created by liberal Catholics including the following:

- Eucharistic communities that employ canonically-active Roman Catholic priests but gain some degree of autonomy by operating outside parish structures.
- Independent communities, parishes, and dioceses that operate outside of Vatican control and refer to themselves as “Catholic” but not “Roman Catholic.”
- Independent seminary-like organizations such as Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) and the Diocese of One Spirit, which provide theological and pastoral training and ordination for women and others excluded from ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

These recently formed communities are primarily small grass-roots groups with few members and minimal resources. However, Spiritus Christi Parish in Rochester, New York, regarded as prophetic by many in the Reform Movement, claims over 1,500 members and a budget of almost \$1.7 million.<sup>57</sup> The largest network of independent communities, Ecumenical Catholic Communion, claims twenty-eight communities in the United States and seven in Europe.

Despite their lack of visibility and small size, these parallel organizations do represent at least a potential source of leverage for the Reform Movement, in part because they provide liberal

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<sup>56</sup> The creation of independent Catholic communities by liberal reformers is not an original or unique historical development. As far back as the Eighteenth Century, there have been Catholic parishes in the United States that severed ties with the Vatican. There are also several networks of independent parishes affiliated with the Old Catholic movement and the Polish National Church.

<sup>57</sup> For more information on Spiritus Christi, consult their website: (<http://spirituschristi.org>).

Catholics with a supportive community where they can practice Roman Catholicism on their own terms. These communities pride themselves on their inclusive ministry which features female, married, and GLBT persons as priests and does not restrict access to Eucharist.<sup>58</sup> These communities presently include in the range of 10,000-20,000 members, but have been attracting a steady stream of new members and communities over the past decade.<sup>59</sup> If these groups succeed in attracting a substantial number of liberal Catholics, they could become a threat to the stability and financial viability of at least some parishes and dioceses in the United States.

In the short term, however, the emergence of these communities may have contributed to the chorus of calls for ordination of women and married persons on the part of priests and theologians who are concerned about the consequences of an ever-worsening priest shortage and shrinking numbers of practicing Catholics in their communities. Although reform groups have been advocating for decades for a “more inclusive priesthood,” this long-awaited goal is no longer a pipe dream since many women and married priests now perform their ministry in independent communities. Far from hiding their “illicit” ministries, these priests proclaim their ministries in a celebratory “in your face” style that bears not the slightest hint of apology or fear of retribution. In particular, Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP) (whose priests have been excommunicated by Vatican decree), has been adept at attracting massive media coverage of its ordination ceremonies that are occurring primarily in the United States and Europe.<sup>60</sup> In fact, *Time Magazine* listed an article about RCWP entitled “Women

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<sup>58</sup> The Roman Catholic Church has rules restricting access to the Eucharist to baptized Catholics and denying the Eucharist to divorced Catholics who have not received an annulment and to excommunicated Catholics.

<sup>59</sup> Kautzer, Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> RCWP has ordained over 100 women as deacons and priests primarily in the United States and Europe.

Priests in Spite of the Vatican” as one of the Top Ten Religious Stories in 2010.<sup>61</sup>

Many reformers have been energized by the increasingly bold statements and actions by Catholic priests regarding ordination. In the United States, Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest, who was expelled from his order in 2011, faces probable excommunication following his refusal to recant his participation in a RCWP ordination ceremony. Reform groups petitions supporting Bourgeois included over 15,000 signatures, including 150 priests.<sup>62</sup> CTA also sponsored a 34 city speaking tour featuring Bourgeois in 2011.

Following the example of priests in European countries, American priests have formed a new Association of U.S. Catholic priests designed to provide “fraternal support” and “create a collegial voice so priests can speak in a united way.”<sup>63</sup> The 250 priests who responded to the Association’s survey indicated their top reform priority was an emphasis on Vatican II reforms regarding more participatory church structures.

Religious sisters in the United States have overshadowed American priests in their defiance of Vatican authority, resulting in a decision by the Vatican in 2009 to conduct a “doctrinal investigation” of the largest U.S. women religious organization, the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR).<sup>64</sup> In explaining the purpose of the investigation, William Joseph

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<sup>61</sup> *The Huffington Post* also listed the documentary on Roman Catholic Womenpriests entitled *Pink Smoke over the Vatican* as number five on its list of “The 10 Greatest Finds” in 2010.”

<sup>62</sup> Erin Saiz Hanna, *Father Roy Bourgeois and international delegation of women’s ordination leaders hold press conference, March on Vatican to deliver petition signed by 15,000 supporters* [Press Release], October 17, 2011, <http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/371/42/> (accessed December 15, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Robert McClory, “U.S. priests form new national association,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 15, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/us-priests-form-new-national-association> (accessed September 22, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Fox, “Vatican investigates U.S. women religious leadership,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 21, 2009, <http://ncronline.org/women/vatican-investigates-us-women-religious-leadership> (accessed June 28, 2009).

Cardinal Levada pointed to concerns about the extent to which American sisters fail to promote church teachings on three important doctrines, namely, homosexuality, a male priesthood, and salvation for non-Catholics.<sup>65</sup> Reportedly, the vast majority of U.S. women in religious orders “did not comply with a request to answer all questions in a document of inquiry” that made up the first phase of this study.<sup>66</sup> For their part, the liberal reform groups have issued press releases and petitions decrying the investigation. By 2010, the Vatican realized its investigation had backfired, generating ill-will and anger among many sisters who are growing increasingly discontent with their second-class status within the Church.<sup>67</sup> The Vatican responded with a few conciliatory gestures, so that it is now unlikely that the investigation will result in any form of censure.<sup>68</sup>

In Australia, Bishop William Morris of the diocese of Toowoomba, Queensland was forced to resign following a five year investigation of his statements urging consideration of women’s ordination and other liberal reforms.<sup>69</sup> In response, the Australian National Council of Priests issued a “ringing defense”

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> John Allen, “Tobin urges ‘strategy of reconciliation,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, December 24, 2010, 5. It should be noted that Roman Catholic sisters are considered “lay persons” under canon law and have no collective voice in church governance.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Richard McBrien, “Infallibility on women’s ordination in question, Essays in theology,” *National Catholic Reporter*, July 29, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/print/25141> (accessed July 29, 2011). McBrien states that Morris was fired due to the “constant drumbeat of criticism on the part of ultraconservative Catholics.” In most circumstances, the Vatican is reluctant to depose bishops.



of Bishop Morris.<sup>70</sup> Over 1,000 Catholics in Australia signed a petition demanding an explanation for the firing of Morris.<sup>71</sup>

The most cohesive and intensive rebellion against the Vatican coalesced in Europe in 2011 where Cardinal Christoph Schöborn acknowledges the Austrian Church is at risk of schism following the growing conflict over a reform manifesto *Appeal to Disobedience* that was signed by over 400 Austrian priests and deacons.<sup>72</sup> The manifesto called for dialogue on mandatory celibacy, ordination of women, the Eucharist for the divorced and remarried, and more democratic church structures. Signers pledged to openly defy church rule by serving Eucharist to Protestants and divorced and remarried Catholics and allowing lay persons to preach or conduct liturgies. Polls suggest that 76% of Austrians support these reforms.<sup>73</sup>

Elsewhere in Europe, clergy and laity alike are voicing demands such as a more inclusive priesthood and democratic structures as follows:

- The Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland supported calls by former Bishop of Derry Edward Daly to waive the celibacy requirement as a solution to a growing priest shortage.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Laurie Goodstein, "In 3 Countries, Challenging the Vatican on Female Priests," *New York Times*, July 22, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/23/world/23priest.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed July 22, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> "Hundreds sign petition against bishop's forced retirement," ABC News, July 25, 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-07-25/hundreds-sign-petition-against-bishops-forced-retirement/2809098> (accessed October 12, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Giacomo Galeazzi, "Austria: The Church is dangerously close to schism," *Vatican Insider*, September 18, 2011, <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/inquiries-and-interviews/detail/articolo/austria-8195/> (accessed September 22, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Patsy McGarry, "Priest group backs calls for end to celibacy," *The Irish Times*, September 14, 2011, <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0914/1224304082694.html> (accessed September 22, 2011).

- Swiss Catholic Bishop Markus Büchel called for far-reaching church reforms, including the ordination of women, and recommended ordination of women deacons as a positive step forward.<sup>75</sup>
- In Portugal Cardinal Patriarch Jose da Cruz Policarpo of Lisbon, proclaimed that “there is no fundamental theological obstacle” to women’s ordination within Roman Catholicism, but warned that it must be postponed because such a measure would evoke a “series of reactions.”<sup>76</sup> Policarpo was subsequently summoned to the Vatican for a discussion regarding his statement.<sup>77</sup>
- In 2007 the Dutch Dominicans, who have a reputation as “exceptionally progressive,” distributed a booklet entitled *Church and Ministry* that proposed lay persons be allowed to preside at liturgies when priests are not available due to the growing priest shortage.<sup>78</sup> Although this proposal has no prospect of being approved by the Vatican, lay-led liturgies have become commonplace in the Netherlands.<sup>79</sup>
- In Germany, 144 leading theologians from Germany, Switzerland, and Austria issued a public letter

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<sup>75</sup> Anthony Ruff, “Swiss Catholic Bishop speaks out for women’s ordination,” April 24, 2011, <http://www.praytelligblog.com/index.php/2011/04/24/swiss-catholic-bishop-speaks-out-for> (accessed July 29, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> Andrea Tornielli, “Policarpo summoned to Vatican for his statements on the ordination of women priests” *Vatican Insider*, August 9, 2001, <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/world-news/detail/articolo/policarpo-sacerdozio-6779/> (accessed August 10, 2011).

<sup>77</sup> Policarpo’s statement is considered significant because it contradicts Pope Benedict XVI’s assertion that the prohibition against ordination of women is an infallible teaching.

<sup>78</sup> Robert McClory, “The Dutch plan: Will innovation save this church? Amsterdam and other cities in Holland,” *National Catholic Reporter*, [http://natcath.org/NCR\\_Online/archives/2/2007d/121407d/12407a.htm](http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives/2/2007d/121407d/12407a.htm) (accessed February 16, 2008).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. McClory reports that in 2004 in the Netherlands there were 630 lay led *Word and Communion* services in contrast to 1,900 Sunday Masses.

proclaiming they “could no longer remain silent” following the “unparalleled crisis” stemming from clergy abuse revelations in 2010, which led to massive defections by Catholics in these countries.<sup>80</sup> The letter cites many of the same reforms advocated by Austrian priests regarding more democratic church structures and more inclusive policies on Communion and the priesthood. This call for reform evoked a petition in support of these theologians that was signed by 17,000 German Catholics, including 213 priests in the Freiburg diocese,<sup>81</sup>

- In Belgium 6,000 Catholics signed a “Believers Speak Out” manifesto calling for reforms allowing women and married priests and permission for lay persons to preside as pastors.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

The growing conflict between conservative Church hierarchs and liberal reformers reveal a deeply polarized institution, in which the seemingly invincible authority of the Papacy is eroding due to its inability to retain the loyalty and obedience of large sectors of its membership. In particular, American and Western European Catholics are increasingly adopting liberal views on the teachings most emphasized by the Vatican, including reproductive issues,

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<sup>80</sup> Paul Hockenos, “144 theologians confront hierarchy: Blunt letter says reforms are necessary in light of scandals, priest shortage,” *National Catholic Reporter*, February 18, 2011, 8. The signers of this letter include many prominent theologians and more than one-third of the Catholic theology professors in Germany.

<sup>81</sup> William Lindsey, “Reform Movement Widens Even More: German Priests’ Group Makes Statement of Support for Theologians’ Reform Petition,” February 21, 2011, <http://opentabernacle.wordpress.com/2011/02/21/reform-movement-widens-ever-more-ger...> (accessed November 12, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> John A. Dick, “Belgian Catholics issue reform manifesto,” *National Catholic Reporter*, December 2, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/print/27869> (accessed January 12, 2012).

homosexuality, and a more inclusive priesthood.<sup>83</sup> Although the Reform Movement has lost ground on its efforts to reform Catholicism from within, its efforts are increasingly devoted to creating parallel worship communities that provide an alternative to what reformers describe as stifling and uninspiring liturgies in local parishes.

This ongoing battle over the future of Catholicism reflects many of the central tenets of nonviolent theory as proposed by Sharp, which points to the fluid and unstable nature of even the most seemingly unassailable forms of power. Despite the Vatican's deeply-entrenched and near-monarchical control over Church affairs, the Papacy can no longer rely on its members to simply "pay, pray and obey," particularly since the credibility of the Vatican has been damaged by the clergy abuse and finance scandals.<sup>84</sup> Also consistent with Sharp's theory, the Vatican's choice of highly punitive policies toward dissenters and its refusal to engage in dialogue (which some have termed "moral" and "psychological" violence) have backfired. The Vatican's advocacy for more just, humane, and egalitarian policies in the international arena is undermined by its unwillingness to apply these principles to internal church governance. Far from strengthening the unity of Catholics, the Vatican's insistence on unwavering obedience has led to massive defections by liberal and moderate Catholics.

Although church officials use the "schismatic" label to discredit dissidents, reformers in turn are applying the schismatic

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<sup>83</sup> Anthony Wilhelm, *Christ among us: a modern presentation of the Catholic faith for adults* (New York: HarperCollins: 1996).

<sup>84</sup> The issue of financial accountability has been on the reform agenda since the movement began in the 1970s. A number of financial scandals have surfaced in both the Vatican and American dioceses over the past four decades. More recently, journalist Jason Berry published a book entitled *Render unto Rome, the Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church* (New York: Crown, 2011), which documents widespread financial malfeasance within the church facilitated by secrecy, lack of transparency and accountability, and the self-serving and deceitful practices of some hierarchs. Berry, whose previous works include two books on the clergy abuse crisis, is a frequent presenter at reform gatherings and his most recent book has heightened the interest of reformers in financial issues.

label to the hierarchy itself due to its abandonment and reversal of many of the formal church policies established by Vatican II. In fact, Vatican II scholar Hans Küng predicted that, if the Church continues to be led by archconservatives, it will eventually become sect-like by barricading itself from the contemporary world and rejecting any accommodation with liberals. At a 2011 reform gathering, Küng warned that to avoid being “left behind completely and becom[ing] a big sect, the Vatican must be willing to move forward” rather than resist the modern world.<sup>85</sup> Already the Vatican’s views are increasingly out of step with the views of many Catholics across the globe, especially well-educated persons who are accustomed to democratic governance and liberal social reforms. Thus, both sides claim they represent the authentic Catholic tradition which is undermined by their opponents’ sect-like behavior.

While liberal reforms have lost their battle to influence Vatican policies, at least in the short-term, the Vatican in turn has lost its battle for the hearts and minds of a growing numbers of Catholics. Theologians can debate which side of the culture wars can most accurately be labeled *schismatic*, but the future of Roman Catholicism will be shaped by the choices of Catholics from all walks of life who will choose if, and under what circumstances, they practice their faith.

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<sup>85</sup> Tapes and transcripts of Küng’s interview at the American Catholic Council (ACC) in 2011 are available from the ACC website (<http://americancatholiccouncil.org>).

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## **CHRISTIANITY**

# **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE**

**Ron Large**

It is almost certainly a truism to say that Martin Luther King saw justice as one of the essential elements of his vision of a moral society. His goal of creating the Beloved Community revolved around the theme of justice that served as the foundation for social relationships. King's language reverberates with the call for justice. In the Dream speech, King employs the word justice eight times. His speech opposing the war in Vietnam calls for justice six times. King's Letter From Birmingham Jail asks for justice on twelve occasions. If we factor in the additional element of injustice, King's rhetoric becomes even more pronounced in its demand for justice. This essay will examine King's use of the term justice with a specific investigation of the practical dimensions of what King means by justice. Beginning with an analysis of the theoretical basis for justice in King's view of God, human unity, and Jesus, I will move to the practical aspects of King's view of justice as expressed in his criticisms of racism, militarism, and poverty. These three levels form the basis of King's social critique and establish the basic parameters for the realization of justice. While I will discuss racism and militarism, the focus of my analysis will be

on King's attack on poverty and his corresponding call for economic justice.

### **The Moral Reality of God**

King's understanding of God lies at the heart of his plea for justice. For King, God is the creator and sustainer of human existence and of all creation. This connection between God and creation, however, represents more than a simple statement of fact or the neutral recitation of a theological point. King defines creation and human existence as moral constructs that derive from the ethical nature of God. For King, God is more than a theological abstraction. God exists as a moral reality that underlies the very basis of creation itself. Thus King views God's personal presence as the fundamental moral essence that permits creation to exist in the first place. Creation cannot sustain itself apart from God's accompanying moral framework that envelops the creative act. From this basic assumption, King then argues that justice represents God's creative, moral power. This connection between God and justice allows King to claim a relationship between justice and the future of humanity. King clearly expresses the relationship between God and justice at the mass meeting on the first day of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He tells his audience:

We are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. If we are wrong, justice is a lie.<sup>1</sup>

King further expands the connection of the boycott with justice as he places justice at the center of humanity's future. Holding that

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Vol III Birth of a New Age*, edited by Stewart Burns, Susan Carson, Peter Holloran, and Dana Powell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 73.

“God has made the universe to be based on a moral law,”<sup>2</sup> King offers one of his favorite comments “that the arc of the moral universe although long, is bending toward justice.”<sup>3</sup> Since justice is both the foundation and the future of human existence, King concludes that humanity will be judged on whether justice is present or absent from our lives and actions. As a consequence, King ties justice to the way in which our lives and actions express or deny the essential unity of human existence.

A second element of justice revolves around King’s vision of human relationships that shape the moral contours of conduct. This vision stems from King’s belief that human beings are created in God’s image, an image that flows from God’s own moral nature. Consequently in order to be moral, human actions must reflect and uphold the image of God in others. King then uses this moral relation to emphasize the significance of human unity. If all are created in God’s image then all share the claim that the image bestows. This claim, grounded in God’s creation, establishes the worth and dignity of every person. It binds us together in unity and serves as a moral barometer to check the excesses of individual actions and, in particular, social policy. Actions and policies reflect justice in so far as they uphold the unity, dignity, and worth that God’s image demands. Perhaps the classic example of King’s emphasis on unity surfaces in the Letter From Birmingham Jail. Noting the reasons for his presence in Birmingham, King calls for recognition that we are all connected. “Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states.... We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”<sup>4</sup> King’s Dream Speech also echoes the call for unity in its plea that “we cannot walk alone.”<sup>5</sup> King also develops the human connection in his understanding of Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther King, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Vol II Rediscovering Precious Values*, edited by Ralph Luker, Penny Russell, and Peter Holloran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 252.

<sup>3</sup> King, *Papers Vol III*, 486.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther King, *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York: NAL, 1963), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King, *Testament of Hope*, edited by James Washington (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 218.

Like God, King views Jesus through an ethical lens. Moving beyond a strictly theological understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, King places the salvific significance of Jesus in a pattern of ethical conduct, in a life that reveals the moral center of God's creation. Jesus reveals the moral nature of God and thus offers a path toward an understanding of human activity and a means by which to judge social policy. The good news of Jesus encapsulates a plea for justice. In addition to love, King stresses the social significance of Jesus' teachings. King refuses to separate love and justice into distinct compartments where love resides in individual relationships while justice reserves its work for social interactions. For King, love and justice form a partnership in which each one influences the other. Without this connection, neither love nor justice can be fully realized and we end up with what King refers to as a powerless morality or an immoral power<sup>6</sup>. Justice becomes for King what love demands in society. We see this more clearly as King associates Jesus' with the Social Gospel Movement in an effort to establish the social, political nature of Jesus' teachings. Looking further than an individual ethic as a way to express Jesus' love, King brings Jesus into the public arena through an assessment of the social demands of the gospel. Most strikingly, King interprets the resurrection in moral terms that unites Jesus and justice. The resurrection signifies God's acceptance of Jesus, an acceptance that affirms the teachings of Jesus and their social implications. In his April 21, 1957 sermon "Questions that Easter Answers," King examines the meaning of Easter calling it "a day above all days" because Easter offers "God's opportunity" and "affirms that what stops us does not stop God."<sup>7</sup> Easter affirms life's meaning and directs us towards justice as an expression of that meaning. Reflecting on the despair of the crucifixion, King asks "is the universe on the side of justice and goodness?"<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther King, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Vol VI Advocate of the Social Gospel*, edited by Susan Carson, Susan Englander, Troy Jackson, and Gerald Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 284.

<sup>8</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 288.



resurrection offers the answer as “history takes on a new meaning.”<sup>9</sup> It is a meaning that shows the transition from injustice to justice so that the “forces of justice must finally come to the light and must finally come to the forefront. And the forces of darkness and evil must finally pass away.”<sup>10</sup> For King, the resurrection reveals the present reality of and the future hope for justice.

### **The Moral Requirement of Social Justice**

Thus King combines the focus on God, human unity, and Jesus in order to establish the focal point of justice as a constituent element of Christianity. Stated more bluntly, there is no Christianity without an emphasis on justice. Love is extremely important for King, but love alone does not offer sufficient depth to express the full nature of King’s understanding of Christianity. Jesus again sets the stage for King. In an August 2, 1953 sermon, King rejects the notion “that Jesus placed no emphasis on these earthly needs” of “physical well-being, economic security, food, clothing and health.” Those who ignore these needs “are so absorbed in a future good ‘over yonder’ that they are content with the present evils over here.”<sup>11</sup> The following week, King proclaims that “a passionate concern for social justice must be a concern of the Christian religion.”<sup>12</sup> King develops the concern more deliberately in his description of the nature of religion in his book *Stride Toward Freedom*. Here King castigates a view of religion that ignores the earthly, social needs of people. “Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion. Such religion is the kind the Marxists like to

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<sup>9</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 289.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 149.

see – an opiate of the people.”<sup>13</sup> King specifically and deliberately places Christianity on the side of justice. By doing so he delineates the social function of the Church and places the Church squarely in the midst of society. If justice is to be the social expression of faith then Christianity and the Church must reflect a judgment regarding the reality of justice. In his sermon “A Knock at Midnight,” King states that “the Church must be reminded once again that it is not to be the master or the servant of the state, but the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state,--never its tool.”<sup>14</sup> King repeats this emphasis on the importance of conscience in the Letter from Birmingham Jail.<sup>15</sup> King seeks to place Christianity firmly in the prophetic tradition that shapes so much of his thought on the social role of faith. It is a tradition that shapes King’s calls for justice and his vision of what justice finally entails, the Beloved Community.

Without going into too much detail on the specifics of King’s understanding of the Beloved Community, we can note that King views the Beloved Community as the visible, although partial, representation of the Kingdom of God. Given his sense that Christianity is inherently social and that justice defines the social dimension of Christianity, King thus links the Beloved Community to the specifics of justice. The Beloved Community becomes the way in which the Kingdom of God exists in the world through the attainment of greater levels of justice. Consequently the Beloved Community is both the foundation of justice in the present and the hope for justice in the future. The community acquires the status of a realized eschatology; it is the already and not yet of God’s social revelation. Seeking justice is what God demands and what King sees as a requirement of faith. It is for this reason that King refers to those who struggle for justice as “co-workers with God.”<sup>16</sup> This partnership structures King’s vision of the true nature of Christianity. It is a vision that alters the polite, moderate

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther King, *Stride Toward Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 36.

<sup>14</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 500.

<sup>15</sup> King, *Testament of Hope*, 291, 294, 295, 297, 302.

<sup>16</sup> King, 296.

complacency that King comes to criticize. It is a vision that thrusts the faithful into the public arena. It is a vision that shouts the challenge of the prophet Amos to “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24). It is a vision that clamors for social redemption, a vision that King refers to as a revolution of values.

### **The Moral Revolution for Justice**

King describes the 1963 civil rights protests in Birmingham and by extension the March on Washington as a second American revolution. These events stand as a critique of the first revolution’s failure to implement the underlying promise of freedom and equality. The civil rights movement represents the unfinished revolution, the promise of justice for all. The less quoted and less well-known opening passages of the Dream Speech provide King with a critical forum from which he can express his frustrations and disappointments with the languishing promise. They are worth quoting at length.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men - yes, black men as well as white men - would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked "insufficient funds." However, we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. Therefore, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice.<sup>17</sup>

These words begin King’s rhetorical march to his dream “that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 217.

creed – we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”<sup>18</sup> King’s revolution differs slightly from the first in that it seeks not independence as separation, but rather justice as unity. Independence may open the door to justice, but justice is still the unfulfilled promise. Fulfillment comes not from force of arms, but through the revolution of values, the moral revolution, that King proposes for individuals and the nation as a whole. King’s speech on the Vietnam War pleads for this new revolution. “I am convinced that if we as a nation are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.”<sup>19</sup> The revolution of values specifically characterizes King’s hope for justice by altering the perceptual framework through which people understand themselves and their relationships with each other. The revolution provides the focus for King’s three-fold social critique that challenges the continuing injustices of racism, militarism, and poverty. These injustices block the promise and stand against the dream. Thus King sees his revolution as a direct confrontation with these injustices. It is nothing less than a struggle for social redemption.

Before examining King’s critique of racism, militarism, and poverty, the basis of the critique needs to be established. King’s revolution of values attempts to shift the focus of social evaluation away from quantitative measurements to qualitative ones. King’s basic point is that these injustices treat people as things, as means to others’ ends. They deny and distort the humanity of those so treated. In opposition, King wants a way to assess the moral health of a nation. His touchstone becomes the welfare of others. The revolution of values looks to what is needed to ensure human flourishing. Here is King’s movement toward justice. Using categories proposed by Isaiah Berlin, Jose-Antonio Orosco employs the distinction between negative and positive liberty as a way to understand King’s views.<sup>20</sup> “Negative liberty is best

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>20</sup> Jose-Antonio Orosco, “Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Conception of Freedom and Radical Democracy,” in *Journal of Social Philosophy* 32.3 (Fall 2001): 387-389.

understood as freedom from unwarranted external interference in one's personal affairs by others: the right to be left alone, especially by state authorities."<sup>21</sup> King holds to a view of negative liberty, but it is not sufficient. This view of liberty is too minimalist. It cannot provide the social and political structures that would actually offer some practical way to respond to and assess the welfare of others. More is needed. The question becomes what do people need in order to flourish as human beings? What are people due so that they can become full citizens? These questions reflect King's notions of human worth and dignity. "Positive liberty is best understood as having the capacity to choose which values and projects will be central to one's life and the adequate skills and abilities to pursue those goals."<sup>22</sup> Conditions need to be created in which these capacities, skills, and abilities can be realized, conditions that allow for the recognition and fulfillment of human need. While the distinction between negative and positive liberty helps to clarify King's emphasis on the need for justice, King's own resources also enable us to see the significance of his insistence on the welfare of others as the foundation of justice.

### **The Moral Responsibility for Justice**

Although tied to a political awareness, the birth of King's referencing of human need lies in his biblical vision of what God expects of us. Since human unity exists as a consequence of creation, our actions must enable the realization of unity not as an abstract concept, but rather as the practical expression of meeting human needs. Two of King's most important sources for this understanding of need are the Good Samaritan and the Last Judgment. King's sermon, "The One-Sided Approach to the Good Samaritan" from November 20, 1955 illustrates this connection between justice and human need. King often uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to illuminate the significance of Jesus' teachings.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 387.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 388.

In this sermon, King connects the Good Samaritan with “Christian social responsibility” in order to develop his interpretation of the parable. King stresses the need to follow the Samaritan’s example. “Like the good Samitan [sic] we must always stand ready to descend to the depth of human need.” However, King moves beyond the individual act of compassion to argue that “there is another aspect of Christian social responsibility which is just as compelling. It seeks to tear down unjust conditions and build anew instead of patching things up.” The one-sided Samaritan only looks “to sooth the effects of evil without going back to uproot the causes.”<sup>23</sup> King’s draft of “On Being a Good Neighbor” later published in *Strength to Love* stresses the need of the person who requires help. The other, the helpless one becomes the focal point for evaluation. King writes that “the Samaritan was great because he made the first law of his life not self-preservation, but other preservation.” For King the Samaritan also “had the piercing insight to see beyond the accidents of race, religion and nationality. He saw a fellow human being in need.”<sup>24</sup> The need that King examines is also social. He notes how need refers to race, economics, war, and other concepts that strip people of their humanity. Thus the lesson of the Good Samaritan is that “the true neighbor is the man who will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others.”<sup>25</sup> The Last Judgment in Matthew 25: 31-46 also captures King’s assertion of human need. Jesus sets the agenda for moral human action insofar as he identifies with those in need. The implied level of judgment is that we are judged when we do not see nor meet the needs of others. Writing of the “ethical nonconformity” of Jesus, King challenges us to abandon our comfort and conformity so that we might clearly respond to the other. “When we, through compassionless detachment and arrogant individualism, fail to respond to the needs of the underprivileged, the Master says ‘In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it

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<sup>23</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 240.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 479.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 482.

to me.”<sup>26</sup> King’s self-eulogy the “Drum Major Instinct,” reverberates with the themes of need and fulfillment. After paraphrasing Jesus’ words in Matthew 25: 31-46 as the point of remembrance, King calls out “Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice; say that I was a drum major for peace; say that I was a drum major for righteousness.”<sup>27</sup> For King, then, justice rises from the recognition of the unity that we all share and the needs that we all have in order to be fully human. Two versions of the same sermon express his views most clearly. “The Dimensions of a Complete Life” from 1954 rejects a self-centered life for one that looks to “the welfare of others” and remembers that “no man should become so involved in his personal ambitions that he forgets that other people exist in the world.”<sup>28</sup> King’s 1960 version entitled “The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life,” warns that

This is our problem in the South, and this is our problem over the United States. Many of our white brothers are concerned only about the length of their life, their preferred economic positions, their political power, and their so-called way of life. If they would ever rise up and add breadth to length, the other-regarding dimension to the self-regarding dimension, we would be able to solve all the problems in our nation today.<sup>29</sup>

Human need, the welfare of the other, stands as the foundation of King’s critique of injustice and its triad of racism, militarism, and poverty.

Scholars have long noted King’s later focus on the intersection of racism, poverty, and militarism. In many instances, this was attributed to a growing radicalism in King’s thought that becomes more strident after 1966 or 1967. However, it has become increasingly clear that the radicalism in King’s thought reflects a

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 19.

<sup>27</sup> King, *Testament of Hope*, 267.

<sup>28</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 154.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 400.

significant continuity rather than an abrupt development in his ideas. Thomas Jackson states it clearly.

King's activism, sermonizing, rhetoric, writings, correspondence, and interviews reveal a continuous evolution in his thinking through changing contexts, rather than a radical departure at a specific juncture. Almost every radical 'set piece' historians cite from King's final years can be found in some form much earlier.<sup>30</sup>

King takes a much more holistic view of the various manifestations of injustice, the ways they interconnect, and how they combine to destroy peoples' lives. He comments on how war, poverty, and racism deny the essential humanity of those who bear the brunt of their effects. Each denies the basic human need that shapes King's moral vision. In his sermon "First Things First" from August 2, 1953, King lays out the threat that poverty, war, and racism represent. "So long as we place our selfish economic gains first we will never have peace. So long as the nations of the world are contesting to see which can be the most imperialistic (sic) we will never have peace. So long as America places 'white supremacy' first we will never have peace...All these injustices must be eliminated if we are to have peace."<sup>31</sup> The triple focus on war, racism, and poverty shapes and directs King's response to injustice and the development of his proposals to bring it to an end. While all three levels of injustice serve to create a larger whole, I shall develop King's views on economic justice. Still a few brief comments on war and racism can be made.

### **Racism and War**

That King would challenge racism is certainly no surprise. It forms the basis of his life's work. The depth and extent of racism in America leads to King's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. He notes his experiences of racism growing up and

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: King and Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>31</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 144-145.



how these established his opposition.<sup>32</sup> In addition, King turns the effects of racism on their head. While racism clearly affects the African-American community, it also distorts the vision of whites. They, too, have been consumed by racism in what King refers to as the myth of superiority. Racism damages the oppressor as well as the oppressed. This tragedy lies in the oppressor's refusal to acknowledge this fact. King bitterly writes that "white people of America believe that they have so little to learn."<sup>33</sup> He is also keenly aware of the connection between racism and poverty as this relationship becomes the focus of the Poor People's Campaign in 1968. Similarly King's opposition to war begins early in his career. Jackson convincingly shows that King's rejection of war does not begin with his speech against the Vietnam War. King opposed war long before April 4, 1967. This speech develops themes that King has long harbored.<sup>34</sup> King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech counsels against racism and war. "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."<sup>35</sup> His 1960 sermon "Love in Action," chides us to realize "that war is obsolete."<sup>36</sup> The 1958 sermon "A Knock at Midnight," examines war and "the total annihilation of the human race."<sup>37</sup> In 1953, King professes that there are "no gains from war."<sup>38</sup> There are many similar examples throughout King's writings that show his long-standing opposition to war and militarism. King bluntly states his conclusion. We must find "an alternative to war and human destruction."<sup>39</sup> War is both immoral and ineffective. King's revolution of values rejects the evils of racism and war. Although war and racism are inseparable from the

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<sup>32</sup> King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, see pages 15-24.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Jackson, 308.

<sup>35</sup> King, *Testament of Hope*, 225-226.

<sup>36</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 490.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 495.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, 181.

injustice of poverty, King reserves his most strident criticisms for the continuing existence of poverty.

### **Economic Justice**

If, as King writes, that “other-preservation is the first law of life” then we have a “moral obligation” to end poverty on a global scale.<sup>40</sup> For King, poverty denies the essential values of human need and welfare. Poverty, like its partners of racism and war, reduces people to things and crushes their humanity. If human need represents the moral foundation of King’s social vision then the restoration of human dignity and worth requires the elimination of poverty. How to accomplish this goal derives from King’s vision of economics and the need for a moral purpose to undergird society. King’s arguments about poverty and how to overcome it may be seen in his criticism of capitalism and communism. Whether one calls King’s vision “radical democracy”<sup>41</sup> or “Christian socialism”<sup>42</sup> or “democratic socialism”<sup>43</sup> King rejects capitalism and communism for their failure to address the fundamental question of human need. Both fall short, and both become incapable of fulfilling the demands of human welfare.

Much of King’s criticisms of communism come from two sermons delivered almost ten years apart, “Communism’s Challenge to Christianity” from 1953 and “Can a Christian be a Communist” from 1962. In both sermons, King states that Christianity and Communism are “at the bottom incompatible,” and “diametrically opposed”<sup>44</sup> due to communism’s denial of God and the basic moral order of creation. Communism elevates the state over the individual and denies the individual’s worth making the person subservient to the ends of the state. Thus the person

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 180, 178.

<sup>41</sup> Oresco, 386.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Michael Franklin, “In Pursuit of a Just Society: Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Rawls,” in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18.2 (Fall 1990): 57-77.

<sup>44</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 146, 445.

becomes a means to the ends of the state. Human need and welfare can be sacrificed to the demands of the state. Once again persons become things. Still King notes the challenge that communism presents to Christianity in its concern for “the hardships of the underprivileged.”<sup>45</sup> From this perspective, King views communism as a “corrective for a Christianity that has been all to (sic) passive and a democracy that has been all to (sic) inert.”<sup>46</sup> While communism cannot be accepted, its challenge cannot be ignored.

Given the level of poverty in the African-American community in the US, King reserves his harshest criticisms for what he sees as the failure of capitalism to address the basic needs of the people, especially the poor. From a moral standpoint, capitalism values money over people. Like communism, it too treats people as things. This denial of the person runs counter to King’s vision of justice and the need-based moral foundation of society. More and more, King begins to link civil rights with economic justice and the elimination of poverty. King’s criticisms of capitalism have a long history in his writings that culminate in his challenge for nations to recognize and deal with poverty on a global level. As racism and war contribute to poverty, they also fall under King’s judgment. In an assignment for a preaching class at Crozer Theological Seminary, King asks “Will Capitalism Survive?” His answer is two-fold. First, King simply remarks that all systems and institutions eventually come to an end. The critical question is how systems continue before reaching that point. Second, King focuses on the moral issue of need and fails capitalism on this point. Capitalism cannot survive, nor should it, because it lacks a moral foundation. King offers a straightforward assessment.

I am convinced that capitalism has seen its best days in America, and not only in America, but in the entire world. It is a well known fact that no social institution can survive after it has outlived its usefulness. This capitalism has failed to do. It has failed to meet the needs of the masses.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 104.

Perhaps in an overly optimistic youthfulness, King imagines the demise of capitalism. These criticisms continue in a letter to Coretta Scott from July 18, 1953. Once again using the moral framework of need, King tells Coretta that “capitalism has outlived its usefulness. It has brought about a system that takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes.”<sup>48</sup> A system that creates wealth for the few at the expense of the many cannot be moral. A system that ignores the needs of the poor leads to exploitation. King would hold that exploitation adheres to capitalism as it ignores the welfare of others. He sees capitalism as self-regarding rather than other-regarding. King also derides capitalism for its complicity in war and racism as well as poverty. His letter to Coretta includes the admonition to “Let us continue to hope, work, and pray that in the future we will live to see a warless world, a better distribution of wealth, and a brotherhood that transcends race and color.”<sup>49</sup>

A religious perspective also fuels King’s critique of capitalism. The idolatry of capitalism leads to a lack of a concern for others. It is an idolatry that places materialism and wealth above human need. King’s three-part sermon from July 1953, “False Gods We Worship,” explicitly makes this argument. After examining the false gods of science and nationalism, King turns to the false god of money. It is false because money substitutes for the true God. Money becomes the highest good, the locus of loyalty and worship. King writes that “the temptation to worship this money god is one that faces us all.” Yet instead of resisting the temptation “millions today are dutifully worshipping at the shrine of the god of money.”<sup>50</sup> The effect is the loss of a moral center that sustains individuals and society. King lists three major problems with the worship of money. First, it distorts the values needed for social life. Second, once money becomes the highest goal, the concern for others loses its importance. Third, the single-minded pursuit of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 134.

wealth removes idealism and fosters a rampant individualism. King pointedly summarizes his view in stating that “when it (money) is projected to the status of a god it becomes a power that corrupts and an instrument of exploitation.”<sup>51</sup> The god of wealth supplants the God of justice. Capitalism in-and-of-itself cannot create the values or conditions that allow all human beings to flourish. Where does this analysis leave King? Personally and socially King moves to a view of economic justice based on the principle of human welfare and basic needs.

### **United in Justice**

His own personal sensibility moves him more and more in the direction of socialism. Jackson argues that by 1950 King was a “committed socialist.”<sup>52</sup> King’s 1952 letter to Coretta seems to confirm this point. King tells her that “I am much more socialistic in my economic theory than capitalistic.” However King also adds that he is “not so opposed to capitalism that I have failed to see it relative merits.”<sup>53</sup> The significant reference is the term relative. King objects to an absolute capitalism based solely on competition. Socially, King calls for a “radical restructuring of the architecture of American society.”<sup>54</sup> For King, a society aligned with the injustices of racism, war, and poverty simply cannot continue both morally and factually. The injustices will eventually rot the very social fabric. King sees no evidence that the United States is willing to confront these problems. In response to the personal and the social, King identifies three areas for consideration in the struggle against injustice: power, alliances, and programs. King views a lack of power as one of the primary factors facing the African-American community and the poor in general. Consequently, he develops three levels of power: ideological, political, and economic. All three need to be acquired if any significant change is to occur. This combination will give people

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>52</sup> Jackson, 15.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Papers Vol VI*, 123-125.

<sup>54</sup> King, *Where Do we Go From Here*, 133.

the “power to enforce change.”<sup>55</sup> The problem is that wealth determines power and thus controls the levers of change. Governments listen to the wealthy and powerful who then shape policy to further their own agendas. The great irony is that in spite of the claims to adhere to free market capitalism, the wealthy determine policy in a way that supports their own interests to the detriment of broader social values. King views this relationship between wealth and government as proof of his social critique. Paraphrasing Bayard Rustin, King remarks that what we really have in America is “socialism for the rich and rugged free-enterprise capitalism for the poor.”<sup>56</sup> Through their ability to wield and control power, the rich get richer and the poor become poorer. Perhaps relying on his understanding of Reinhold Niebuhr as well as his own experience, King seeks to challenge power with power. Politically he calls for the Black community to organize in terms of voting, decision making, and participation in the political process. He challenges Blacks to become more involved, to become more politically active, and to see the validity of engaging in the political process.<sup>57</sup> King also confronts Black leaders with what he sees as their failure to take seriously the views the people. He calls on them to recognize leadership from below and to earn the “respect of the masses.”<sup>58</sup>

King’s second emphasis turns on the need for alliances. He clearly believes that the Black community cannot attain power without cooperating with other groups. This belief lies behind the Poor People’s Campaign where King hoped to forge a partnership among the poor across racial lines. The belief in alliances also stems from King’s religious concepts. His view of God and human unity lead King to a profound sense of oneness and solidarity. Interconnectedness defines our personal and social existence. King’s sense of a common destiny is more than a rhetorical device; it structures how King views the very shape of human life. Yet alliances also have a practical aspect. They allow for the creation

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Jackson, 346.

<sup>57</sup> King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, 146.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 148.

and use of power. Thus in a political context, alliances are essential to check the power of the wealthy and to alter government policies. Calling on the need for unity and coalition, King states that “what is most needed is a coalition of Negroes and liberal whites that will work to make both major parties truly responsible to the needs of the poor.”<sup>59</sup> The moral focus remains on human welfare. The practical question is how to get there. Thus King looks to a combination of liberal, labor and civil rights groups to provide the countervailing power that government cannot ignore. In addition, King envisions a broader coalition that also includes the poor. It is not just a matter of organizing existing groups into a more powerful whole; King wants to involve the very people that the alliances are supposed to help. “The coalition of an energized section of labor, Negroes, unemployed and welfare recipients may be the source of power that ushers in a breakthrough to a new level of social reform.”<sup>60</sup> Consequently King’s political vision involves the creation of groups and alliances that will be able to develop the “power to enforce change.”<sup>61</sup>

### **Proposals for Justice**

Finally King offers some specifics for programmatic changes that will meet the moral goal of securing human welfare. Since war, racism, and poverty deny human welfare, the changes King proposes refer to all these injustices. However, given King’s fundamental concern to eliminate poverty these changes most directly relate to that goal. In a startlingly simple question, King asks what causes poverty. In a startlingly simple answer, King responds the lack of money. The greatest threat to human need is economic insecurity. Attacking what he sees as a piecemeal approach to dealing with poverty, King wants a “fully adequate program.”<sup>62</sup> Thus the suggestions King offers refer to the specifics of employment and income. Using various terms such as a

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 161.

“guaranteed income”<sup>63</sup> or a “livable income,”<sup>64</sup> King proposes a floor income that would prevent the calamity of economic collapse for individuals and families. The guaranteed income, however, would not necessarily be separate from work. King also notes that work enhances human worth and dignity. Work provides a sense of self-respect. In response, King argues for full employment measures that would bring the poor into the economy. If the private sector could not supply the needed jobs then public sector jobs would be created that would “enhance the social good.”<sup>65</sup> King wants a “fairer distribution of goods”<sup>66</sup> that would compensate for the inequalities present in contemporary constructs of class and race that essentially keep many people in poverty. The concrete specifics of King’s suggestions find much of their expression in two proposals: the Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged<sup>67</sup> and the Freedom Budget for all Americans.<sup>68</sup> Each of these sets parameters and expectations for dealing with poverty. For King, they call the nation to a sense of compassion, to live out the concern for others. They represent the measure of a civilized nation’s responsibility for the least and marginalized.

The focus on power, alliances, and programs forms a constellation of efforts that King sees as essential for dealing with war, racism, and poverty. He views these efforts as a realistic way to confront the specter of chaos that injustice creates. In a broadly defined sense of community, King believes that these efforts will benefit all Americans across lines of race and class. He realizes the struggle ahead. There are powerful interests aligned against him. He wonders whether America will be willing “to pay a significant price”<sup>69</sup> to make justice a reality. Yet his optimism for the Beloved Community is more than an abstraction. It testifies to the hopes of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>66</sup> Franklin, 62.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Luther King, *Why We Can't Wait* ( New York: NAL, 1963), 137-138.

<sup>68</sup> Franklin, 64.

<sup>69</sup> King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, 5.



many and sustains them in the belief that the universe is on the side of justice.

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## **ISLAM**

### **MAKING MUSLIM DEMOCRACIES – A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH ASIA**

**Raoof Mir**

There are approximately 1 billion individuals professing the Islamic faith in the world. Only 200 million of these are in the Arab world. Nearly half a billion of the world's Muslim population live in South Asia, which includes the nation-states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. When some scholars in the West speak of a clash of civilizations, they usually mean a contemporary conflict between Islam and the West. Both 'Islam' and the 'West' are vastly sweeping categories and tell us little about the actual lives of people. Those who subscribe to the 'clash of civilizations thesis' find the distance between a hollow generalization of the sort that Samuel P. Huntington has proposed and the eventual caricature of Islam and Muslims to be a short one. Combined with Orientalist prejudices, they offer equally untenable theories that suggest that Islam is inherently and uniquely resistant to democracy, secularism and liberalism. If there was a conflict at all, it would have to be one between Christianity and Islam or between the East and the West. In proposing the 'clash of civilizations' thesis, intellectually untenable set of category-mistakes are dressed in the garb of analysis and high theory. The truth lies elsewhere. The most substantial majority of Muslims in the world live in two

fairly stable democracies, namely India and Indonesia. Pakistan and Bangladesh also add up to a sizeable population of Muslims in the world. The Arab world constitutes, then, a very miniscule sample, one that is hardly representative, of Muslims or the Islamic traditions in contemporary times.

In order to achieve a sense of clarity about the status of Islam in the world, it is essential to look at the larger narrative of religiosity and secularization in the world. All religions in the world are multivocal. They have both democratic and authoritarian dimensions and lend themselves to a plural constellation of interpretations.<sup>1</sup> Most times, the fallacy of rendering Islam's incompatibility with democracy arises when political activists, journalists, and professors sometimes misleadingly equate Islam with Arab culture.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as Alfred Stepan argues, the condition for democracy is not secularism but the existence of what he terms as 'twin toleration' between state and religious denominations, sects and established churches. This is indicated by the happy coexistence of such churches and secular constitutions in several western European democracies.<sup>3</sup> While it is true that there

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>2</sup> From Francis Fukuyama's theme of "the end of history," Bernard Lewis's theme of "the roots of Muslim rage," Ernest Gellner's theme of "religion and the profane" and Benjamin Barber's argument about "jihad vs. McWorld" to Robert Kaplan's suggestion about "coming anarchy" and, more influentially, Samuel P. Huntington's essay and subsequent book on "the clash of civilizations," all have collectively reinforced, in different ways, the idea that the Muslim faith and Islamic civilization are incongruent with liberty, democracy, human rights, gender equality, and other emancipatory principles. (Nader Hasemi, "Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy," 4).

<sup>3</sup> Until 1995 every single long standing West European democracy with a strong Lutheran majority- Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, and Norway had an established church. Germany and Austria have constitutional provisions in the federal system for local communities to decide on the role of religion in education. Western analysts may think about the impropriety of religion-based parties ruling in a secular democracy such as Turkey, Christian democratic parties have, of course, frequently ruled in Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

are no democracies among the Muslim countries of the Middle East, extrapolating this existential fact to a generalization that Islam and democracy are incompatible, or that Muslims and the democratic political contexts are usually at loggerheads, is a gross misunderstanding.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, theorists of democracy closely watch Indonesia as an exemplar. With its estimated population of 216 million people, roughly 190 million of whom are Muslim, Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim majority country. Against all odds, democracy is still on Indonesia's agenda.<sup>5</sup> Same is the case with Bangladesh and Pakistan. All of them, of course, have had intermittent experience of military regimes; in recent times they have been all at some time, have been above or at the threshold of being democracies. In India, nothing less than 120 million Muslims contribute to India's flourishing democracy and provide, perhaps, the finest illustration of Islam's multivocal culture in today's world.

While such obvious examples of the multivocality of Islamic traditions are evident, it remains a mystery why analysts like Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Ernst Gellner, Benjamin R. Barber, Francis Fukuyama, and Robert Kaplan choose to portray Islam and Islamic traditions as univocal. Historically speaking, our contemporary understanding of Islamic traditions emerged from a genealogy of thought that could be traced back to Orientalism, the erudite study of texts and ideas that became a highly developed field in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and America.<sup>6</sup> Over a billion people, and over a millennium of history, were sort to be stereotypes and collapsed into generalizations that are factually erroneous and historically misleading. Added to this was by

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<sup>4</sup> Nader Hashemi, "Islam, Arguing Comparative Politics," *Secularism and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 215-235.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 214-234.

<sup>6</sup> Carl W. Ernst, "The Study of Religion and Study of islam," <http://www.unc.edu/-cesrnst/study.htm> (January 1, 2011).

stereotypes default Eurocentrism of the curricula.<sup>7</sup> The inheritance of Orientalism and Eurocentrism led to intellectual laziness on the one hand, and produced a clutch of film clips and quotable quotes that most people came to identify with Islam, Muslims, and the life within Muslim countries.<sup>8</sup> The flippant use of the term fundamentalism to describe the political development of brand of political Islam – or what most scholars term today as ‘Islamism’—has tended to conceal the fact that Islamism is profoundly a recent and deviant phenomenon. Faisal Devji, quoting Cantwell Smith, argues that it was only during the nineteenth century that the word Islam, of rare occurrence in the Quran and premodern Muslim texts in general, came to be used as a category of identity embracing all Muslim practices. He argues that “[b]efore this it had been used mostly to relate theological categories, such as religion (*din*), sect (*firqa*), school (*mazhab*) and mystical order (*tariqah*), to say nothing more or less profane identifications of royal authority.”<sup>9</sup>

In the light of these debates and controversies, it is the South Asian experience that teaches us a significant lesson. It shows that there is no single linear pattern to define Muslims or Islam in the world. Similarly there is nothing that points towards a single authority which can determine the finality of Islamic law or indicate its authoritative version. It is this openness of interpretation and plurality of sources that makes it imperative to know what Islamic law is and disabused those views that point in the direction of univocal interpretation of Islamic law. In this context, there is great divergence of views, not just between opposing currents, but also between individual scholars within the

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<sup>7</sup> Carl W. Ernst, “The Study of Religion and Study of islam,” <http://www.unc.edu/-cesrst/study.htm> (accessed January 1, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Francis Robinson, “Islam, south asia and the West,” 99-106.

<sup>9</sup> Devji Faisal, “The Minority as Political Form,” in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar and Andrew Sartori, eds., *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: South Asia in Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 52.

legal streams, of exactly what set of rules actually belong to the corpus of Islamic law.<sup>10</sup>

It is incorrect to entertain the idea of a universally valid Islam or universally applicable Islamic law. Further, there is absence of a single text that clearly and unequivocally establishes all the rules of a Muslims behavior.<sup>11</sup> Neither is there single authority that can determine at all times and all contexts the application of a standard Islamic law. This is most illuminating in connection with South Asia. Here there is evidence of a clash between Muslims, between Islamic traditions and Muslim sects, something that has cost the lives of many Muslims. For example, since 2000, the Sunni-Shia conflict in the subcontinent alone has claimed 5,000 lives. In recent years, Mosques and shrines of saints in Pakistan are regularly targeted, and votaries of different Muslim sects are the victims of suicide bombings. It is ironical that in Pakistan every mullah enjoys the arbitrary right of declaring anyone who he thinks has deviated from Islam as an apostate, a non-Muslim, and whose killing he justifies in the name of upholding the religious core of Islam. The Wahabbis and Ahle-hadith who constitute 20 per cent of the population in Pakistan, therefore, consider the remaining 80 per cent Muslims in Pakistan as kafirs.<sup>12</sup>

These are just a few examples that not only explain the non-existence of any real authority to define what Islam should or should not mean in South Asia, but also stand as instances of the inadequacy of Huntington's assertion of *clash of civilizations*. To understand Islam in South Asia it is, therefore, essential to know it from a South Asian perspective and locate it in the context in which it has evolved, shaped and flourished. The fate of Islam cannot be refracted from within the confined prism of the mean Middle East or the Arab world. It is evident that a sizeable majority of Muslims live outside the Middle East; South Asia, which is home to the world's largest Muslim population, then, has

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<sup>10</sup> Knut S. Vikor, *Between God and the Sultan: A History of Islamic Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Amir Mir, "Just Who is Not A Kafir," <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?266157> (accessed March 21, 2010).

a major role to play in explaining, restating, and clarifying the tenets of Islam and the multiplicity of Muslim identity in the world. The first step in understanding South Asian Islam is to clearly delineate the beginnings of Islam and Muslims in the subcontinent. One of the most compelling arguments to explain the growth of Muslims in India as well as their unique brand of Islam is to attribute it to systematic conversion of sections of the local population in India.

Of all theories that claim to explain conversions to Islam in South Asia, or how Muslims became Muslims in South Asia, Richard Maxwell Eaton's theory is the most compelling.<sup>13</sup> By closely analyzing Eatons' theory of conversion, two trends in relation to spread of Islam and Muslims in South Asia are identifiable. In the first trend, there has been, historically, an ongoing conflict among adherents of Islam in an attempt to define the true nature of Islam in the Indian context. In other words, the debate is simply about fabricating a model of Islam suitable to India. In turn, it has raised questions as to whether India ought to be considered as Dar-ul-Harb (abode of war) or Dar-ul-Islam (abode of peace) and, as a corollary, whether Hindus are to be included in the category of ahl-dhimma. Answering these questions one way or the other also serves to clarify the desirability of waging jihad against *kafirs*, levying *Jizya* and a host of other politico-theological questions. These questions are not merely historical but continue to have a contemporary salience. More than anything else, these issues demonstrate the ever-present conflict between those Muslims who were sympathetic to India's other religious traditions and those who considered India's religious traditions to be incompatible with Islam and argued for their elimination.<sup>14</sup>

There were several medieval writers like Al-Biruni, Amir Khusraw Dihlawi and Dara Shukoh who gave sympathetic attention to the religions of India. These writers did not see

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<sup>13</sup> In Case of Conversions to Muslims in Kashmir, see Mohammed Ishaq Khan.

<sup>14</sup> Yohanan Friedmann, "Islamic Thought in Relation to the Indian Context," Richard M. Eaton, ed., 51-57.



Hinduism or other religions in India as antithetical to Islam. There were those, in sharp contrast, who wanted a more rigid definition of what Islam should mean and do in South Asia. One of the founding fathers of this trend in South Asia was Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi. He believed that it was supremely important, morally and spiritually, to conform to the *Shari'ah* in every detail.<sup>15</sup> He sought to replicate a more rigid and historically exclusive definition of Islam in South Asia.

The second trend that is more understandable is the Muslim reaction against British colonialism, whereby Muslims tried to localize the idea of a Muslim community with the emergent idea of nationalism. Both trends extend from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in mutual conflict, or some elements overlapping with each other. This trend emerges from a politically enfeebled Muslim community, fighting not only to regain its past glory and political power, but also rising against, what they considered as alien cultural contamination from the modern west. It is instructive to note that the anti-colonial stance of Muslims in India was not a battle between Christianity and Islam, but one that was premised on a culturally integrated Muslim identity at war with the modern, scientific and technological west with its claims to universal rationality.

Any attempt to rigidly define Islam in the subcontinent is then, an effort to mark a rupture from the history and nature of society in South Asia. The most undemocratic feature of this uncompromising attitude lies in the refusal to coexist with difference. Significantly, this is in sharp contradiction to the way Prophet Muhammad himself had understood Islam. Despite his critical attitude toward the local social and moral environment, Prophet Muhammad was very much part of this environment and was deeply rooted in the traditions of Arabia and other parts of the Near East. Although, as the new faith he had founded evolved, many new rules and principles were introduced, the Prophet let several old institutions and ancient customs to remain largely

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<sup>15</sup> Ayesha Jalal, "Partisan of Allah, Jihad in South Asia," 36-40.

unchallenged. *Strictly speaking much of Arabian law continued to occupy a place in the Shari'ah, but not without modification.* For examples, prayer (salat), fasting, alms-tax, mercantile transactions, forms of sale, barter, retaliation and *qasama* continue to drop on pre-existing traditions (blood money).<sup>16</sup> In propounding his message, Prophet Muhammad plainly wished to break away from pre-Islamic values and institutions, but only insofar as he needed to establish once and for all the fundamental tenets of the new religion. Being a pragmatic individual, he could not have done away with all the social practices and institutions that prevailed in his time and win new adherents to his, what at that time was fledgling faith.<sup>17</sup> This shows that foundationally Islam has been accommodative to customary laws and local traditions. Even the foundation myths and historical evidence of Islam makes it compatible with plurality, diversity and, in a putative sense, democracy.

The only aberration from the accommodative plural and historically sensitive example of the Prophet of Islam was the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Contrary to the glorious tradition exemplified by Prophet Muhammad, Jinnah's creation of Pakistan was a result of the claim of having made a *radical and unprecedented beginning*, of having inherited nothing from the past, not even from the past of Islam, by which its existence was justified.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> If the body of a murdered person was found on the lands occupied by a tribe, or in residential quarter in a city, town or village, fifty of the inhabitants had each to take an oath to the effect that they neither had caused the person's death nor had any knowledge of who did. If fewer than fifty persons were available, those present had to swear more than once until fifty oaths had been obtained. By doing so they freed themselves of criminal liability, but nonetheless remained bound to pay blood money to the agnates of the person slain. Hallaq, "A History of Islamic Legal theories," 3-10.

<sup>17</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An introduction to Sunnī uṣūl al-fiqh* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3-10.

<sup>18</sup> Devji Faisal, "The Minority as Political Form," in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar and Andrew Sartori, eds., *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: South Asia in Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.

Jinnah and his Muslim league never engaged in doctrinal discussion, and when they described Islam, they always did so as an ideal one that was translated into political life only in terms familiar to liberalism: rights, responsibility and representation. Muslim league and its leader were prevented from making much use of Islam as a set of religious beliefs and practices by the opposition of Muslim clerics and seminaries, the vast majority of them supporting the avowedly secular if Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress. Senior clerics like Husayn Ahmad Madani of Deoband supported the Congress and its ideal of a united and secular India not because he was a secular nationalist, but because he thought the partition of British India would bring into existence separate Hindu and Muslim states and so prevent the completion of Islam's work in the former, in fact forcing it to abandon a territory that had for so long been its own.<sup>19</sup>

Pakistan accomplished something radical: even the Prophet of Islam did not believe in taking radical breaks from nature and history. Given the heterogeneity of customs in South Asia, this accommodative character of Islam provided a great opportunity to develop a significant paradigm of Islam in the world. A departure from this uniquely South Asian model of pluralism, something that could aid and deepen democracy, has led to the failure of political democracy in Pakistan. Inability to accommodate diversity and pluralism has also led to failure in Pakistan to respect, cherish and preserve the plurality of Islamic traditions within South Asia. It is in this context that the creation of Bangladesh disabuses not only the claims of advocates of a universalistic theory of Islam, but is a warning to all those who willfully negate the uniqueness of South Asian Islam. In other words, South Asian Islam not only provides a paradigm for coexistence of religious traditions but also offers the most multivocal Islamic register.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



## **ISLAM**

### **BEYOND TOLERANCE AND ACCOMMODATION: MYSTICISM AND AMICABLE RELIGIOUS COEXISTENCE IN THE MEDIEVAL BALKANS**

**Marianne Kupin**

The common image that is associated with the religious atmosphere of the Middle Ages is paradoxical. On the one hand there is the aura of fervent religious piety, while on the other is an image littered with religious animosity. The latter notion is further amplified by the bloodshed and brutality of the Crusades.<sup>1</sup> These constant wars were presented as the Christian West versus the armies of the Islamic East, as both battled to gain control of the holy city of Jerusalem, the supposed sacred epicenter of the world. This overwhelming picture of conflict makes it hard for anyone to imagine the Middle Ages as an era in which there could have been amicable religious coexistence of any kind. Yet this must be considered. According to an article published by the BBC in April

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<sup>1</sup> The Crusades began in 1095 and continued, off and on, until 1272.

2010 entitled “Secret Shrine Shared by Muslims and Christians,”<sup>2</sup> houses of worship in Macedonia, and across the Balkans, were shared; religious coexistence was, for the most part, harmonious. In the article, ethnologist Elizabeta Koneska asserted that “For centuries, people who lived together also prayed in common temples. Although the ritual was observed discretely, people respected it and tolerated each other.” This phenomenon, according to her and other scholars, is common especially when associated with the mystical Sufi order, the Bektashi Dervishes. Their unique mystical religious structure, combined with the uncommon religious and socio-cultural landscape of the Medieval Balkans allowed for the possibility of amicable religious coexistence.

These claims raise questions about the current perception of the religious landscape in the Medieval period. Has an apparent lacunae existed in the socio-religious and cultural historiography of the Medieval world? Something may be missing. The interpretation of the religious dynamic in the Medieval world, in such places like Moorish Spain and Ottoman Constantinople, can be distinctly defined as tolerant and accommodating towards the religious other, but not associated with any sort of coexistence that went further than that. Such coexistence, in these particular areas, occurred out of practicality, for both Christians and Muslims. Both Christians and Muslims in these areas had to tolerate and accommodate on practical levels in order for life to continue as normal. Charles J. Halperin in “Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier”<sup>3</sup> explains that sometimes medieval people had no choice but to reconcile their ideological differences in order to coexist.

What is significant about this assertion of amicable religious coexistence in the Medieval Balkans is twofold – the location of where it occurred and the unparalleled religious influence

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<sup>2</sup> Dusko Arsovski, “Secret Shrine Shared by Muslims and Christians,” BBC News, April 4, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8618275.stm> (accessed July 10, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Charles J. Halperin, “The Ideology of Silence: Prejudice and Pragmatism on the Medieval Religious Frontier,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26.3 (July 1984): 443-445.

prominent in the region. The Balkans was at the fringes of Europe, and has been a frontier region even before the dissolution of the Dacian Empire in the second century, CE. Dacia, as an empire, had stretched from the coast of the Black Sea all the way to the kingdom of Bohemia at the height of its power in the first century and engulfed a large portion of what is more commonly known as the Balkans. The Balkans, historically, has been an unstable region. The earliest records show it was an area ripe with conflict, owing to the rich salt, silver and gold mines that were located within the Transylvania region.<sup>4</sup>

More than being a region of constant warfare it was also a region with a unique religious history. Some of the earliest religious influences came from the Vedic and Greco-Roman traditions, which were intermingled with the already monotheistic and pantheistic beliefs of the native Dacians. The people of the Balkans possessed religious ideology that was receptive and incorporating. For example, the religion of Zalmoxism, the monotheistic religion prominent in the region prior to the Dacian Wars waged by the emperor Trajan, was ripe with Vedic and Greek philosophical influence; it is said that the main “prophet” of Zalmoxism, Zalmoxis, was exceptionally similar to the Greek mathematician, Pythagorus, perhaps even a follower.<sup>5</sup> Despite political instability, the region seemed to have a knack for coping, assimilating, and bringing together religious ideologies in order to accommodate the constant influx of new populations and shifts in political control. This skill would prove useful as a continuous plague of warfare infected the region when the Ottoman Empire attempted to gain a foothold in Europe.

In addition to the unique attributes prominent in the cultural landscape of the Balkans, what is also significant are the religious ideologies that migrated from the eleventh century onwards. This group of believers that brought with them the religion of Islam were not Sunni Orthodox Muslims, but, rather, were the unique

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<sup>4</sup> Ion Grumeza, *Dacia: Land of Transylvania, Cornerstone of Eastern Europe* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2009), 65-82.

<sup>5</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Romanians: A Concise History* (Bucharest: Roza Vinturilor Publishing House, 1992), 10-15.

mystical Sufi order, known as the Bektashi Dervishes. As mystics, they shared a universal consciousness of the limitlessness of the Divine, and perhaps a more zealous distaste for orthodoxy. Their views of scripture were allegorical, and their protocol for following *Sharia* law was lax.<sup>6</sup> They were infamous for their flexibility and their malleable view of religious doctrine. In mysticism, and the goal of the mystic was something different from the average orthodox follower. They desired a closer relationship with and knowledge of God intermingled with a distinct understanding that this world is inconsequential, perhaps even an illusion, and were commonalities that all mystics shared. The mystical nature of this order, which had in common with all mystical orders concepts of undying love, lamentation, and the limitlessness of the Divine, fostered a receptive and courteous religious coexistence.

In order to determine whether or not the religious dynamic of the Medieval world was more diverse and amicable than is currently believed, a few things must be understood. The first is realizing that this assertion is difficult to prove definitely; this paper will deal with the topic in part, on a theoretical level, especially when it pertains to the explanation of the universal consciousness of mystical philosophy. There could be a plethora of holes in the existing information and there is an apparent lack of primary resources. Yes, the temples themselves as presented, in the aforementioned BBC article, are primary resources, that are “decorated [with] Christian icons, and portraits of both Jesus Christ and Muslim saints.”<sup>7</sup> The *baba* of this particular Bektashi shrine describes how, “Once a year, Christians and Muslims come together here on the day of Saint George known as ‘Gjurgjovden’” and that this is, and has been, a common occurrence. However, is there further proof beyond such claims, or is this an attempt to transfer modern mentalities onto individuals in the past?

There are a few travelogues from writers such as Ibn Battuta (c.1304-1369), Celebi Evliya (1611-1682), and Paul of Aleppo

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<sup>6</sup> John K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (Bristol: Burleigh Press, 1937), 93.

<sup>7</sup> Arsovski, “Secret Shrine.”



(1627-1669) who have written about the Bektashi in the Balkans, but their work is, with few exceptions, either propaganda or hagiography. However, they do not explicitly confirm, nor deny, amicable religious coexistence in the region. Thus writings from historians, travelers, clergymen, and scholars must be examined. These sources are out there, however, they are limited by language and access that went beyond the means of this study.

Furthermore other events that have taken place could be misconstrued as evidence of amicable religious coexistence. These things include religious syncretism, transference of saints and houses of worship or sacred places, and the practice of Crypto-Christianity. On the other hand, as anthropologist Robert M. Hayden suggested, superstition may have preceded everything, and if the common good was at stake then religious allegiance was abandoned for supposed spiritual strength for a miracle.<sup>8</sup>

Theoretically the idea is not beyond reason or possibility, especially when examining mystical philosophy, but it is imperative that modern ideologies are not forced onto the people of the past. John Kingsley Birge, F. W. Hasluck, and other authorities in the field arguably pushed Bektashi principles and actions from the nineteenth century onto their past counterparts. While it is safe to assume some principles have existed within the order for centuries, it is not uncommon for ideologies to change. Thus, everything must be taken with a grain of a salt until further resources come to light.

Taking that as a given, there must now be an examination of what sort of religious coexistence is proven and prominent during the Medieval period. Religious texts, laws, and doctrine must be understood in order to illuminate the dynamic of the religious coexistence that existed in the Medieval world. Then, a comparison can be made as to what is unique about mystical ideology and how it allowed for flexibility of religious coexistence within frontier regions.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Hayden, "Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans," *Current Anthropology* 43 (April 2002): 214.

### **Tolerance versus Accommodation: Dealing with the Religious ‘Other’**

As previously stated, the common perspective of Medieval religious culture was very matter of fact due to practicality. Before defining the universal mystical ideologies and the possibilities that are provided, there must be an understanding of what type of religious coexistence, if any, occurred in prominent orthodox controlled regions. One challenge to amicable religious coexistence was the common practice of intermingling government<sup>9</sup> with religion. The goal, especially in the Christian West, was to create a kingdom of heaven on Earth; a kingdom of moral righteousness. The goal of the Muslims, at first, was to create a land of peace within war-torn Arabia. Then, they set their sights elsewhere for a kingdom of righteousness and praise to Allah. Both religious cultures had the same agenda in mind, but with slightly different justification. Christians did it in order to help prepare for the Second Coming, which was seemingly imminent<sup>10</sup> - this is often attributed to one of the many biblical passages that speak of the second coming: “Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”<sup>11</sup> The same is to be found within the *Qur’an*, regarding what Muslims call the “Last Hour: “People will ask thee about the Last Hour. Say: ‘Knowledge thereof rests with God alone; yet for all thou knowest, the Last Hour may well be near!’”<sup>12</sup> Obviously, if it was not known when the Day of Judgment would come, and if salvation was the goal for both Christians and Muslims, it made perfect sense to create a kingdom that was good in the eyes of their God, in the manner that was ascribed to them by their holy texts: the *Bible* and the *Qur’an*. Despite the fact that both attempted to make

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<sup>9</sup> From both the church and state.

<sup>10</sup> R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 26-27.

<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Catholic Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Matthew 24:42.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Asad, trans., *The Message of the Qur’an* (Bristol: The Book Foundation, 2003), 33:63.

a similar moral world that would be pleasing to God, their viewpoints of how to do that were religiously different. For Christians, Islam was a heresy<sup>13</sup>; for Muslims, Christians were misguided. Even if their moral actions were completely comparable to one another, their own viewpoints of the doctrines of their faith and their paths to Paradise and God led them to attempt to achieve their goals and kingdoms in different settings. Neither wanted any hindrance on their journey. All, however, claimed to serve God. The two main religious texts, the *Bible* and the *Qur'an*, elucidate why each religion dealt with the religious other in such different ways and illuminate why there existed within mysticism the potential for an exception to the general practice against religious coexistence in orthodox religion.

### Religious Toleration-The Christian West

To tolerate is “to allow the existence, presence, practice or act without prohibition or hindrance.”<sup>14</sup> In this case it is one religious order or institution permitting another to practice its belief, at least in part. The distinction that can be made between what occurred in Christian controlled territories versus Muslim controlled areas is that toleration was the only act permissible in terms of the Christian faith.<sup>15</sup> Remi Brague argued in *The Legend of the Middle Ages* that Christians tolerated Muslims, merely tolerated, for pragmatic reasons, especially when the existing religious population (in the case of Moorish Spain, the Muslim population) was more numerous than the conquering Christian religious population. It was practical to tolerate in order for life to run as normal. This was due to the fact that Islam, as a religious message, was unexpected for people of the Bible; something that should not exist, and had no preexisting category, such as Judaism or

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<sup>13</sup> Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/tolerate>, definition 1.

<sup>15</sup> In terms of any sort of peaceful coexistence; there were, obviously, harsher forms of treatment of the religious other that were equally acceptable.

Paganism.<sup>16</sup> It was an anomaly. The distinction that makes the act of toleration different from the act of accommodation is best described in ‘Abd al-Hakeem Carney’s article “Twilight of the idols? Pluralism and Mystical *Praxis* in Islam.” Carney makes clear why toleration was an act of Medieval Christianity in dealing with the religious other; “tolerance” implies evil within the Other: the Other is tolerated as much as a body tolerates a small dose of strychnine.”<sup>17</sup> The religious other, Islam, was seen as heretical; it possessed an evil due to the fact that it led those astray from the true faith of Christianity. Obviously, the mindset of believers in Christianity was that it was the one, true, religion. The *Bible* clearly depicted that the only way to Paradise, to obtain salvation was by following the path of Jesus Christ. John 14:6, for example, states that “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, the light; no one comes to the Father but by me.’”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Romans, 6:23, states, “For the wages of sin are death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>19</sup> John 9: 35-38 also expands on this:

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and having found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” He answered “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshipped him.<sup>20</sup>

Due to these clear biblical statements that attested to Jesus being the way to obtain ever-lasting life with God, Christians were left to assume, then, that the religious other could only be tolerated. Christians knew that Muslims needed to find Christ, and until that point were still heretical damned heathens. Yet they tolerated the

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<sup>16</sup> Remi Brague, *The Legends of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 198.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Abd al-Hakeem Carney, “Twilight of the idols? Pluralism and Mystical *Praxis* in Islam,” *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 64 (2008): 4.

<sup>18</sup> John 14:6

<sup>19</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>20</sup> John 9: 35-38

Muslim population out of necessity: to do otherwise would have jeopardized their control of recently Reconquered Moorish Spain.

The toleration of Muslims, then, was prudent, at least in the short term. As Halperin argued, it was a very wise move to tolerate previous religious institutions when the majority of one's subjects followed that faiths due to the fact that the religious group that had just gained power was the minority, and therefore, any harsh action against the current religious majority would have severe political consequences.<sup>21</sup> This was the case in Moorish Spain, specifically in Valencia under the reign of James I of Arago-Catalonia (1208-1276). After his *reconquista* of Spain, he opted not to deport the existing Moorish population. Instead, as Halperin points out, "He issued sweeping guarantees of their political autonomy, religious inviolability and socioeconomic rights in order to induce them to surrender." Halperin goes on to explain that these concessions made by James I were done out of necessity and were not a reflection of genuine toleration.<sup>22</sup>

As time passed, and political rule was stabilized, the laws became stricter, permitting only the bare minimum toleration towards the religious other. The set of laws, *Siete Partidas*<sup>23</sup> described the status of Jews and Muslims in Castile during the early fourteenth century. The differences between the allowance of religious practice and the treatment of Jews and Muslims clearly depict the distinction between accommodation and toleration. For example, Jews were permitted to keep their synagogues,<sup>24</sup> though they were not allowed to rebuild ones that have fallen or to construct new ones. Moors, however, were not allowed to maintain their mosques. As stated within the *Partidas*, "We decree that Moors shall live among Christians in the same way that we mentioned in the preceding Title that Jews shall do, by observing

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<sup>21</sup> Halperin, "The Ideology of Silence," 450.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 444.

<sup>23</sup> Oivia Remie Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings From Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> As will be later shown, this is similar treatment that Muslim rulers gave to Christian subjects in Ottoman controlled areas.

their own law and not insulting ours. Moors, however, shall not have mosques in Christian towns, or make their sacrifices publicly in the presence of men.”<sup>25</sup>

Further, Jews were not pressed to do anything during their holy day, were as no such accommodation was even mentioned for the Moorish faith.<sup>26</sup> Converts to Christianity, whatever their original faith might have been, were to be treated with respect. Anyone who lost their sanity and become a Moor, however, was stripped of their property and put to death. The description of why one would even consider converting to Islam shows the mentality of the populace concerning people of this heretical faith for it was better to be dead than to be a Moor. As written in the *Partidas*, “Men sometimes become insane and lose their prudence and understanding as, for instance, where unfortunate persons, and those who despair of everything, renounce the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and become Moors.”<sup>27</sup> All of these, including the comparison of treatment to adherents of both faiths, amplify the differences of toleration and accommodation of the religious other.

Christian-occupied regions, such as Reconquered Moorish Spain, then, during the Middle Ages tolerated the religious other, Islam, out of pragmatism. To have done otherwise would have been problematic for it would have madness and occupation of the land, at the initial stages of conquest, would have made it more difficult. The laws put in place, by James I and afterwards, were done so for practical reasons rather than sincere toleration towards the religious other.

### **Religious Accommodation – The Ottoman East**

Religious accommodation was an exceptionally different way of dealing with the religious other in comparison to toleration. While toleration was pragmatic, and had no doctrinal base within medieval Christianity, accommodation was part of Islamic doctrine,

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<sup>25</sup> Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 270-273.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 270-274

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 274.

and described within the *Hadith* and *Sharia Law*. The *Qur'an* states:

We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them.<sup>28</sup>

This similar sentiment is repeated several times within the *Qur'an*. Christianity was the message of Jesus and thus, to Islam, was an old story, especially since Jesus was considered one of the prophets of Allah. Although Muslims may have viewed Christians, as Brague put it, “as objects of sympathy, [to be] treated ...with condescending affection, [as] one [would] a doddering old uncle....”<sup>29</sup> they offered them a level of respect owing to their shared reverence for Jesus. Because Christianity was a religion of the book, a *dhimmi*, its followers and the faith were to be treated with respect and without persecution. As noted within the text, *Medieval Worlds: An Introduction to European History 300-1492*, as a general rule, Muslims treated those of different faiths better than their Christian counterparts. Moreover, the authors continued to state how the *dhimmi* were permitted freedom of religious practice, granted property rights and even held positions of high rank at court.<sup>30</sup> This is where accommodation differs from tolerance: tolerance is, for the most part, pragmatic, and hints at an evil nature to the religious other, whereas accommodation has, in this instance, a basis within religious doctrine. As Halperin noted, “According to Islamic law, the Christians, like the Jews, qualified as People of the Book. They could practice their religion as long as they recognized Muslim authority, paid the poll tax, did not insult

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<sup>28</sup> *Qur'an* 2:136

<sup>29</sup> Brague, *The Legends of the Middle Ages*, 198.

<sup>30</sup> Jo Ann H. Moran Cruz and Richard Gerberding, *Medieval Worlds: An Introduction to European History 300-1492* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 114.

Islam and did not interfere with the conversion of Islam.”<sup>31</sup> If they respected their rulers and obeyed the laws, they were permitted their religious practice.

As previously stated, the Muslim view of Christianity is that it was an old story. In the surah *Al-‘Imran*, it states:

[But] they are not alike’ among the followers of earlier revelation there are upright people, who recite God’s messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin the doing of what is right, and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous.<sup>32</sup>

The revelation of the *Qur’an* made a distinction: that those individuals who believed in the Last Day, God, and who committed good deeds were among the righteous. By the *Qur’an* acknowledging “followers of earlier revelations” it clearly is meant to mean followers of Judaism and Christianity, and granted that if they are good in deed then they are among the virtuous. This provides an explanation to the accommodating mentality of Muslim rulers, and the reasoning as to why they treated their Christian subjects in the manner that they did. If the *Qur’an* was the holy revelation of Allah, and if Allah himself said that by doing good works then they were among the righteous, then Christians and Jews had to be treated with respect. To do otherwise would clearly be going against the doctrinal beliefs within the *Qur’an*, and thereby against Allah himself.

This concept is not only found within the *Qur’an* but also within one of the oldest political treaties between Muslims and Christians, *The Pact of Umar*. Written between the eighth and tenth centuries, this pact was created between Umar ibn al-Khattab (c. 592-664) and the Christian populations of Syria. Similar to the *Siete Patridas* in Spain, this pact described what Christians were permitted to do, religiously and otherwise, in Muslim occupied Syria, and set the precedents for treatment of the *dhimmi*, in

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<sup>31</sup> Halperin, “The Ideology of Silence,” 454.

<sup>32</sup> *Qur’an* 3:113-114



Islamic occupied territories as late as sixteenth century Cairo.<sup>33</sup> The differences between the *Pact* and the *Patridas*, and the differences between toleration and accommodation, are shown in a few distinct differences between what was and was not admissible, which was similar to the treatment of Jews in Moorish Spain. First, Christians, much like the Jews in Christian occupied Spain, were permitted to keep their religious houses, though they were not allowed to build new ones anywhere in Muslim territories. “We [Christians] shall not build...new monasteries, churches convents or monks’ cells, nor shall we repair...them as fall in ruins or are situated in quarters of the Muslims.”<sup>34</sup> Further, the *Pact* clearly permitted the allowance of Christian worship, though with some conditions attached. “We shall use only clappers in our churches very softly.” Obviously, this is in complete contrast with the worshipping rights of Moors. The allowances to exist, and to have the freedom to practice their faith showed accommodation in Islamic controlled Constantinople, another area where the religious population was a mix of ideologies.

Although Christianity was a *dhimmi*, it did not mean that the *Qur’an* lacked any polemical language against Christianity, or saw the religious other as misguided. For example, in the surah *Al-Imran*, it states:

Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith it would have been for their own good: [but only few] among them are believers, while most of them are iniquitous.... Overshadowed by ignominy are they wherever they may be, save [when they bind themselves again] in a bond with God and a bond with men, for they have earned the burden of God’s condemnation, and are overshadowed by humiliation: all this [has befallen them] because they persisted in denying the truth of God’s messages...<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “Islam and the Jews: The Status of Jews and Christians in Muslim Lands, 1772 CE,” *Jewish History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1772-jewsislam.html> (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> “Pact of Umar, 7<sup>th</sup> Century ?” *The Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pact-umar.html> (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> *Qur’an* 3:111-112

In denying the truth that is being presented to them by the *Qur'an*, Christians and Jews broke their bond with God, and are doomed to suffer the fires of hell. Since the *Qur'an* also had given this perspective of the religious other, it is no wonder as to why there also existed stories of outright persecution under Islamic rule. However, that had been the exception and not the rule.

Doctrinal religion had a large influence on the content of laws, which dictated how to deal with the religious other. Coexistence was determined by doctrine that made interaction with the religious other, and their existence clear. The religious other in Christian-occupied territories, then, was tolerated, due to pragmatism and views of heresy. While, under the rule of Islam, religious others were accommodated, due to their *dhimmi* status and their place within *Sharia Law*. It will be in areas where political rule and doctrine were not fixed structures that religious coexistence can further be defined as something beyond mere tolerance and accommodation.

### Understanding Mysticism

Mysticism was a religious other with a mixed reputation. Seen as highly pious due to their extreme asceticism and devotion, mystics were respected, as a general rule, by the population. To those in power, they were viewed as rebellious, extreme, and heretical. This was because mystics went beyond the control of establishments dedicated not just to faith but also doctrine. The methods mystics utilized their theories, writings, and practices, in their search to reunite with and experience the Divine was unorthodox and limitless. While masters of doctrine, mystics felt that basic orthodoxy was not enough to quench their spiritual thirst, in fact the Bektashi order thought orthodoxy so useless that they made a habit of mocking it.<sup>36</sup> Doctrine was limited, and lacked the fluidity that was necessary in order to obtain a true mystical experience.

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<sup>36</sup> Birge, *The Bektashi*, 93.

Seeking spiritual nourishment beyond everyday practices, mystics sought for extreme ways to surround themselves with the Divine. This was an especially important part of *ma'rifa*, or knowing God, a practice of the Sufis.<sup>37</sup> This practice was something that was seen as commanded by Allah in the *Qur'an*: “And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings, and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me.”<sup>38</sup> There was no knowledge greater in this world than that of knowing God.

Mystics had a keen realization that their lives on Earth were only part of the greater reality of this unlimited, shared universal consciousness. What made the mystical philosophy so unique was its kaleidoscope-like perspective of the Divine. Though having distinct differences in such things as names of the Ultimate coming from their faith of origin, a mystic did not limit the Ultimate Reality. After all, mystics willingly set out to do the impossible:

The idea that we can describe God and therefore prescribe means of coming closer to God is informed by paradox. Can you come closer to that which is all around you and therefore already as close to you as your own breath – even as it is more distant than the most distant star? Yet that is what the mystic seeks to accomplish, and more.<sup>39</sup>

The ideology of the mystic, then, was paradoxical, a fact that each was aware of. They attempted to experience God and thus obtain knowledge of Him from that experience. Yet they realized his limitlessness; this was the necessity behind their ambitions. The mystics from both sides shared many attributes concerning their relationship with the Divine. That shows the plurality of the mystical ideology, thus allowing for the possibility of amicable religious coexistence to occur. In their acceptance of this limitlessness of the Divine, their lament from their separation from Him and desire to be with Him, and their undying love towards

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<sup>37</sup> The term is associated with the mystical orders of Islam.

<sup>38</sup> *Qur'an* 51:56

<sup>39</sup> Ori Z. Soltes, *Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam Searching for Oneness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 2.

their Beloved created an ideology that allowed for the possibility of a unique form of religious coexistence that went beyond toleration and accommodation.

God was seen as Infinite, and this was a truth that was abundantly clear to the mystics, both Muslims and Christians alike. Carney, speaking from a Sufi perspective, explained that the Ultimate Reality was limitless and could not be bound by doctrine. Her explanation went further to say that any attempt at making something infinite as the Ultimate Reality into something finite, bound, by a single religious text, or doctrine was a violation against God Himself.<sup>40</sup> Mystics, in their own realization of the Infinity of the Divine wrote that to bind God by any human rule or restriction was preposterous and harmful to oneself. Ibn' Arabi (1165-1240 CE) wrote the following advice for those seeking to know God and who were searching for a path to follow:

Those who adore God in the sun behold the sun, and those who adore Him in living things see a living thing, and those who adore Him in lifeless things see a lifeless thing, and those who adore Him as a Being unique and unparalleled see that was no like. Do not attach yourself to a particular creed exclusively so that you disbelieve in all the rest; otherwise you will lose much good: nay you will fail to recognize the real truth of the matter. God, the omnipresent and omnipotent, is not limited by any one creed. Whosoever you turn, there is the face of Allah.<sup>41</sup>

Quoting a most famous line from the *Qur'an*<sup>42</sup> Arabi got to the heart of the matter: whatever one adores and thanks God for in this world is how God would be perceived. If it is a limited adoration, then God is restricted and forced to fit into human ideals. To confine God is to lose the truth of the matter, and the significant truth is, to Arabi, an open mind, for God could be found everywhere; within everything.

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<sup>40</sup> Carney, "Twilight of the idols," 4-6, 14.

<sup>41</sup> James Fadiman and Robert Frager, eds., *Essential Sufism* (New York: Harper One, 1997), 279.

<sup>42</sup> *Qur'an* 2:115

Another Sufi mystic of the same tradition, Jalal-al-din Rumi (1207-1273) expanded upon his idea of the nature of the reality of the Divine:

Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu,  
 Buddhist, Sufi or Zen. Not any religion  
 Or cultural system. I am not from the East  
 Or the West, not out of the ocean or up  
 From the ground, not natural or ethereal, not  
 Composed of elements at all. I do not exist,  
 Am not an entity in this world or the next,  
 Did not descend from Adam and Eve or any  
 Origin story. My place is placeless, a trace  
 Of the traceless. Neither body nor soul.  
 I belong to the Beloved, have seen the two  
 Worlds as one and that one call to and known,  
 First, last, outer, inner, only that  
 Breath-breathing human being.<sup>43</sup>

The Almighty then, did not bind people with any ideology, even with existence. The Divine was paradoxical in its nature: natural and ethereal, trace, and traceless-ness, no body nor soul. The divine was beyond such limits of this confined, finite world.

Mystics, in their desire to know God, in their journey towards *ma'rifa*, as a whole, lamented and longed to be joined with the Divine. A fair portion of their open-mindedness stemmed from their 'obsession' to be with the Ultimate and the realization that here, this confined world, was not their priority. They bemoaned their loss and longed to be rejoined with their Beloved. These notions are not specific to a religious doctrine or theology: Christian and Muslim mystics both were mournful of this separation from the Divine, as they viewed the world of here and now as something of insignificance, an illusion of the greater reality that is the supreme Godhead. The writings of St. John the Cross (1242-1591), for example, epitomized this idea for he felt anguish and the torment due to his separation from the Beloved:

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<sup>43</sup> Soltes, *Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 179.

Where have you hidden yourself,  
 and abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved  
 You have fled like the stag after wounding me,  
 I ran after you, calling; but you were gone.  
 O shepherds, you who go  
 Through the sheep cots up the hill,  
 If you shall see Him  
 Whom I love the most,  
 Tell him I languish, suffer and die.<sup>44</sup>

Here St. John seems lost without his Beloved as he searches for them in agony of their separation. Though he was well aware of the concept that God was everywhere, but to him it was not the same. He longed to be rejoined with the Beloved.

Rumi also lamented his separation from his Beloved; called his home. In the opening of his most famous work, *The Masnavi*, he explains the pain of his exile:

Hearken to the reed-flute, how it complains, lamenting its banishment from its home: Ever since they tore me from my osier bed, my plaintive notes have moved men and women to tears. I burst my breast, striving to give vent to sighs, and to express the pangs of my yearning for my home.<sup>45</sup>

Rumi's place then, was unity with the Beloved. He described, through the allegorical reed flute, his torment and suffering that he had experienced through this involuntary exile. This description exemplified the realization that mystics had when it came to the world. As ascetics they felt only a desire and longing to be with God and not for any aspect of this life, from wealth to power and even, perhaps to its labels.

An English mystic, Thomas Kempis (1379-1471), wrote not of his separation from the Beloved, the Ultimate Reality, but his longing to be with him again after death. In an act of acceptance,

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<sup>44</sup> Saint John of the Cross, *Mystical Doctrine of St. John the Cross* (New York: Sheen and Ward, 1974), 141.

<sup>45</sup> Jalal al-Din Rumi, *The Masnavi, Book One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

he does not cry out in anguish but spoke only of his longing for their reunion:

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly untied with thee and may withdraw my heart from created things, and by Holy Communion...may more and more learn to relish heavenly and eternal things.... Then all that is within me shall rejoice exceedingly when my soul shall be perfectly united with my God.<sup>46</sup>

His joy then will come from his reunion after his life is done. He did not long for any part of this world, and thus separated himself from it. One could argue that this was the mindset of most mystics in their view with doctrinal religion. Orthodoxy was a man made institution, both fallible and limited, and a part of this world. They disparaged this separation from God, this exile, and grew weary of their time on Earth.

The philosophy of love is another, and perhaps the largest, theme in all mystical writing; love was central to understanding the Divine. Mystics defined love as the most complex of all emotions, and equated it with getting closer to, and knowing, God, for it was as limitless in its diversity as was the Ultimate. A Christian mystic, Maximus Confessor, the theologian of Constantinople (560-662), wrote in his work *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* about the illuminating power that came from the love that one had for God:

If the life of the mind is the illumination of knowledge and this is born of love for God, then it is well said that there is nothing greater than love. Love is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers no being to the knowledge of God.<sup>47</sup>

Love for God bore an illumination of knowledge for the greater things of this world and thus was most sought out. Ramon Lull (1232-1315) goes further with the concept of love and how it unites both Lover and Beloved:

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<sup>46</sup> Soltes, *Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 149.

<sup>47</sup> S. J. Harvey Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 127.

Love and loving, Lover and Beloved, are so closely united in the Beloved that they are one reality in Essene. And Lover and Beloved are distinct beings, which agree without any contrary element or diversity in essence. Therefore the Beloved is to be loved above all other objects of affection.<sup>48</sup>

Here, Lull brings up another concept that came up in many mystical writings; the concept of the unity of the Lover and the Beloved, the mystic and the Ultimate. It is an idea that Rumi expressed in his lament for his home, which is equated to the Beloved. Thus, Lull reiterates the mentality that the Lover is whole with the Beloved, and so to worship him and love him was to also do the same for the self, and recognize that the Beloved and the Lover are part of each other.

Mysticism was not a gender exclusive experience; it was an undertaking of both holy men and women. Julia of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avail, and others sought out to know and experience the Divine. Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya (717-801) was one of the most well-known female Sufi mystics and saints from the early days of Islam. The majority of her works focus on the love she bore for her Beloved, and the fact that this love was more important than anything in the world. Here she described her love for God, and spoke of its unworthiness:

With two loves have I loved You,  
 With a love that is selfish  
 And a love that is worthy of You:  
 In the love that is selfish,  
 I busy myself with You and others exclude.  
 In the love that is worthy of You  
 You raise the veil  
 That I may see.  
 Yet not to me is the praise in this or that,  
 But in that and this, is the praise to You.  
 O Beloved of hearts  
 I have no other like You.  
 Pity this day this sinner that comes to You.  
 My Hope,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 289.



My Rest,  
My Delight,  
The heart can love no other than only You.<sup>49</sup>

This lament of an imperfect love, that is selfish and worthy, asks the Beloved for pity when she would return to Him. She noted that the heart is made to love the Beloved. Like all mystical writings on love, Rabi'a took her love for the Beloved personally, as if the relationship was a marriage between the two, much like monks, priests and nuns were all seen as married to Christ. Mystics tended to take the emotion of love to another level. Love was seen as the ultimate, the bit of humanity that connected them directly with the supreme Godhead and they sought for the unity that love brought a couple on Earth with their Beloved in heaven.

The ambiguous, open mystical ideology makes it entirely possible that amicable religious coexistence could occur within the medieval world. As shown, the mystical experience and ethos were something that was pluralistic in nature and shared by mystics of both faith ideologies. Combined with the unique socio-cultural and religious aspects of the Balkans, it makes it all the more plausible for amicable religious coexistence. In their quest, mystics were not close-minded because they wanted to learn all that they could do to know the Divine. It was not just their desire to be close to God that led them to be open minded, but also the knowledge that they felt that the Divine could not be limited. This holds true with the ethos of the Sufi order, the Bektashi Dervishes that were prominent in the Balkans and were one of the significant factors in amicable religious coexistence. Before discussing this unique Sufi order, it is best to understand the rare cultural landscape of the Balkans.

### **The Balkans**

Some more information needs to be given about this intriguing region and its rich, historical narrative to understand why religious coexistence occurred here. On the other hand, there is no

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<sup>49</sup> Catharine Hughes, ed., *The Secret Shrine: Islamic Mystical Reflections* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 29.

possibility, within the limitations of this essay, to give an in-depth historical narrative, so an overview will suffice. There are two key factors within this region that created such a unique socio-cultural landscape: the constant warfare that occurred due to its geographic location, and the continuous migration of people, who brought with them a plethora of spiritual ideologies. The receptive, incorporative, and flexible nature of the Balkans due to this constant population growth shows an ability to adapt within this ever-changing frontier.

The difficulty that occurs in beginning the examination of this region is the lack of accuracy from ancient historical sources. The ancient history of the region, lumped together under the name of Dacia or the Dacian Empire, is a guessing game for modern scholars. As Ion Grumeza explains in his text *Dacia: Land of Transylvania, Cornerstone of Ancient Eastern Europe*, the greatest difficulty that present-day historians have is trying to figure out what name ancient historians used to describe Dacia. For example, Herodotus and Thucydides confused Dacia with Thracia, and thus Dacians were listed as, interchangeably, Thracians, Gepids, or Tartars, creating difficulties for historians in distinguishing between these groups. The information that comes from such texts, especially concerning religious ideology, aids in understanding the significance of religion in the Balkan area from the beginning.<sup>50</sup>

Dacia's significant location on the Dardanelles, the mouth of the Danube River, which would then allow one to travel within Northern Europe, its close proximity to the steppes, and its vast natural resources made it a desirable location to possess. The Roman Emperor Trajan (r. 98-117 CE) desired control of this region, not only to expand Rome's borders beyond Moesia, but to also have possession of the salt, gold and silver mines that were hidden in the Carpathian Mountains within the Transylvanian region. The Dacian Wars (101-102, 105-106 CE) opened Dacia's borders to the Western World. After Rome fell there came, as one

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<sup>50</sup> Grumeza, *Dacia*, 19-42.

scholar put it, a “millennium of invasions.”<sup>51</sup> Slavs, Byzantines, armies from the Steppes, and the Ottomans all invaded and attempted to gain control of this region. Until the Ottomans came there was no peace in the Balkans; they were in a constant state of local warfare as well as victims to invaders. Many disputes were settled with the invasion and conquest of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>52</sup>

From the beginning, the area had been influenced by an array of religious ideologies, such as Vedic philosophies, that came with nomadic populations settling within the region, such as the Celts, the Germanic Tribes, Scythians, and Samaritans. Thus, the religious landscape was a balancing act between these groups and their principles. Religion during the Dacian empire was a mix of both monotheistic and pantheistic ideologies. From there, religion changed, as if malleable, depending upon the influence resulting from the influx of peoples.

With each conquest the religious demographic of the area changed; the population became more diverse as members of different faiths settled in the area and then stayed there after their particular ruler had lost control. As the religious landscape changed, the local population was exposed, and in some cases was receptive, to the new faiths; they assimilated and transferred ideologies with the folk religions of the area. From nomads coming from the East, to masses coming from lands that were ransacked by war, people moved into and made their homes within the Balkans, creating a unique religious landscape. As Micahel Kiel, an architectural historian described the area after the fall of Rome, “Ever since the downfall of the classical civilizations the Dobrudja has been a borderland between the settled empires of the early middle ages and the hosts of nomad peoples pouring in from the east.”<sup>53</sup> Each invading army and population brought with them

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<sup>51</sup> Alexandru Madgearu, *The Wars of the Balkan Peninsula: Their Medieval Origins* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *The Balkans in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30-50.

<sup>53</sup> Macheil Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (London: Variorum, 1990), 206. Dobrudja was a portion of present day Romania, located on the Black Sea coast.

their own ideology to throw into the melting pot that was already brewing in the region. With the Romans came the Roman Pantheon and, later, Christianity. Slavs brought a pagan ideology, Byzantines introduced Orthodox Christianity. Jewish populations settled here as well. Heterodoxical faiths and dualist sects in Christianity, such as Bogomilism and Paterine heresies, creeds that accepted concepts similar to reincarnation, found a place within this religious kaleidoscope. The Balkans became, over time, a land of many faiths.

Since the region was in a perpetual state of war, it seems unlikely that there was much time to persecute heterodoxical faiths. Thus, there was an opportunity for these faiths to coexist, for prolonged periods of time, without much hindrance. As it was explained in the book *The Balkans in World History*, when it came to the religious make-up of local villages, “a number of cosmopolitan urban islands formed, in which adherents of different faiths and carriers of various cultures lived side by side and learned from each other.”<sup>54</sup> Thus people who possessed various belief structures had existed next to each other peacefully, or otherwise, as a result. It was only when the region stabilized politically that the rules tightened and the attitude changed towards the religious other.

Political instability was usually present in the Balkans as a result of constant warfare. The lack of any solid political foothold allowed for laxity in laws and doctrine, so divergent ideologies had the ability to exist on a variety of levels. This amicable religious atmosphere had the ability to continue and thrive under Ottoman rule due to the malleable philosophy of the Bektashi Dervishes, who introduced, assimilated, and intermingled Islamic ideals with the rich spirituality of the locals. Their mystical ideology allowed for a coexistence that influenced not only the Bektashi, but population at large.

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<sup>54</sup> Wachtel, *The Balkans in World History*, 53.

### The Bektashi Dervishes

The religious landscape of the Balkans, as previously discussed, was distinct in comparison to Western Europe because it had a variety of religious movements that made their home within the area. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and heterodoxies appeared to be the normal religious demographics. The people in some localities within the region would assimilate and even transfer religious ideas and spaces from one faith to the next. This phenomenon was seemingly due to the flexibility of the religious ideology of the native population. This flexibility made it easy for the Bektashi order to find a home in the Balkans, without persecution for their own heterodoxical ideologies, and introduced Islam into the region as well. This allows for the plausibility of a more amicable and fluid religious coexistence, especially between Christianity and Islam, which were the prominent religions in the area.

The Bektashi order had been introduced to the Balkans around the early thirteenth century. Their ‘founder’, Hajj Bektash (c. 1209-1271) had supposedly studied Christianity to help the Islamization of Europe. In other words, he studied the “other” in order to subvert it. This study, however, created a more forward thinking community with spiritually syncretic ties to Christianity and Judaism. The unique philosophical make-up of Bektashism made its adherents especially popular among the lower class, whose folk religion and ideology stemmed from the history of the land and culture, and preexisting religious ideology. When attempting to deal with and convert new colonies of the Ottoman Empire, Bektashis had to create and adapt a more flexible religious ideology to be accepted by the local populace.<sup>55</sup>

The Bektashi ideology has prided itself for its pluralistic attitude towards members of other faiths. While it is foolish to assume that this modern pluralistic ideology existed from the outset of the order, it has to have historical origins and it is not

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<sup>55</sup> Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein, eds., *Bektachiyya: e'tudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), 16.

impossible to imagine it having been around since the later medieval period. After all, Bektashi ideology, which was originally from Anatolia, was exposed to and assimilated with a variety of ideologies, which made it all the more malleable. Macheil Kiel states,

In their ancient homes in Central Asia men like Haji Bektash and Sari Saltik<sup>56</sup> had been exposed to centuries old religious syncretism between Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Manichaeen, Christian, Gnostic and Islamic elements and an atmosphere laden with religious spirituality.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, from the very beginning Bektashism was already a faith that was richly enhanced by a mixture of diverse religious ideologies. F. W. Hasluck gives an even more detailed understanding of the vastness of Bektashi thought:

The theology of Bektashism ranges from pantheism to atheism. Its doctrine and ritual have numerous points of contact with Shia Mahommedanism, of which it is confessedly an offshoot, and with Christianity, to which it acknowledges itself akin. In theory at least abstinence from violence and charity to all men are inculcated: the good Bektashi should make no distinction in his conduct between Musulmans and non-Musulmans, and members of non- Musulman religions may be admitted to the order.<sup>58</sup>

Hasluck, then, believed that Bektashism had taught that good conduct, charity and behavior should not change when dealing with people of different faiths as well as ones of their own.

Owing to this, as well as to it being a mystical tradition, it possessed an open-minded ideology that stemmed from the acceptance of the limitlessness of God, a concept that is, as was previously discussed, shared by all mystics. Like many of the mystical traditions, but, unlike the majority of Sufi orders, they interpreted scripture in allegorical terms. In this way, the Bektashi doctrine could find itself more flexible: "Perhaps more than any

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<sup>56</sup> The assumed founder of the Bektashi order, and their most famous saint.

<sup>57</sup> Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture*, 211.

<sup>58</sup> F. W. Hasluck, "Ambiguous Sanctuaries and Bektashi Propaganda," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 20 (1913-1914): 95.

other Anatolian sect, the Bektashis interpreted Scripture allegorically and effaced all sharp contrasts and vicissitudes, preaching as they did their favorite theme of unity of existence.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, they found aspects of doctrine and scripture disposable if it would hinder unity and amicability among the masses.

Bektashis’ disdain for orthodoxy was apparent. They mocked orthodox faith and held it in a great deal of contempt. Their apparent lack of respect and mockery of the foolishness of orthodox faith, especially in their disregard for *Sharia* law made them a religious other within Islam. This disregard for Islamic law permitted them, they believed, to have a more in-depth religious coexistence, which extended from the accommodating attitude of the Empire. This caused displeasure in Sunni counterparts, who wanted the Balkans to be exposed to the true, orthodox, Sunni version of Islam. Margaret Hasluck explained the disdain that Sunni Muslims had for the Bektashi and how, in turn the latter, were more beloved and accepted by their non-Muslim and Shia counterparts:

By its preached and practiced gospel of love Bektashism therefore maintains its position among non-Sunni Moslems. Sunnis however abominate its adherents for their laxity about drink, veiling, daily prayer, etc., and their blasphemous equation of Ali to Mohammed. Said a Sunni, ‘We may eat and drink with a Christian without harm, but we break the spoon with which a Bektashi has eaten, we refuse him water when he is thirsty or if he has already drunk, and we break the pitcher and destroy the fountain from which he has drunk.’<sup>60</sup>

Fellow Sunni Muslims, then, found the Bektashi to be so deplorable that they would not even touch items that were exposed to Bektashis. Perhaps such disdain made Bektashis seek out the camaraderie of the religious other, who were fellow religious pariahs within the greater political scheme of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>59</sup> G. G. Arnakis, “Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12.4 (Oct. 1953): 243.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Hasluck, “The Non-Conformist Moslems of Albania,” *The Moslem World* 15 (1925): 394.

An aspect of Bektashism that helps to explain the phenomenon in question of shared religious sites is the idea of transference of a holy or sacred site from one religion to another. This transference occurred from the constant claiming and reclaiming of sacred spaces; thus, the holiness of a particular site, or an individual saint, became shared and revered by followers of both faiths. This is very common with Bektashi and Christian saints such as St. Nicolas and his equation with the most famous Bektashi saint, Sari Saltik. Such beliefs in the sacredness of a site or person were not bound by doctrine, or a religious text, and could therefore be fluid, which allowed for amicability to occur and for mutual worship to continue unhindered. Margaret Hasluck provided an excellent description as to the nature of this phenomenon:

Thus, on the social side, Bektashism makes definite attempts at bridging the gap between Christianity and Islam. On the religious side, its tolerance has resulted in Bektashis and Christians frequenting each other's shrines. The primary reason is the ordinary human desire for health of mind and body, fertility of crops, and the gift of children, which leads those to whom such blessings are denied to seek help from all possible quarters.<sup>61</sup>

Religious coexistence in the Balkans, then, had the possibility to be something more than just tolerance or accommodation, practices rooted in doctrinal religion. Owing to the unique and flexible nature of the region's peoples, and of the unorthodox mystical orders, the two intermingled. Common ground was found through culture or through the assimilation or understanding of certain aspects of the original faith. The beliefs of the Islamic order, the Bektashi, of the limitlessness of the Divine made it possible for discussion and understanding to occur. While there was judgment against, and dislike of the religious other, there was also a more pluralistic attitude, which challenges the present stereotypical image of the Middle Ages.

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<sup>61</sup> M. Hasluck, "The Non-Conformist Moslems of Albania," 397.



### Travelogues, Discrepancies, and Possibilities

In the introduction of this monograph the article “Secret Shrine Shared by Muslims and Christians”<sup>62</sup> was presented and questioned for its assertion that amicable religious coexistence had occurred in late medieval Macedonia and the Balkans in general, up to the present day. Now that it has been concluded that it is well within the realm of possibility through the flexible ideologies of mysticism, particularly the philosophy of the Bektashi dervishes, within the all-encompassing Balkan region, there remains a lingering question: where is the primary source evidence of such claims? The Balkans, because of its location and resources was the destination of frequent travelers during the medieval period, from Ibn Battuta, in the twelfth century, to Paul of Aleppo in the sixteenth century and Celebi Evliya in the seventeenth. All of these travelers left diaries, which have been reviewed in order to see if they contain anything even remotely pertain to the question of amicable religious coexistence. Sadly, they have been found wanting for such information.

The writings of Celebi Evliya and Ibn Battuta, however, in their description of the popularity of the infamous Bektashi Saint, Sari Saltik, added, at least in part, to the possibility in two ways. Firstly the description of the unorthodox practices of *Baba Saltuk* given by Ibn Battuta confirms that the practices done by Saltik, and by suggestion, the Bektashi Dervishes, were considered to be unorthodox. While that does not affirm amicable religious coexistence, it does uphold that the Bektashi went outside of orthodoxy [in order to gain] a foothold within the medieval Balkans. As H. T. Norris, the present authority in this field, quoted from Ibn Battuta’s travelogues, “They relate that this Saltuq was an ecstatic devotee, although things are told of him which are reproved by Divine Law.”<sup>63</sup> While this is just a simple sentence, it affirms that the Bektashi were not staunch followers of doctrine,

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<sup>62</sup> Arsovski, “Secret Shrine Shared by Muslims and Christians.”

<sup>63</sup> H. T. Norris, “Ibn Battuta’s Journey in the North-Eastern Balkans,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5.2 (1994): 213.

which can be taken as proof to their laxity with its uses for their own purposes.

Celebi Evliya, like Ibn Battuta, does not state outright that there was amicable religious coexistence in the Balkans; quite the contrary. His diaries are often interpreted as suggesting the opposite: that the Balkans was ripe with forced conversions in the attempt to save the infidels. Yet, there is one thing that can be taken from his narrative, for the sake of argument, which will prove useful in giving further credence to the possibility of amicable religious coexistence.

Celebi's work, concerning his trips within the Balkans, talk about the conquests and travels of Sari Saltik, the most beloved Bektashi saint, and acclaimed hero of the faith. The portion of these tales that seems to help further the claim of cordial coexistence is found within his discussion of the dual reverence of Sv Ty Nicola<sup>64</sup> by Christians and Muslims, though under different names. As Celebi explained, "At Danzig he [Saltik] conversed with Sv Ty Nicola the patriarch, whose name is the same as Sari Saltik, whom he killed, adopted his habit, and by this means converted many thousands to Islam."<sup>65</sup> Though this is not an examination of the text in the original language it is made clear that the name of Sari Saltik and Sv Ty Nicola are the same, a suggestion that holds true with the ideology of transference, which was discussed earlier in this essay. Celebi reiterated this fact when he pointed out that, "In Christian countries he is generally called St. Nicolas, is much revered and the Christian monks ask alms under his auspices."<sup>66</sup> Here, Celebi is not merely equating St. Nicolas with Sari Saltik, but has stated that Christian monks ask for alms through him. While it is not specified whether they are using the name of St. Nicolas or Sari Saltik, if the names are used interchangeably, that brings one to consider the plausibility of this claim.

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<sup>64</sup> St. Nicolas.

<sup>65</sup> Celebi Evliya, *Narratives of Travels in Europe Asia and Africa in the Seventeenth Century*, vol 1 (Memphis: General Books, 2010), 58.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 60

The last travelogue that aids in expanding the possibility of religious coexistence is that of Paul of Aleppo (1627-1669), the son of the Patriarch Macarius (d. 1672) of Syria. His travelogue was very much unlike those of Ibn Battuta or Celebi Evilya. Rather, at least within the Romanian principalities,<sup>67</sup> his travelogue showed the way Ottomans controlled a country within these 'buffer states' in the Balkans and how they were able to conduct their lives as a result.

Romania had a great deal of political and religious autonomy during the time of Aleppo's visit. Unlike countries that were directly part of the Empire, there was no *adan*, the Muslim call for prayer. However, Aleppo described the sounds of bells during the masses, which was something that was not commonly heard on the mainland. As Ioana Feodorov noted in her analysis of Aleppo's work: "The religious climate found by the Syrians is very favorable: the Romanians were free to follow their rites and rituals without any encumbrance."<sup>68</sup> Since Syria was under Ottoman control, it is safe to assume then that this was not a common practice throughout the empire, but was something unique unto the Romanian principalities, and possibly the Balkans as a whole. While this does not exactly pinpoint amicable religious coexistence, it does insinuate the notion that the Balkans was not a region that was dealt with in the same political and religious manner as other countries across the empire.

A final note that can be taken from Aleppo's writing was the pointing out of what was expected of the Christian Romanian princes by the Ottoman Empire. As he noted:

...as a lawful ruler of the country the Romanian prince was expected to protect all his subjects, including Muslim Turks; Greeks, Bulgarians, Jews, Arabs and Turks came to settle in Wallachia and Moldavia which

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<sup>67</sup> Wallachia, Dobrudja and Moldavia.

<sup>68</sup> Ioana Feodorov, "Ottoman Authority in the Romanian Principalities as Witnessed by a Christian Arab Traveler of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century," *Authority, Privacy and Public Order in Islam; Proceedings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of L'Union Europe* (2006): 300-303.

they considered secure tolerant countries, where they could have a good life.<sup>69</sup>

So then, if Aleppo noted that these countries were places where immigrants had the expectation of a good life with tolerance and security, then there must have been something unique about the region, socially, politically and religiously that allowed for that to occur. The treatment of immigrants showed that the area was unique in its flexibility of religious freedom, and if the expectation was had that it was a tolerant land allowing for a good life, then it had to be for a reason.

While the above sources have some discrepancies in them, especially Celebi in his hagiographical treatment of St. Sari Saltik, they do further the possibility of amicable religious coexistence, which now is arguably well within the realm of possibility as having occurred in the later Medieval period in the Balkans. Their suggestions of saint transference, unorthodox behavior, and the expectation for religious freedom open doorways to further understanding what is becoming a very heterogeneous religious dynamic in the Medieval world.

There are many more sources that, while unable to explore within this essay, deserve attention in order to lay further credence to the claims of amicable religious coexistence. The writings of traveler P. Lucas in the early eighteenth century who frequented Bektasi *Tekkes*<sup>70</sup> during his travels to Greece, the writings of Leunclavis Ann Turc, in 1526, a review of the historical documents about transferred saints like St. Nicolas, the writings of Tuffa al-Arwah, Jawidan-nam Fadallah and the review of various chronicles coming from areas around the Balkans including borderlands such as Hungary.

## Conclusion

So where does this leave this work and the claims of the BBC and other historians about some sort of amicable religious

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 301-302.

<sup>70</sup> Ottoman Turkish for "Shrines."

coexistence phenomenon that occurred in the Balkan region? The examination of mystical ideology, the socio-political history of the Balkans, the uniqueness of the Bektashi Dervishes, and primary resources, indicate that amicable religious coexistence is not outside the realm of possibility; in fact it is plausible.

There have been distinct images formed about religious coexistence in the medieval period, and these images are hard to shake. Their overbearing presence had prevented historians from examining what was an involved and complex religious dynamic in a particular place, and now historiography must be reconsidered. With the examination of the frontier region of the Balkans, whose borders were constantly redefined there was a different religious population and thus a different way of coexisting with the other. A new form of religious coexistence occurred that was a mix of pluralism, tolerance accommodation, transference and many more added to this concoction of coexistence. The significant factors that add to the possibility were the flexibility of the religious ethos of the mystics, particularly the Bektashi Dervishes, who prided themselves in their pleasant dealings with non-Muslim individuals. The very nature of the mystic being one that sought a closer union with the divine, made their journey more open minded in learning about the religious other rather than attempting to change their perspective. Dually noted, there were probably cases of attempted conversion on both sides but noting the possibility that amicable religious coexistence, something beyond known concepts had existed within the Medieval period creates now a new way of studying the medieval world. The historian's focus now shifts to the Balkans and other frontier regions that sit on the fringes of great empires, and realize their coping mechanisms, and their impeccable nature to allow room to welcome large influxes of people. The impact of such malleability is nothing short of astounding.

The study of amicable religious coexistence during the Medieval period now opens doors to new areas of research that will focus on how a world that was once considered 'dark,' i.e., the Dark Ages, is not, perhaps, one of the more enlightened times of human history. The pejorative notion of such a dark era was due to

the tendency of historians to focus on main political epicenters where there was unquestionable proof of the actions and occurrences that had taken place. By examining the fringes of the other parts of the world, and by looking at the flexibility of the religious ideologies that were prominent will open doors to a better understanding of a far more complex world than previously thought.

## **BAHÁ'Í FAITH**

# **NEW PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY AND CONFLICT <sup>1</sup>**

**Zarrín T. Caldwell**

### **Introduction: The Causes of Conflict**

Over the last couple of decades, the role that differing ethnic and religious identities have played in armed conflicts has received more academic attention and interest. The conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, between the Karen and Chin people in Burma, between Indians and Pakistanis in Kashmir, between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, and between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo are just a few examples, but, in the context of history, the list of such divides is a very long one. In these and similar cases, opposing ethnic and/or religious communities typically have a very strong sense of a particular identity that is juxtaposed against “the other.” The armed conflicts that these divides have engendered have led to not only considerable bloodshed, but also, in many cases, to the social and economic destruction of entire communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the institutions or specific communities of the Bahá'í Faith.

Of course, it is not always easy to define whether “us vs. them” identity formations are the driving motivators for any given conflict. In reality, such conflicts may be caused by a range of factors, including a battle for economic resources, a quest for political power, or conflict entrepreneurs (those benefiting from the conflict) inflaming any number of divides in society to pursue self-serving agendas. In speaking about the role of religion in conflict, for example, the United States Institute of Peace notes that “religion is often intertwined with a range of causal factors—economic, political, and social—that define, propel, and sustain conflict.”<sup>2</sup> Take Nigeria. The media often portray the conflict in Nigeria as based on Christian/Muslim religious divides. As the USIP report notes, however, economic struggle and competition between migrants and indigenous people also play into the North-South conflict in that country. Even the genocide in Rwanda in the mid 1990s was inflamed by economic privileges that the Hutus believed had gone to the Tutsi ethnic group since the time of Belgium’s colonial rule.

Ultimately, scholars in this field have different opinions over the main drivers of conflict and cite a range of diverse causes such as competition over land or capital, the holding of different values, unmet psychological needs, social and economic discrimination, or leadership that promotes polarized narratives. In the latter case, what compels masses of people to follow leaders who wage genocidal campaigns against another group? Deep-seated insecurities are one reason. In his work on ethnic conflicts, for example, Daniel L. Byman suggests that groups pursue conflict in order to obtain security for themselves at the expense of others; that they may do so to seek status, or certain privileges, over others; or that their desire to gain more power or resources entails taking it from other groups. Political leaders exploit the fears associated with all of the above, notes Byman.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Smock, “Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace” (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, February 2008), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel L. Byman, *Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2002).



Despite the various reasons that armed conflict happens, identity remains an important part of the mix and should be taken seriously in any conflict analysis. As Jay Rothman explains in his book on *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict: In Nations, Organizations, and Communities*, what may appear to be conventional disputes over something like resources or socioeconomic disparities may actually have deeper roots related to identity. He adds that identity-based conflicts, “are deeply rooted in the underlying individual human needs and values that together constitute people’s social identities, particularly in the context of group affiliation, loyalties, and solidarity.”<sup>4</sup>

Purists may say that every conflict is about identity at some level and others may see a wide range of contributing factors. If, however, the conflict involves survival, cultural expression, or recognition, then identity factors may well be at play, the conflict may be harder to resolve, and the stakes are likely to be much higher.<sup>5</sup> But, there is hope. Rothman claims, for example, that because these types of conflict focus on common human needs and deal with whom one is at much deeper levels, they have the potential “to generate great creativity and positive transformation.”<sup>6</sup>

### Identity Matters

Before moving on to what the Bahá’í teachings have to offer on these themes, it is important to review how identity formations can be shaped in positive or negative ways. In the former case, people define themselves in all kinds of different ways—by gender, cultural group, religion, nationality, or profession for example. People generally have multiple identities that they affiliate with and these also change throughout time. Having diverse identities is a very important part of being human and is how individuals find their place in the world and fit into a wider social framework.

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<sup>4</sup> Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict: in Nations, Organizations, and Communities* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, xii.

Without these frameworks, individuals can suffer from various pathologies and feelings of alienation.

Forming narratives of who we are in relationship to a collective whole (or having social identities) is particularly critical to self-development. The literature on identity tends to focus on individuals. However, and especially when it comes to peacebuilding, the concept of forming collective identities—or when communities come together for a common purpose that they can only achieve by working together—is also very important. As Matt Weinberg, a scholar on this topic and also a Bahá'í, notes in a paper about identity, “Social, cultural, and other narratives directly impact who we are. They provide context and structure for our lives, allowing us to link what we wish to become to a wider human inheritance, thereby providing a basis for meaningful collective life. Various narratives of identity serve as vehicles of unity, bringing coherence and direction to the disparate experiences of individuals.”<sup>7</sup>

While identity formation is a positive aspect of being human, it does, however, have the potential to become problematic when an individual or group focuses on a primary identity that becomes so all consuming that it leads to violence against those holding opposing views. For an inter-group (e.g., ethnic or religious) conflict to occur, notes Dr. Louis Kriesberg at Syracuse University, “the opponents must have a sense of collective identity about themselves and about their adversary; each side believing the fight is between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” These kinds of conflicts, adds Kriesberg, are particularly prone to becoming intractable. The enduring identities of ethnic groups, identities that are non-compromising, identities built on viewing an enemy as subhuman, or identities associated with nationalist sentiments are among identity formations that can keep conflicts going, he adds.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Matt Weinberg, “WorldWatch” in *Bahá'í World* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre 2005-2006), 175.

<sup>8</sup> Louise Kriesberg, “Identity Issues,” Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, eds., *Beyond Intractability* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2003), <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/identity-issues> (accessed August 1, 2011).

While it cannot be addressed in any depth in this paper, it is worth citing the identity formations to which a people may be particularly attached and that can lead to conflict. Identification with the nation-state, for instance, remains a particularly strong affiliation at the dawn of the millennium. Although the nation-state concept is a relatively recent development in history and largely an artificial construct,<sup>9</sup> identification with it has often been an important way to unite disparate people in a larger common cause.<sup>10</sup> Nationalist sentiment, however, can also become a variant of ethnocentrism, or the tendency to see one's own group as superior as and more deserving of respect than all others.<sup>11</sup> The rise of Nazi Germany prior to World War II offers an historical example and the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s a more contemporary one.

National and ethnic identity may also be closely tied. Whereas national identity generally refers to the country one is a citizen of, ethnic origin refers to the sharing of a common culture and language. These may, or may not, be the same. Koreans, for example, may see themselves as both citizens of Korea and ethnic Koreans. The Kurds, however, may be citizens of Iraq, but identify more closely with their ethnic, Kurdish identity. When an ethnic group has been oppressed or dominated by others, or perceive that they have been so, they can also develop an identity of victimhood, which may be passed on through generations—such as in the Armenian community.<sup>12</sup> Collective or historical traumas can shape

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<sup>9</sup> There is a variety of emerging literature on this topic. A synopsis of these ideas can be found in Devin T. Stewart, *The Myth of the Nation-State* (New York: Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> The multicultural mix of people that have come to associate themselves with a strong American national identity, and to support a common constitution, is a case in point.

<sup>11</sup> Louise Kriesberg, *Beyond Intractability*, originally included in Robert A. Levine and Donald T. Campbell, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> From 1915-1923, what was then the Ottoman Empire forcibly exiled Armenians based, in part, on their support of the Russian army during World War I. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians died from either starvation or at the hands of mobs of Muslim Turks. Debates still rage over this history, with

identity in very strong ways. But, if they are to continue doing so, adds Kriesberg, “they must be kept alive in families, schools, and religious institutions, and sometimes aroused and amplified by political leaders, intellectuals, or other influential persons.”<sup>13</sup>

Affiliation with a religion or faith tradition is another important and primary identity for many people around the world.<sup>14</sup> The faith and values inherent in religious traditions offer much richness and order to the world. Religion, when used in the interest of the greater good, acts as a civilizing force that helps curtail an individual’s self-serving instincts, provides values for society, and has served as a way to unite disparate peoples.<sup>15</sup> Religious identity, however, can also become a negative force when opposing sides in a conflict use these affiliations to demarcate “us vs. them” dividing lines that result in violence. An historical example of religiously-motivated violence is the Crusades in the Middle Ages. The ongoing conflict between Hindu and Muslim communities in northern India, which has spawned acts of violence for decades, offers a more contemporary example.<sup>16</sup>

Ethnic and religious differences are often combined too in a very strong ethno-religious identity. “In Northern Ireland, as in Croatia and Serbia, as in Ukraine, ethnicity, religion and politics are soldered together into identities so total that it takes a defiant

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Armenians calling it genocide and Turks claiming it was a civil war. However, either side defines it, the Armenian identity today remains very closely tied to this history. (This text is informed by work that the author has done for the U.S. Institute of Peace where she serves as an occasional contractor.)

<sup>13</sup> Louise Kriesberg, *Beyond Intractability*.

<sup>14</sup> Gallup has been measuring the world’s religiosity for a number of years by asking representative samples whether religion was important in their daily lives. A 2009 poll conducted in 146 countries and territories indicated that, across all populations, the median proportion of residents who answered in the affirmative was 84 percent, [http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance\\_of\\_religion\\_by\\_country](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance_of_religion_by_country) (accessed October 2, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> The unification of the warring tribes of Arabia under the common banner of Islam is one example.

<sup>16</sup> The Crusades was a 200+ year religiously-sanctioned military campaign in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries that was largely fought by the Roman Catholics to regain control of the Holy Land from Muslim expansion. Religious identity was central to this conflict.

individual to escape their clutches,” notes a recent book on border politics.<sup>17</sup> The text goes on to explain how people are often stereotyped into these definitional boxes whether they want to be or not. An entire society may get swept up in these identity formations—often led by charismatic individuals that make a strong case for an exclusionary politics.

### **Bahá’í Perspectives on Identity**

So, given the above context, what do the Bahá’í writings contribute to the important discussion of identity and conflict? Like other religious traditions, the Bahá’í Faith has a founder, revealed scriptures, laws, and institutional structures at local, national, and international levels. It is unique among religions, however, for the emphasis its scriptures place on topics such as world peace, security, governance, and development. Identity too is a topic that is woven throughout its teachings. The place of identity in the Bahá’í Faith is a very multidimensional one. The Faith’s writings simultaneously address the imperative of embracing a common human identity that we all share, as well as the value of diversity and individual capacity. Both of these identities (universal and particular) are set in the context of humankind’s larger spiritual identity and reality. While oneness and universality are themes that most religious scholars associate with the Bahá’í Faith, a closer examination of identity in the Faith’s writings show that it is considerably more nuanced.

As those who have some familiarity with the Bahá’í Faith are aware, its teachings emphasize that the world’s peoples share a common human identity and that the time is at hand to both acknowledge this reality and to ensure that, for the sake of the advancement of civilization, social institutions must begin to reflect this principle. “The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens,” noted Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá’í

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey, *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 170.

Faith, more than a century ago.<sup>18</sup> Far from being just an ideal and pious hope, a commitment to unity is central to the Bahá'í teachings and positioned as the next necessary stage in humanity's evolution. As clarified by the Universal House of Justice—the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith—in *The Promise of World Peace*:

The Bahá'í Faith regards the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs as a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.<sup>19</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh and the interpreter of his teachings, also wrote a great deal on the theme of unity and a shared human identity, and he spoke of it widely in his travels to both Europe and America in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He spoke of the need for an “unlimited unity” over the more limited unities of lineage, tongue, nation, and politics.

The unity which is productive of unlimited results is first a unity of mankind which recognizes that all are sheltered beneath the overshadowing glory of the All-Glorious; that all are servants of one God; for all breathe the same atmosphere, live upon the same earth, move beneath the same heavens, receive effulgence from the same sun and are under the protection of one God. This is the most great unity, and its results are lasting if humanity adheres to it; but humankind has hitherto violated it, adhering to sectarian or other limited unities such as racial, patriotic or unity of self-interests; therefore no great results have been forthcoming.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988), 167.

<sup>19</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, Ebook edition (Haifa, Israel: Bahá’í World Centre, 2006), 3.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), 190-194.

Throughout the Bahá'í writings, its adherents are called to be “world citizens.” This principle may have seemed entirely unrealistic only a century ago, and certainly when Bahá'u'lláh revealed his Faith in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today though, as our interactions with others increasingly transcend traditional boundaries defined by geography, race, culture, or other divides, the idea of having a global identity is less far-fetched. An increasing number of civil society initiatives, people's movements, government officials, multinational corporations, educators, and others, now commit their energies to advancing these concepts in some form.

Despite the emphasis in the Bahá'í writings on the essential oneness of the human family, its' teachings do not disregard other loyalties. Love of one's country, a “sane patriotism,” and an individual's pride in their own cultural heritage are all encouraged. The diversities of the human race are likened to a garden that is all the more appealing because of its diversity of shape, fragrance, and color. Among other examples, the Bahá'í Faith pays great tribute to the rich spiritual traditions, languages, and experiences of the world's indigenous peoples. Although recognition of one's place in the larger human family is central to the Bahá'í teachings, this principle

... can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race.<sup>21</sup>

In a statement to the International Consultative Conference on School Education in relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief,

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<sup>21</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Ebook Edition, (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006), 77.

Tolerance and Non-discrimination in November 2001, the Bahá'í International Community further explains these relationships:

That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inherent diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. Hence, acceptance of the concept of unity in diversity implies the development of a global consciousness, a sense of world citizenship, and a love for all of humanity. It induces every individual to realize that, since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a trust of the whole and has a responsibility to the whole. It further suggests that if a peaceful international community is to emerge, then the complex and varied cultural expressions of humanity must be allowed to develop and flourish, as well as to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization.<sup>22</sup>

As is clear from these passages, “unity in diversity” is a preeminent principle and was an expression used in the Bahá'í writings long before its more widely-accepted usage—such as in the now official mottos of various nation states, including India, Ghana, Indonesia, and South Africa.<sup>23</sup> And, Bahá'í viewpoints on this matter are now well into the mainstream. Noted scholars writing about identity in a modern age—such as Kwame A. Appiah, Bhikhu Parekh, and Amartya Sen—all hold to the concept that the necessarily diverse identities that people have need to be balanced with recognition of our common humanity, or at least the need for more collaboration to solve a myriad of shared global problems.

While valuing diversity, but calling its adherents to a wider loyalty to humankind, identity in the Bahá'í Faith, however, goes

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<sup>22</sup> Bahá'í International Community, “Belief and Tolerance: Lights Amidst the Darkness,” a statement presented to the International Consultative Conference on School Education in relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and Non-discrimination, Madrid, Spain, 23-25 November, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity\\_in\\_diversity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity_in_diversity) (accessed September 23, 2011).



beyond understanding one's position in the larger society. It takes on a much more personal and individual character with the emphasis that its teachings place on spiritual identity. In many ways, this is the foundation of all other identity formations. Namely, individuals have a physical, intellectual, and spiritual reality. The material world largely serves as the means or conduit through which one's spiritual qualities are refined and developed for continued progress in "all the worlds of God." Through this spiritual reality, note the Bahá'í writings, "one discovers spiritual revelations. ... It is an eternal reality, an indestructible reality, a reality belonging to the divine, supernatural kingdom; a reality whereby the world is illumined, a reality which grants unto man eternal life."<sup>24</sup> Understanding this spiritual reality, imply the Bahá'í writings, is also central to achieving universal peace – in that the spiritual bonds formed between people are among the strongest and most long-lasting.

Until all nations and peoples become united by the bonds of the Holy Spirit in this real fraternity, until national and international prejudices are effaced in the reality of this spiritual brotherhood, true progress, prosperity and lasting happiness will not be attained by man.<sup>25</sup>

In a similar vein, 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the different "collective centers" that characterize the life of humanity. These include patriotism, nationalism, identity of interests, and political alliances. While these affiliations are important to organizing society, he notes, they are "the matter and not the substance, accidental and not eternal, temporary and not everlasting" and will not survive great revolutions and upheavals. Rather, the eternal collective center is the body of divine teachings that is influenced by the Holy Spirit and "destroys the foundation of differences."<sup>26</sup> These and other passages make clear that a spiritual reality is both fundamental to our being and a necessary component of peace.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968), 51.

<sup>25</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 143.

<sup>26</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993), 101-107.

### A Closer Look at Divisive Paradigms

A great deal of the Bahá'í writings focus on a theme of unity and, as such, they are also very direct when it comes to condemning divisive paradigms. The Bahá'í teachings make it quite clear that narrowly-construed identities associated with racism, nationalism, and religious sectarianism, among others, are destructive of civilization generally. Shoghi Effendi, the appointed head of Bahá'í community until his passing in the mid 1950s, pointed in quite strong language to the “false gods” of “Nationalism, Racism and Communism” that humanity has blindly worshiped and to which “the flesh and blood of the slaughtered multitudes” have been sacrificed.<sup>27</sup>

The theories and policies, so unsound, so pernicious, which deify the state and exalt the nation above mankind, which seek to subordinate the sister races of the world to one single race, which discriminate between the black and the white, and which tolerate the dominance of one privileged class over all others – these are the dark, the false, and crooked doctrines for which any man or people who believes in them, or acts upon them, must, sooner or later, incur the wrath and chastisement of God.<sup>28</sup>

In another passage, Shoghi Effendi is quite firm on the importance of putting loyalties like nationalism in their proper context if humanity is to reach the next stage in its evolution.

Unification of the whole of humankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and

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<sup>27</sup> Although communism is mentioned in this passage, the Bahá'í writings also address the detrimental effects associated with materialism and advocate a spiritual solution to economic problems.

<sup>28</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 113

wholeness of human relationships, and establish once [and] for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.<sup>29</sup>

With respect to religion, the Bahá'í writings address both its contributions to society and the way religion has been misused. In the first instance, they laud the role of religious leaders who have practiced justice and fairness. Religion in its true form is seen as “conducive to the progress and uplift of the world,” as “the cause of human betterment,” the “source of human enlightenment,” and involving the “acquisition of praiseworthy attributes.”<sup>30</sup> Throughout the Bahá'í writings, the role of religion is lauded as a “brilliant light” and as “an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the people of the world.”<sup>31</sup> In a pointed statement to the world's religious leaders in 2002, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith noted the power of religion to awaken “in whole populations capacities to love, to forgive, to create, to dare greatly, to overcome prejudice, to sacrifice for the common good and to discipline the impulses of an animal instinct.”<sup>32</sup>

Despite many texts on the importance of religion and morality in advancing civilization, neither were the founders of the Bahá'í Faith blind to the many injustices committed in the name of religion. The Faith's writings include numerous passages about the damage that religious prejudice has done to society. Harsh words are reserved for those religious leaders who have led people astray to pursue their own selfish agendas. Bahá'u'lláh himself was subjected to over 40 years of imprisonment, torture, and a series of banishments at the hands of both secular and religious authorities in the Ottoman Empire and Persia in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>29</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 275.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 179.

<sup>31</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, 113

<sup>32</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *Letter to the World's Religious Leaders* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Center, 2002), 3.

when He revealed His cause.<sup>33</sup> As he noted in one of his preeminent works, *The Book of Certitude*:

Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory.<sup>34</sup>

Many passages in Bahá'u'lláh's work are devoted to this theme. Shortly before his passing in 1892, for example, he wrote a letter to a Muslim cleric who was violently opposed to his cause:

How numerous the oppressors before thee who have arisen to quench the light of God, and how many the impious who murdered and pillaged until the hearts and souls of men groaned by reason of their cruelty! The sun of justice hath been obscured, inasmuch as the embodiment of tyranny hath been [e]stablished upon the throne of hatred, and yet the people understand not.<sup>35</sup>

The Bahá'í writings also address the conflicts occurring between religions and emphasize that these divisions often have more to do with human interpretations over religious truth than with the fundamental teachings of these faiths, which, at their heart, are focused on love for and service to others. Appreciation for the divine foundations of all religions are lauded in the Bahá'í Faith, but its teachings also make clear that, when religion is used as way to divide people, it is better for it not to exist. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes clear:

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<sup>33</sup> For more information on the life of Bahá'u'lláh, see <http://info.bahai.org/bahauallah.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), 15.

<sup>35</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), 101.

Inasmuch as human interpretations and blind imitations differ widely, religious strife and disagreement have arisen among humankind, the light of true religion has been extinguished and the unity of the world of humanity destroyed. The prophets of God voiced the spirit of unity and agreement. They have been the founders of divine reality. Therefore if the nations of the world forsake imitations and investigate the reality underlying the revealed Word of God they will agree and become reconciled. For reality is one and not multiple. ... Religion must be the source of fellowship, the cause of unity and the nearness of God to man. If it rouses hatred and strife it is evident that absence of religion is preferable and an irreligious man better than one who professes it. According to the divine will and intention, religion should be the cause of love and agreement, a bond to unify all humankind for it is a message of peace and good-will to man from God.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous references can be found in the Bahá'í writings to those in positions of power during various historical periods who have brought ruin to countless societies and spilled the blood of the innocents. In more contemporary documents, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith—the Universal House of Justice—comments on the “horrors being visited upon hapless populations today by outbursts of fanaticism that shame the name of religion” and calls upon both religious leaders and the “battalions of nationalism” to put away the “inflammatory rhetoric designed to provoke hatred and fear of others” and accept the “processes of unification that are transforming the rest of humanity’s social relationships.”<sup>37</sup>

While the history of shameful acts committed in the name of religion cannot be examined in-depth here, the point remains that the Bahá'í writings strongly condemn those who have created unnecessary divisions in society as a means to further their own advantages. Passages throughout the Bahá'í writings attest to the terrible consequences of ethnic and religious prejudices and the divine justice awaiting those promoting these ideologies.

A more recent, 2009 paper from a Bahá'í-inspired agency called the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, speaks more

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 141 and 181.

<sup>37</sup> Universal House of Justice, *Letter to the World’s Religious Leaders*, 2.

broadly to the detrimental effects that divisive ideologies as a whole have had, and are having, on contemporary society:

... those who have sought advantage at the expense of others have often invoked real or imagined differences as a means of dividing people—in order to advance their own interests and ambitions. Over time, these distinctions born of self-interest have solidified into stereotyped constructs related to race, gender, nationality and ethnicity. These stereotyped constructs have often been used to define human beings and to divide them into groups. Narrowly identifying with particular physical or social characteristics and placing them at the center of our understanding of self and other has had ruinous consequences, whether that identity has been used as a basis for seeking preference over others or has congealed in response to the experience of prejudice and oppression. The deeply fragmented social reality that we find around us today is, in part, a consequence of these narrow identity constructs and attachments.<sup>38</sup>

### Considering Consequences

As this paper has sought to demonstrate, pride in one's identity—affiliated, for example, with religion, ethnicity, or culture—has much to offer the world. The Bahá'í writings support this diversity, but also make clear that these identity constructs are less defensible when such affiliations move from being a source of celebration to a harbinger of division. Abandoning “prejudices of race, class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, or everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others,” is the high standard to which adherents of the Bahá'í Faith are called, but it is not presumed to be an easy task.<sup>39</sup> In fact, believing in one's superiority over others is a hallmark of the human condition and a personal tendency that many, from any faith tradition, struggle against on a daily basis.

Of greater concern, however, are primary identities or strongly-held identity affiliations that position people along “us vs. them” dividing lines and result in harm or violence to others. In the kind

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<sup>38</sup> Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, *Advancing Toward the Equality of Women and Men*, 2. See also <http://www.globalprosperity.org>.

<sup>39</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 17.

of world we now live in, and where cooperation is becoming a paradigm needed for our survival, such a framework should be increasingly subject to inspection. As Weinberg suggests in a paper about identity, “In a world convulsed by contention and conflict, conceptions of identity that feed the forces of prejudice and mistrust must be closely examined. Assertions that certain populations can be neatly partitioned into oppositional categories of affiliation deserve particular scrutiny.”<sup>40</sup> In his book on “Identity and Violence,” Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen makes similar points about such partitioning. Namely, that any given person’s identity is so diverse today that dividing humanity up into polarized categories—such as the West vs. the Islamic world—not only makes little sense, but cuts us off from intellectual inquiry and has the potential to cultivate violence.<sup>41</sup>

In his book, Sen does not devote significant space to a discourse about global identity, but does focus on ways to create more collaboration within countries. In referring to Britain, for example, he suggests that, as members of British society think of themselves as, say, religious ethnicities first and British second, it can result in a “fractional view” that makes the country more “open to the preaching and cultivation of sectarian violence.” He adds that “the future of multiethnic Britain must lie in recognizing, supporting, and helping to advance the many different ways in which citizens with distinct politics, linguistic heritage, and social priorities can interact with each other in their different capacities, including as citizens.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Sen does not do so, one could, presumably, also take his argument one level higher. Namely, that as those in nation-states think of themselves as nationalists first and members of a global community second, it can result in similar “fractional views” that lead to violence. And, it could be argued that our failure to move beyond increasingly “narrow identity constructs” is

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<sup>40</sup> Matt Weinberg, *Bahá’i World*, 178.

<sup>41</sup> Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2006), 40-46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

leading not only to violence at many levels (manifested in ethno-religious conflicts, for example), but also to system failure.

The destruction of the environment and the global financial crisis are just two examples of these failures in that policymakers are approaching these issues from a nation-state framework rather than the global view they require. Problems like these that require systems-level thinking are, unfortunately, all too often being dealt with by reductionist means. While those espousing realist theories of international relations have often been quick to call globally-oriented views naïve, it can also be claimed that, from a realist perspective, a failure to adapt our worldviews to fit changing conditions is coming at significant costs. The consequences of not thinking in these totalities is likely to have, and is already having, serious consequences. These systemic links are referenced throughout the Bahá'í writings, such as a passage from Shoghi Effendi below:

The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole.<sup>43</sup>

If one understands the need for this more holistic view, it raises a more basic question of whether the wide range of global problems that require humanity's attention are likely to be solved if divisive identity constructs, increasingly angry and polarized discourses, and a failure to recognize our common human needs, are making collaboration impossible. As economic and other crises intensify, it is likely that many people will form more rigid and exclusive identity groups. "While the complexity and extent of the problems of the world require a perspective that sees the interconnected and often global nature of causes to problems, the crises of our times are narrowing the perspectives of vast numbers of people," suggests Dr. John Woodall, a Bahá'í and formerly a

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<sup>43</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, 122.



psychiatrist at the faculty of Harvard Medical School.<sup>44</sup> He goes on to note that finding the collective will to address global problems will require a broadening of identity that, in part, needs to be taught in a systematic way.

The Bahá'í writings add that the most urgent issues facing humanity can only be addressed collectively and that norms and institutions need urgently to be updated to reflect a new era in human history. At a time that calls local and national institutions to more global cooperation than ever before, it is only fair to ask whether attachments to traditional divisions in our society (particularly related to the ethnic and religious divides addressed in this paper) can meet our current requirements. Or, is humanity, and even our planet, being sacrificed for adherence to doctrines that are past their time? As Shoghi Effendi reiterated in 1938:

If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

In an article on “Discourse, Identity, and Global Citizenship” published in *Peace Review*, Michael Karlberg, both a Bahá'í and a noted scholar on these topics, points to a growing list of global problems that, he posits, are unlikely to be solved unless humanity is willing to set aside some “old cultural patterns,” and he relates these patterns directly to identity. He explains as follows:

Our reproductive and technological success has enabled us to populate, and thrive in, every part of this planet. This success has enabled us to

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<sup>44</sup> John Woodall, “Global Education and Mobilizing Political Will for Larger Freedom,” *World Order Magazine* 36.4 (2005): 47.

<sup>45</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 41-42.

live in communities of ever increasing complexity, which have enriched our existence in many ways. But our success has now brought us to a critical juncture in human history. We have arrived at a moment of unprecedented social and ecological interdependence on a planetary scale, but we have not yet learned how to live together under these new conditions. The problem is that we are captives of old cultural patterns that are not well-adapted to these new conditions. Among these cultural patterns are the divisive identity constructs referred to earlier. ...As long as people understand the world primarily in terms of 'us' and 'them'—whether those categories be racial, national, ideological, or religious—humanity will be unable to realize its common interests and work toward them. This is because interests are so closely linked to identities.<sup>46</sup>

Bahá'í institutions around the world are themselves engaged in a learning process about how to build community across divides. The Bahá'í community is very diverse and has struggled for over a century with putting principles related to fellowship and service into practice. Bahá'ís, like individuals everywhere, are “captives of old cultural patterns” related to prejudice. The community, however, is guided by a universal vision and consultative processes that serve as a principal mechanism for overcoming entrenched patterns of thinking among diverse groups.

Many contemporary thinkers would acknowledge that the world is at a critical turning point and requires the adaptation of many institutions to a newer reality. Philosopher Kwame A. Appiah notes, for example, that the challenge before us “is to take minds and hearts formed over the long millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe that we have become.”<sup>47</sup> But, an awareness of why it is important to foster a global, or common human identity, is a necessary precondition. As repeated several times in this paper, that awareness does not preclude a pride in other loyalties, but it does call humanity to a rethinking of those attachments that are causing harmful, destructive divisions in

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<sup>46</sup> Michael Karlberg, “Discourse, Identity, and Global Citizenship,” *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 20.3 (2008): 311-312.

<sup>47</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), xiii.

society and to abandon practices that are no longer meeting the requirements of an evolving society. Far from just nice principles to follow, failure to adapt to the new realities of our time may well have dire consequences at multiple levels.

### **Practical Implementation**

Although the topics presented in this paper may seem abstract at one level, at another they lend themselves to some potential ways to work with different conceptions of identity as tools for peacebuilding and conflict management. While the musings that follow are those of the author's only, they build upon the principles cited in this article. The following practical suggestions revolve around support for spiritually-based approaches, "attractors" in the system, and educational initiatives as a means to advance peacebuilding.

On the first point, there are certainly many religious traditions, including the Bahá'í Faith, that emphasize the importance of a spiritual identity and the human soul's relationship to a divine spirit. But, the question remains how to draw on this untapped energy, depth of knowing, and moral imagination to advance peace. As a contemporary paper from the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity notes:

Men and women of insight, often inspired by the sacred scriptures of the world, have throughout history sought to broaden human consciousness by drawing attention to that which is most essential about human nature: the inner reality with which every human being is born, the reflection of the Divine in each of us, that which we all share in common, that which is whole within us, as opposed to the fragmented labels with which society tags us in the course of our life.<sup>48</sup>

Religious leaders—from Martin Luther King in the United States to Desmond Tutu in South Africa to Mother Theresa in India to the Dalai Lama in Tibet—have been vital voices for peace and justice. And, there are many more "unsung heroes" doing this

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<sup>48</sup> Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, *Advancing Toward the Equality of Women and Men*, 2.

important work. Most attention in this subfield, however—particularly in the media—is on religion as a source of division and a cause of conflict vs. a vehicle through which people can experience a shared commitment to a spiritual reality. Of course, interfaith movements have flourished over the last century and there are also many religious actors and peacebuilders who are encouraging interfaith dialogue and supporting reconciliation.<sup>49</sup> Even in interfaith fora though, the focus often is on appreciating the differences, theological and otherwise, between participants rather than on examining the spiritual identities and common values that unite them.

When so many people around the world seek what is spiritual and gives their lives meaning—even when it is not in the sense of following a traditional religious path or structure—such an identity would seem to have an important part to play in renewal. As politicians and intellectuals, especially in the West, often rush to disassociate themselves from anything with a religious or faith-inspired link, it may be that one of the greatest means for transforming societies is being overlooked. “To draw upon the spiritual roots of motivation that lie at the heart of human identity and purpose is to tap the one impulse that can ensure genuine social transformation,” suggests the Bahá’í International Community.<sup>50</sup> There are some initiatives are focusing on learning about the lived spiritualities of “the other” and the religious values—like compassion—that are critical to peacebuilding, but how the spiritual impulse can be supported at the program level remains a rich avenue to explore.

On the second point, supporting those who are working together across traditional divides is critical. In an interesting, new book called “The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly

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<sup>49</sup> The U.S. Institute of Peace, for example, has a program devoted to looking at ways that religious leaders globally are fostering peace and reconciliation in their societies, <http://www.usip.org/programs/centers/religion-and-peace-making> (accessed September 23, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> The Bahá’í International Community, *Overcoming Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity in Public Institutions: A Bahá’í Perspective*, May 2001, <http://statements.bahai.org/01-0528.htm> (accessed September 23, 2011).

Impossible Conflicts,” Dr. Peter Coleman at Columbia University and a multi-disciplinary team of scientists, mathematicians, anthropologists, conflict managers, and others explain that intractable conflicts are intractable because they have self-organized into a complex, interrelated, and mutually-reinforcing system.<sup>51</sup> These systems are understood in a simplified “us vs. them” narrative. To get out of these conflicts, Coleman suggest, means to empower the “latent attractors” in the system and to break the institutionalization of conflict narratives.<sup>52</sup> Coleman looks at conflict from a systems point of view, which requires examining the underlying patterns of the system and the role that “attractors” can play in moving the system into a state of greater equilibrium.

In his book, Coleman also advocates recognizing and supporting what is working, i.e., individuals or groups who are using their social capital to stay connected to the “other side.” In the peacebuilding and conflict management field overall, the focus is all too often on what is not working rather than what is. To make a very small contribution to the latter, this author’s own peacebuilding website at [www.modelsofunity.net](http://www.modelsofunity.net) features case studies of those who are working together across racial, ethnic and religious divides to further the social, economic, and spiritual life of their communities. Initial findings from this work indicate that sustainable peace is more likely to be achieved when diverse groups are working together on “superordinate” goals, or functional activities that all participants value.<sup>53</sup>

Along these same lines, more thought might be given to whether policymakers and practitioners are paying too much attention to the dividers in society vs. the connectors. Peacebuilders themselves remain conflicted over the degree to

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<sup>51</sup> Peter D. Coleman, *The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly Impossible Conflicts* (Philadelphia: Perseus Books Group, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Reference for this text, and a review of the book, comes from Roi Ben-Yehuda, The Arty Semite Blog, July 19, 2011, <http://blogs.forward.com/the-arty-semite/139970> (accessed September 23, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> “Superordinate” is a term in psychology that defines the goals that are achieved when those normally in opposition to each other are working together.

which potential “spoilers” should be brought into the peace process. For example, conflict entrepreneurs are often the main actors at peace negotiations and are appeased for the sake of getting a peace deal in the short term. It is far less certain that such strategies are sustainable over the long term. In fact, keeping such individuals in power often leads to more corruption and criminal violence. More importantly, many of those who have suffered untold misery at the hands of these oppressors see these policies as grossly unjust. The Dayton Peace Accords, for example, did end the bloodshed of the Yugoslav Wars in 1995, but also maintained the power of the national elites who were responsible for the war.<sup>54</sup> Today, the region is governed by two semi-autonomous entities, but characterized by pervasive ethnic divisions, economic problems, and significant social unrest that threatens to erupt once again. One can only wonder what might have been different if there had been a far more inclusive process that gave resources to the “latent attractors” in the system rather than legitimizing the dividers who instigated the conflict in the first place. As many peacebuilders would agree, peace is often not sustainable without justice. “That which trained the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment” noted Bahá’u’lláh, “These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.”<sup>55</sup> This paper has only touched on some of the injustices committed by those espousing divisive ideologies. However, religious teachings on the imperatives of justice, from multiple faith traditions, would seemingly have much to contribute to this discussion.

Finally, in addition to empowering peacebuilders and exploring the role of spiritual identities in conflict transformation, there may be nothing that is more urgent than educational initiatives that can move society out of divisive paradigms. Religious leaders can play a vital role in this work because of their credibility and the influence they exert in local communities. There are numerous

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<sup>54</sup> Roberto Belloni, “Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transitions,” Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 22-25 March 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* (Haifa, Israel: Bahá’í World Centre, 1982), 26.

ways that one can be proud of, and believe in, one's own ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage without resorting to harmful and hateful messages about the "other." Understanding that diverse identities are nested under the umbrella of a common human identity can help to develop the qualities of compassion that sit at the core of all religious traditions. There are many authentic religious leaders who take this work to heart, but there are just as many who continue to promote conflict-ridden ideologies.

In school settings, educational initiatives and courses could well frame discussions about religious and nationalist identities in the context of what it means to have a broader human identity and a sense of responsibility to those beyond one's borders. With a few exceptions globally, the curricula in most schools overwhelmingly emphasize national affiliation and identity with little, if any, time remaining for an exploration of global issues, worldviews, or what skills, attitudes, and values will be needed for not only becoming a "globally competent" individual, but gaining the collaborative skills that this task will require. Teaching about conflict generally takes precedence over teaching about peace and/or the skills for peacebuilding. While understanding the history of conflict and the causes of conflict is a valuable exercise, little change for a better world seems possible if educators remain stuck in this conflict-focused frame.

As humanity struggles through the growing pains of forming a more collective identity suitable to our times, and if students are to be prepared for the world they will inherit, this imbalance needs to be addressed. The International Education for Peace Institute (EFP) offers one model. Inspired by Bahá'í ideals, it largely rejects conflict-centered approaches and promotes a unity-based framework in its curricula. It has successfully worked with hundreds of schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (representing the three main ethnic populations) to create "cultures of peace" in schools. Such educational models that are effectively working to bridge traditional divides in society need far more research and scaling up.

While these three policy recommendations of supporting spiritually-based approaches, "attractors" in the system, and

educational initiatives may not result in peace in the immediate term, they will almost certainly create the climate for such peace to take root in a more sustainable way and create a critical mass of young people working for positive change.

## Conclusion

This paper has taken a closer look at identity-based conflicts and reviewed some of the key principles of the Bahá'í Faith that might both inform this subject and offer some new thinking about peacebuilding. As a concluding observation, it is worth noting that prevailing theories related to identity, and related themes of multiculturalism, are overwhelmingly on 'otherness.' "The prevalent stance that identity is about difference is untenable," suggests Weinberg. "Perceiving identity through the relativistic lens of separation or cultural preservation ignores compelling evidence of our common humanity and can only aggravate the forces of discord and disagreement now so pervasive in the world."<sup>56</sup>

For those who see a Bahá'í focus on unity as overly idealistic, it is worth asking whether the culture of conflict and adversarial approaches that seemingly characterize the modern world—not only in the field of international relations, but also in business, advocacy, and the legal realm — is a sustainable model. Taking a glass half full vs. half empty perspective, how would our world look if what unites people is receiving just as much, if not more, attention than what divides them? What if the global community was investing more resources in empowering the connectors in society rather than focusing on its dividers? What if disunity was seen as a cause of conflict rather than just a symptom? What could change vis-à-vis identity-based conflicts if more people accepted the concept of our common human identity? And, how might these principles be reflected in policy? Achieving these goals is not likely in the short term, but the lens through which one sees the

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<sup>56</sup> Matt Weinberg, *Bahá'í World*, 179.



world is critical to shaping the attitudes and behaviors that unfold from that understanding.

While this paper has suggested that recognizing our fundamental spiritual reality and common human identity are important steps toward lessening identity-based conflicts, this author has no illusions about this path being an easy one. Achieving any sense of peace in societies torn apart by ethnic conflict, for example, remains that much more difficult when there is no security and/or those who have suffered the most are seeing the perpetrators of violence rewarded for their crimes. As such, justice may be a first priority. And, even in stable societies, achieving unity of thought and action requires a common vision and purpose. The latter can happen by conscious choice, but may be more likely to happen by default after continuing world crises that force humanity to face its shared reality.

Whatever hardships the immediate future may hold, the world's religions, and religious leaders, have an important part to play in this transformative period. And, ultimately, the Bahá'í teachings offer hope for a future that reflects humanity's growing maturity. As Shoghi Effendi reiterated:

The ages of its infancy and childhood are past, never again to return ... while the coming of age of the entire human race is yet to come. The convulsions of this transitional and most turbulent period in the annals of humanity are the essential prerequisites, and herald the inevitable approach, of that Age of Ages ... in which the folly and tumult of strife that has, since the dawn of history, blackened the annals of mankind, will have been finally transmuted into the wisdom and the tranquility of an undisturbed, a universal, and lasting peace ....<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, 117.

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## **RASTAFARI**

### **FROM BLACK SUPREMACY TO ONE LOVE: RASTAFARI AND PEACE**

**Wigmoore Francis**

#### **Introduction**

Since its tortuous beginnings in Jamaica in the 1930s, Rastafari has held aloft the banner of peace and love. Indeed, this tortuous beginning included early calls for Black supremacy and death to all oppressors.<sup>1</sup> However, such strident calls have been tempered over the years by the development of a more racially inclusive vision and a focus on love and justice. So much is this the case, that it is not unusual in the Caribbean (and elsewhere) to come across White Rastas, Japanese Rastas, and Rastas of all ethnicities.<sup>2</sup> This de-

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<sup>1</sup> G.G. Maragh, *The Promised Key* (Frankfield, Clarendon, Jamaica: Black International Iyabinghi, 1991). See, in particular, chapters 7, 10, 11, 14, and 15. See also Fitz Balintine Pettersburgh, *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Kingston, Jamaica: Headstart Printing and Publishing, 1996). See chapters 24, 27, 34 and 42.

<sup>2</sup> For some scholars, Rastafarianism is even seen as a form of transnational nationalism. See Don Robotham, "Transnationalism in the Caribbean: Formal and Informal," *American Ethnologist* 25.2 (1998): 308. For more on the cultural internationalization of Rastafari see Ennis Barrington Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For more on Japanese Rasta see Marvin D. Sterling, *Babylon East: Performing*,

Blackening (but not de-Africanization) of Rastafari, within this decidedly multicultural and multiethnic reorientation has not, however, meant that Rastafari has jettisoned its concerns for racial and socio-economic justice. Indeed, Rastafari has insisted that peace is not forthcoming in the absence of justice.<sup>3</sup>

That this call for equal rights and justice remains strong, is completely understandable, given the repression and injustices that Rastafari experienced in those early years, and given their resolve to prevent recurrences. In fact, there are residual feelings that the oppression of Rastafari continues today on a subtler plane. Their increasing advocacy of a philosophy of “one-love,” however, requires a different analysis, since it goes against the grain of the treatment perennially meted out against them. It is proposed here that this advocacy illustrates a growing spiritual and political maturity that holds strong implications for world peace. From a racially militant foundation to a global embrace of all humanity, it would appear as though Rastafarian political theology has not only evolved significantly, but that its promotion of love, justice, and unity, presents yet another religious blueprint for world peace, this time from a unique Jamaican perspective. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore this blueprint.

The exploration begins by briefly outlining the lineaments of Rastafari belief and value systems. The history of Rastafari is then explained in brief in order to contextualize these beliefs and values. In the next section, various factors responsible for the transition from a racially parochial movement to a more humanist and universal movement, are reviewed. Finally, the nature of peace, from a Rasta perspective, and the hope of global peace emerging from the application of Rasta principles and insights, are discussed.

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*Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Singer Jimmy Cliff in his song *Peace* says it very straightforwardly; Peter Tosh, in *Equal Rights* says he would rather have equal rights and justice. Jimmy Cliff, *Samba Reggae* (France: CellulOid: Mélodie distribution, 1993); and Peter Tosh, *Equal Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

## Part 1: The Nature of Rastafari

### 1. Definitions and qualifications

What then is Rastafari? In discussing the nature of Rastafari it should be taken into account that many Rastafarians reject the term “Rastafarianism” on the grounds that Rasta is not an ‘ism’. ‘Isms’ are related too closely, it is felt, to ‘schisms’, and smacks of ideological systems. Furthermore, ‘ism’ calls to mind the word ‘cult’, which is even more of an offence to Rasta sensibilities. The much preferred (some might say ‘politically correct’) term is Rastafari. Etymologically, Rastafari derives from the Ethiopian title ‘Ras,’ and one of the original names, ‘Tafari,’ of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I. ‘Rasta’, a shortened form of Rastafari, is used both for members of Rastafari and for Rastafari itself;<sup>4</sup> and Rastafari is singular and plural, and refers to both the movement and its members. With this said, Rastafari may be described variously as a religion, culture, lifestyle, philosophy, grass-roots movement, type of Black nationalism, community of practice, and form of psycho-cultural resistance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Some Rastas, such as the order of Boboshanti, in fact reject being called Rastafari. They see themselves, rather, as ‘followers of Rastafari’. See Jonathan Tanis, “Babylon by Tro-Tro: The Varieties of Rasta Identity and Practice in Ghana,” in *ISP Collection: Paper 849* (Ghana: School for International Training, Study Abroad, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> For more details see Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987); Barry Chevannes, ed., *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Girma Yohannes Iyasu Menelik, *Rastafarians: A Movement Tied with a Social and Psychological Conflicts* (Bremen: University of Bremen, 2009); Nathaniel Murrell and Burchell Taylor, “Rastafari’s Messianic Ideology and Caribbean Theology of Liberation,” in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, edited by Nathaniel Murrell, William Spencer, and Adrian McFarlane (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998); and M.G. Smith, Roy Augier, and Rex Nettleford, *Report on the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica* (Mona: Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University College of the West Indies, 1975).

## 2. Houses of Rastafari

Rastafari, however, ought not to be considered homogeneous. It is highly complex, largely decentralized, and polycephalous, having splintered into many 'Houses' or 'Mansions.' Principal among these are Nyabinghi, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and Boboshanti. These Houses and Mansions represent distinct areas of focus, embody contested claims of authenticity, and have their respective constituencies and protocols.

Nyabinghi, for instance, has, since its emergence in the 1940s, evolved a unique liturgical-celebratory rite involving drums, dance, herb smoking, and reasoning led by 'elder dreads'. Encoded within these rituals are the ethical and theological precepts and 'overstandings' which have established Nyabinghi as, arguably, the repository of orthodoxy within Rastafari.<sup>6</sup> Boboshanti was established in the 1950s by Charles Edwards (Prince Emmanuel). 'Bobos,' as members are often called, regard their founder as part of a Rasta trinity alongside Selassie and Garvey. They tend to live in communes and bear a striking physical appearance with their robes and turbans.<sup>7</sup> The Twelve Tribes was founded in the 1960s by Vernon Carrington (Prophet Gad) and has attracted the largest membership of all the Houses. This House adopts an astrology-like methodology in which the month of a person's birth determines their 'tribe', and they identify Rastafari as the real Israelites. Outside of House and Mansion there are also "own-built" Rastas, who operate independently. Despite these sectionalist architectures, however, there remain some core beliefs and values that continue to mark Rastafari as unique.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Overstanding' is the Rasta term for 'understanding.' For details on Nyabinghi see John P. Homiak, "The 'Ancients of Days' Seated Black: Eldership, Oral Tradition and Ritual in Rastafari Culture" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1985), 18-20.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 171.



### 3. Theological and moral considerations

In its religious manifestation, Rastafari has been deeply influenced by the Hebrew Tanach ('old testament'), Myal, Native Baptist, Pukkumina and Revivalist thought and practice including Bedwardist revivalism, and Garveyism.<sup>8</sup> Notably, Rastafari lacks a systematic theology, but from Garveyism came the notion of a Black god; a god in man's image, and thus a god considered from an Ethiopianist perspective.<sup>9</sup> And from Bedwardist and other forms of revivalism came an anti-colonial Biblical exegesis, the use of Revivalist proverbs as practical theology, a reliance on dreams and visions, an emphasis on healing and a metaphysics of herbology, the avoidance of salt, and ultimately, the idealization of Africa as spiritual home (Zion).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Myal, Native Baptist, Pukkumina and Revivalism are all indigenous Jamaican folk, Africentered religious expressions. Otherwise, there are even some who discern the influence of the New Age Movement and Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society on Rastafari. For more see Wade Bailey, *Rastafari and Its Shamanist Origins: The New Age Movement in the Caribbean* (United States: Lulu, 2007). Even a cursory reading of Bailey's text, however, reveals more polemics than serious scholarship. With regard to Bedwardism et al, see Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, 11-15, 17-22. For more on Garveyism see Rupert Lewis and Patrick E. Bryan, *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See Noel Leo Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology*, *History of African-American Religions* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), 33. Ethiopianism, a term first adopted by George Lyle in 1784, is a set of ideas about the emancipatory and empowering presence of Africa (Ethiopia) within global Black consciousness. Based largely on a reading of Psalm 68:31, Ethiopianism configures ancient Egypt and Ethiopia as the royal sources of Black lineage. See Brian Morris, *Religion and Anthropology: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 213. See also Charles Reavis Price, "Cleave to the Black: Expressions of Ethiopianism in Jamaica," *New WestIndian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 77.1-2 (2003).

<sup>10</sup> Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, pp. 21-22, 28, 30-31, 33-35. Salt is taboo in revivalist thought. It is felt that it has anti-spiritual properties. Such a view has become integrated into Rastafari spirituality. For more on the theology of salt see Monica Schuler, *"Alas, Alas, Kongo": A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University

Undoubtedly, however, the most important of Rasta theological axioms is the divinity of his Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia (1930-74), 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords', 'Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah', 'Elect of God' and 'Earth's Rightful Ruler'. Drawing from Tanach and 'new testament' prophecies, Rastas view Selassie as the returned King and Messiah, Christ in his kingly character, and god incarnate in Black flesh (Jah). This foundational belief and god-concept colors every aspect of Rastafarian practice and worldview, and juxtaposes Rasta against mainstream institutionalized expressions of religiosity.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, righteous ('upful') living, with its emphasis on morality and justice, coupled with a strong anti-Babylonianism<sup>12</sup> and the need for mental emancipation, represent the kinds of values that have enabled Rastafari to survive and evolve. This is critical, inasmuch as the Rasta demand for universal justice requires confrontation with Babylon; and confrontation with Babylon requires the cultural and moral strength that comes from being mentally liberated.

In this regard, a handful of sacred texts form the scriptural basis of Rasta morality, which in turn (alongside knowledge of African history) forms the basis of mental freedom. These texts include the Judeo-Christian Bible, but equally include the Holy

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Press, 1980). See also Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* (Dover, Mass.: Majority Press, 1991), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Leonard E. Barrett, Sr., *The Rastafarians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); Robert Hill, *Dread History: Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in the Early Rastafarian Religion* (Chicago: Research Associates School Times, 2001); Maragh, *The Promised Key*; and William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1999). Also see Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards, *Black Supremacy* (St. Andrew: Ethiopian Africa Black International Congress, 1979), 10.

<sup>12</sup> "Babylon" refers to the colonialist, imperialist, capitalist, Roman Catholic, historically evolved system of "downpression" and unrighteousness, and its agents, e.g., the police. See Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane, eds., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and Derek O'Brien and Vaughan Carter, "Chant Down Babylon: Freedom of Religion and the Rastafarian Challenge to Majoritarianism," *Journal of Law and Religion* 18.1 (2002).

Piby, the Promise[d] Key, the Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy, and the Kebra Negast, which are significant aspects of Rastafarian production of historical, cultural and political knowledge. Despite Rasta declamations to the contrary, therefore, these are some of the considerations that allow many scholars to define and theorize Rastafari as a religion, or, more specifically, a new religious movement.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. 'Livivity' – Lifestyle considerations

Other important beliefs of Rastafari include repatriation. Africa is home. A continent cannot be forsaken for an island (Jamaica).<sup>14</sup> In recent times this repatriation discourse has been enlarged to accommodate the idea of spiritual or psychic repatriation. Ital food (that is, food without salt), vegetarianism/veganism, raw and organic foods, a natural lifestyle, use of natural fabrics, and avoidance of materialism, are important aspects of Rastafari 'livivity' (lifestyle).

So too are belief in reincarnation and the wearing of matted hair in the form of 'dreadlocks'. Black pride based on a confidence in the accomplishments of ancient Africans, economic self-sufficiency and industriousness, respect for nature, and the sacramental use of Cannabis,<sup>15</sup> are also significant aspects of the

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that for some authors, 'New Religious Movements' are either cults or are closely related to cults. See Robert Neelly Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980); Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins, eds., *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: H.M.S.O., 1989); and Timothy Miller, *America's Alternative Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Note Joe Ruglass' poem quoted by Chevannes, that begins "Jamaica is an islan'/but is not I lan'." See Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ansley Hamid, *The Ganja Complex: Rastafari and Marijuana* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002). For a brief but useful exposé of the history and role of marijuana and dreadlocks in Rastafari, also see Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 308-10. See

Rasta value system. Importantly, though Rastas believe in ‘Armagiddian’ (Armageddon) – a final apocalyptic battle when good finally and permanently triumphs over evil – their focus has never been other-worldly. Their focus has always been intensely practical and realistic. With these observations in mind it may be asked, how did all of this come to be?

## **Part 2: History and Evolution of Rastafari**

### **1. The Long 1930s**

Rastafari emerged in Jamaica in the early 1930s, a time of great economic and social hardship for poor Black people on the island, courtesy of the racism, classism and administrative inefficiencies of the colonial system then in place, and of the Great Depression. Precipitating factors leading to its birth include the crowning of Ras Tafari Makonnen in Ethiopia in 1930; the influence of Marcus Garvey, who had ‘prophesied’ Tafari’s crowning; the influence of Robert Athlyi Rogers from Anguilla (d. 1931);<sup>16</sup> and the strengthening of Ethiopianist sentiments pursuant to Italy’s invasion and occupation of Ethiopia between 1935 and 1941.

Important founding figures emerging at this time included Leonard P. Howell, Robert Hinds, H. Archibald Dunkley and Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert. All of them were street preachers. All of them established their own churches and/or Ethiopianist organizations around the same time. All claimed a vision of the coronation of Ras Tafari and a revelation that he was the returned King and Black Messiah prophesied in the Bible. All of them had ties to Garveyism and had experienced racial discrimination while working abroad. All preached repatriation, promoted anti-colonialist teachings, and drew ideological sustenance from earlier

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also Akeia A. Benard, "The Material Roots of Rastafarian Marijuana Symbolism," *History and Anthropology* 18.1 (2007).

<sup>16</sup> Rogers founded the Afro-Athlican Constructive Church in New Jersey, USA, and in 1924 wrote “The Holy Piby,” a key proto-Rastafarian text. See Robert Athlyi Rogers, *The Holy Piby* (Chicago; Kingston, Jamaica: Research Associates, School Times Publications: Frontline Distribution Int’l, 2000).

Afro-Christian syncretic movements. Contemporary preachers operating in a similar vein were Paul Erlington, Vernal Davis, and Ferdinand Ricketts.<sup>17</sup>

Leonard P. Howell, whose *nom de plume* was “Gong Guru Maragh,” was born in the Jamaican parish of Clarendon in 1898. He began preaching in the streets in 1933, after being deported from Panama in 1932. Howell preached in St. Thomas and later relocated his ministry to Kingston. Similarly, Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert, born in 1894, returned to Jamaica in 1931 (or the late 20s) after 20 years of farm work in Costa Rica, and transferred his ministry from the parish of St. Andrew to Kingston. Henry Archibald Dunkley, who worked with the United Fruit Company in Latin America, returned to Jamaica in 1930 and became a preacher soon thereafter, in the eastern town of Port Antonio.<sup>18</sup> In 1938 he migrated his ministry to Kingston. Thus, early Rastafari quickly shifted from a rural to an urban base, as the founding fathers strived to carve out for themselves a unique political space where it mattered – the capital city. Indeed, Chevannes goes as far as to argue that the values and worldviews of this relocated, urbanized peasantry continue to mark the identity of Rastafari.<sup>19</sup>

The long 1930s represent a watershed period in Jamaica's modern history.<sup>20</sup> The aforementioned economic hardships were to

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<sup>17</sup> Menelik, *Rastafarians: A Movement Tied with a Social and Psychological Conflicts*.

<sup>18</sup> Hélène Lee and Stephen Davis, *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarianism* (Chicago, Ill.: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003); Barry Chevannes and Jérémie Kroubo Dagnini, “Remembering Rasta Pioneers: An Interview with Barry Chevannes,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3.4 (2009); and Spencer, *Dread Jesus*.

<sup>19</sup> Alston Barrington Chevannes, “Social and Ideological Origins of the Rastafari Movement in Jamaica” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1989). This might have applied, to some degree, up to 1989 when Chevannes completed his doctoral work on Rastafari. Since then, however, Rasta has certainly taken on a far more middle class and cosmopolitan character.

<sup>20</sup> The long 1930s is my term for the period starting roughly from Garvey's return to Jamaica in 1927 to the granting of Universal Adult Suffrage in Jamaica in 1944. This convenient time-period can be justified by the circumstantial and thematic similarities that unify it and distinguish it from the preceding and succeeding periods.

lead to massive labor riots all across the island, climaxing in 1938. Revivalist leader, Alexander Bedward, whose ideas were a part of the anti-colonial ethos out of which Rastafari emerged, died in 1930 in a lunatic asylum in Kingston. During this period Rastafari experienced unrelenting police brutality, harassment, demonization, and discrimination from within the general society. For certain, leadership and membership alike became very familiar with the inside of His (colonial) Majesty's jails, as Rasta was adjudged to be recapitulating earlier configurations of black pathology.<sup>21</sup>

But the period also witnessed the establishment of Jamaica's first modern political parties,<sup>22</sup> and it saw the integration of a restless and dissatisfied lower class with an educated and ambitious middle class; an integration that issued into a radical trade union movement, greater emphasis on self-government, federationism, and universal adult suffrage in 1944. Add to this the establishment of fascist regimes in Europe, Japanese imperialism in Asia, and World War II, and the sense of how fraught the period was with global and domestic tensions, crises, turbulence and confusion becomes clear. It is within this matrix of *Sturm und Drang* that Rastafari was born and developed.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. The Transitional Period (1940s to early 1960s)

The political modernization of Jamaica, in all of this, proceeded cheek and jowl with continued brutality against Rastafari. The transitional period between the long 1930s and the independence era of the early 1960s, thus represented more of the

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<sup>21</sup> Revivalism, Myal, and other indigenous religious forms were perceived as dangerous and pathological expressions of Black consciousness by colonial authorities. See Gov. J. P. Grant, "Despatches, Reports and Copies," in *Colonial Office Despatches* (London: Public Records Office, 1867), 222-3, 254-6.

<sup>22</sup> Garvey established the People's Political Party in Jamaica in 1929. It is credited with being Jamaica's first modern political party.

<sup>23</sup> At least one scholar contends that poverty and brutality have nothing to do with why persons become Rastafarians. See Charles Reavis Price, "No Cross, No Crown: Identity Formation, Nigrescence, and Social Change among Jamaica's First and Second Generation Rastafarians" (Ph.D. Dissertation, City University of New York, 2001).

same. In 1954, against a backdrop of moral panic, the forces of 'Babylon' prevailed and Pinnacle, an important Rasta space established by Howell in 1940, was permanently destroyed.<sup>24</sup> By 1963 the full weight of the colonial machinery was brought to bear in the massacre of Rastafarians in Coral Gardens, Montego Bay.<sup>25</sup>

In 1966, 'Back-O'-Wall', a major depressed area in West Kingston populated largely by Rastas who had fled the destruction of Pinnacle, was bulldozed. These and similar experiences contributed to a hardening of anti-colonial and separatist sentiments among the victims, and reinforced a 'death to all oppressors' political theology that targeted both Whites and their (Brown and Black) Babylonian lackeys.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Internationalization and change (late 1960s onwards)

#### 3.1. UWI report on Rastafari

By the late 1960s and 70s, however, the profile of a subaltern Rastafari within the Jamaican social imaginary began to change. Rasta had begun to develop an international aspect. It began to gain greater acceptance. And its tone and message began to metamorphose. This naturally raises the question of how Rastafari was able to make such a transition, given the forces arrayed against

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<sup>24</sup> The Pinnacle commune, established in St. Catherine parish, represented early Rastafarian separatism, and was subjected to continual police raids. Colonial authorities regarded the compound as a guerrilla stronghold. Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*, 82. Also see Stephen A. King, Barry T. Bays, and P. Rene Foster, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), xviii.

<sup>25</sup> For an eye-witness account from a 'Babylonian' perspective, see Selbourne Reid, *Rastafarian's Uprising in Coral Gardens, Jamaica* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009). Also see Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*, 84.

<sup>26</sup> Howell even went as far as advocating segregated marriages. See Maragh, *The Promised Key*, Chap.10. George Simpson, pioneering ethnographer of Rastafari, laments Rasta's verbal anti-Whiteness and need for revenge against Whites, which existed from early. See George Eaton Simpson, "The Ras Tafari Movement in Jamaica: A Study of Race and Class Conflict," *Social Forces* 34.2 (1955): 167, 169.

it and the resultant entrenchment of its antipathy toward Babylon. Scholarly consensus attributes this to increasing migration, the legacy of the 1960 University of the West Indies report on Rastafari, and the popularity of reggae music (in particular the seminal role played by Jamaican pop icon Bob Marley).

As Ennis Edmonds correctly insists, the 1960 study of the Rastafarian movement by the University of the West Indies signaled a degree of rapprochement between Rasta and the surrounding Jamaican society, which would henceforth transform both.<sup>27</sup> It was the first serious effort by the government to understand Rastafari, and it initiated a process of exposing and repudiating long-standing stereotypes concerning Rasta social deviance. The study also inspired a series of government sponsored events that received full Rasta support, e.g., missions to Africa, the visit of H.I.M. Selassie I, and the establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Thereafter, the participation of Rasta in state ceremonies and other official functions contributed to a gradual collapsing of those barriers of perception that had heretofore ‘Othered’ Rastafari.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2. ‘Movement of Jah People’ – Migration

Quite apart from the 1960 Report, emigration is an important contributing factor as it relates to the internationalization of Rastafari. Thomas-Hope places the apex of Jamaica emigration to the UK in the early 1960s.<sup>29</sup> Much of this migration was prompted by British demand for post-war labor. Additionally, in the 1950s, fear of communism in the USA influenced the McCarran Act

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<sup>27</sup> Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers*, 84-86. None of this means Rastafari was fully accepted at this time. Nonetheless, it is an indication of how far the relation between Rasta and Babylon had come.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope, *Caribbean Migration* (Barbados: Univeristy of the West Indies Press, 2002), 2.



(1952) which staunched the flow of Jamaicans there, hence indirectly increasing migration to the UK.<sup>30</sup>

Further, Jamaican official migration policy at this time encouraged emigration. However, the implementation of immigration restrictions in the UK, starting in 1962, coupled with reduced restrictions in the USA and Canada around 1965, saw a reversal of migration patterns away from the UK back towards North America.<sup>31</sup> The main issue here, though, is that as Jamaicans migrated to the USA, Canada, and the UK, Rastafari and its unique forms of cultural production were informally disseminated beyond the Caribbean.

### 3.3. Role of Reggae music

Reggae music, too, was a significant transmitter of Rastafarian views and values. Music, particularly Nyabinghi music, had always been a central dimension of Rasta worship and celebration.<sup>32</sup> But as reggae music exploded internationally in the early 1970s, and as Rastafari identified with it and became some of its most prominent practitioners, Nyabinghi lost pride of place. Within and outside of Rastafari, at the same time, this newfound relation between reggae and Rasta was seen as untenable by many observers. It possessed the potential to commercialize, water-down, and derail the sacred vision and purpose of the movement. It was perceived as a way of trivializing Rasta.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This Act reinforced the Quota Act of the 1920s, which severely limited immigration from certain quarters. See Steven G. Koven and Frank Götzke, *American Immigration Policy: Confronting the Nation's Challenges* (New York: Springer, 2010), 11.

<sup>31</sup> For more details see Nancy Foner, *Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican Migrants in London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 10-14.

<sup>32</sup> Though having a smattering of inaccuracies, Alston's dissertation manages to convey a sense of music's centrality to Rasta. See James Anthony Alston, "The Role of Music in Rastafarian Society in Jamaica, 1930-1995" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> King, et al, argue that Rasta, through reggae, has indeed been co-opted by Babylonian forces of social control. King, Bays, and Foster, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control*. Also see Stephen Alan King, "'Redemption

Politically, however, as Horace Campbell has suggested, the timing of this global musical surge was problematic not so much for Rastafari, but for Western cultural leaders who harbored notions of maneuvering popular music in a manner contrived to discipline and pacify rebellious youths in their societies.<sup>34</sup> It is known, for instance, that beginning in the 1970s, demagogues from both sides of the political divide in Jamaica have sought, with limited success, to co-opt reggae music and Rasta symbology alike – not only to pacify the youth, but also in order to ingratiate themselves to the people and further their own populist designs.<sup>35</sup> This only rendered Rasta and reggae more visible. It may therefore be argued that the simultaneous globalization of reggae and Rasta, far from attenuating the revolutionary potential of Rasta, in fact advanced the movement's agenda for African and global liberation. On the backs of reggae practitioners, then, the vision, message and purposes of Rastafari were transported well beyond their original constituency. The power of reggae music for Rastafari, after all, resided in the militancy of its social critique and in the potency of its message; and few could demonstrate this as well as the Rastaman Bob Marley.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.4. Political upheavals and change

Rastafari expansion was also given fillip with fundamental socio-economic and political changes in Ethiopia after 1974,<sup>37</sup> and

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Song" in *Babylon: The Evolution of Reggae and the Rastafarian Movement*" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Horace Campbell, "Rastafari as Pan Africanism in the Caribbean and Africa," *Journal of Political Economy* 2.1 (1988): 76.

<sup>35</sup> For more on the relation between politics and entertainment see Liesbet van Zoonen, *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*, Critical Media Studies (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, "Rastafari as Pan Africanism in the Caribbean and Africa," 76-77, 80.

<sup>37</sup> 1974 witnessed a revolution that ousted Selassie's monarchy and instituted Mengistu's socialist dictatorship. See Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

with Rasta's subsequent increased focus on apartheid in South Africa and on standing up for the people's right to self-determination all across Africa. As Rasta expanded beyond Jamaica, the Americas and the UK, to Africa, to continental Europe and to Asia, it therefore progressively became a healing and empowering reference point for the construction of defiant self-images for downtrodden, marginalized minorities. Rastafari discourse, from its rude and heretical beginnings among a displaced peasantry on an economically peripheral island, had come to authorize a global sense of possibilities among the weak and exploited. Apparently, the subaltern can speak.<sup>38</sup>

It would then appear that the changing circumstances of Rastafari's social existence in Jamaica, the downfall of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I in 1974, as well as its growing global presence and respect, contributed significantly to a melioration of its erstwhile hard-line Black supremacist message and its anger toward Whites. To be certain, such sentiments still exist, but they have largely given way to a more dominant mantra of peace and love. The price of this new Rastafarian 'brand' is that to a noticeable degree Rasta has been commoditized; its image crudely tied to variegated merchandise, lifestyles, and tourist products. But Rastafari's emphasis on 'upful livity' (righteous living) and its thrust towards spreading peace and love remain intact. The vectors of capital accumulation have not managed to drain Rastafari of its latent spirituality. The question that these developments raise at this point, then, is – what are the elements underpinning Rastafarian notions of peace and love, now that its militant components have largely atrophied and peace and love have been mainstreamed in Rastafari thought?

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<sup>38</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Spivak's subaltern cannot speak.

### Part 3: Rastafari Language and Peace

#### 1. Understanding peace

Any answer to that question necessarily has to involve a consideration of language. One of the bugbears of international peace studies is the cultural relativity of peace, which renders it an elusive and slippery analytical category. Peace is understood differently in different cultures and languages, but is theorized as operating along four universal axes. These are identified as “positive” and “negative” peace, and “inner” and “outer” peace. Negative peace is described as freedom from conflict, chaos, violence and confusion; while positive peace involves the presence of desirable conditions such as harmony, justice, health, education, and so on. Inner peace is psychological and spiritual tranquility, clarity, and even bodily health. And outer peace signifies a state of security, calm, and order at a collective level.

As examples of the linguistic correlates to this, the Chinese word ‘heping’ (和平) denotes world peace (outer), while the word ‘an’ (安) denotes an ‘inner peace’. The Hebrew word for peace, ‘shalom’ (שלום), signifies wholeness (positive peace), whereas the Arabic ‘salaam’ (السلام) derives from safety (negative peace).<sup>39</sup> Yet, given the density and diversity of cultures that exist globally, this simple taxonomy belies hugely complex cross-cultural subtleties regarding the idea of peace. In some languages, for example, some Chinese languages, there are many words for peace, with different shades of meaning for different types of peace.<sup>40</sup> One implication of this is that it may be more accurate to speak of ‘peaces’ instead

<sup>39</sup> Charles Webel and Johan Galtung, *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 6-7, 11, 31, 167, 188, 366. For more on cultural variations see Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, "Spirituality, Religion, Culture, and Peace: Exploring the Foundations for Inner–Outer Peace in the Twenty-first Century," *International Journal of Peace Research* 1.1 (1996). See also Joseph H. de Rivera, ed., *Handbook on Building Cultures of Peace* (New York: Springer, 2009).89.

<sup>40</sup> Wolfgang Dietrich et al., eds., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Peace Studies: A Cultural Perspective* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

of 'peace'. Such complexity, however, in no way prevents scholars of peace from positing a *philosophia perennis* on the basis of which they are able to postulate universal axes of peace(s).

## 2. 'I an I' and peace – Rasta communitarian ontology and peace

With this in mind, Rastafari may be considered a type of vernacular culture with its own slant on peace, and its own language to articulate this.<sup>41</sup> Rastafarian language embodies many of the core strategies of resistance that have enabled members, over time, to craft new approaches to love and unity, and therefore peace. The concept of "I-nity," for example, replaces the English "Unity," with its foregrounding of the "I". The "I," however, is not the Western liberal, individualist "I". It is the Rasta "I," which is a collective "I". Rastas do not speak of "we". Nor do they speak of "I". They speak of "I and I".

In other words, the "I and I" (I-an-I) construal demonstrates a profound recognition of an existentially valid "Other" that is also an "I". Each person is conceived as another "I". Thus, in Rasta, there really is no "Other". The sovereign binary of 'us and them' has been abolished. I-an-I locution therefore evinces a theological univocity in which what is predicated of one 'I', equally applies to the other 'I'.<sup>42</sup>

Consequently, we are all I's and I's; a communal self of mutually connected divinities. Thus, Rastafarian thinking transcends the very concept of inner peace and outer peace. Rasta peace is at once mystical and social, personal and political. Indeed, true to its African foundations, 'I-an-I' verbalization bears a strong

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<sup>41</sup> For fuller development see Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari* (Barbados; Montreal: Canoe Press; McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Univocity, simply put, is the view that qualities attributed to god exist in identical manner in humans. For more on the concept of univocity see Thomas Williams, "The Doctrine of Univocity Is True and Salutory," *Modern Theology* 21.4 (2005); and Michael Douglas Beaty, "The Univocity Thesis and the Moral Goodness of God" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1986).

‘family resemblance’ to the South African term “Ubuntu,” which means we are who we are, because of the existence and presence of other persons.<sup>43</sup>

As against the modernist individualism that informs the Babylonian quest for domination, this Rastafarian ontology of peace, accordingly facilitates a concern for the reformation and agency of the communal subject, and, in the process, offers a new politics. So, Ziggy Marley can sing, “Love is my religion,”<sup>44</sup> and if this is understood in relation to Kenelm Burridge’s appraisal of religion as being inherently political, then Rastafari exemplifies a kind of movement bent on moral regeneration which, at the same time, is necessarily political regeneration.<sup>45</sup>

The individual in this regard must therefore be understood as being embedded in a network of inter-subjective relations and communitarian dynamics.<sup>46</sup> This is something that the commercialization of Rasta has not succeeded in corroding. Rasta language is thus able to offer an insight into the type of social and political philosophy that undergirds their practice of selflessness, unity, love, and therefore peace.

### 3. The ‘all-seeing eye’ – Rasta epistemology of peace

Bear in mind, as well, that the “I” is not simply a transfiguration of the English “I”. It is not simply a letter of the English alphabet. It is also a reference to the “eye,” the all-seeing

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<sup>43</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Ziggy Marley, *Love Is My Religion* ([Kingston, Jamaica]; New York: Tuff Gong; Cooking Vinyl, 2006). Ziggy is the eldest son of Bob Marley.

<sup>45</sup> For Burridge, religion is ultimately about power and its deployment in the service of redemption. Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1969).

<sup>46</sup> Ennis Edmonds, "Dread 'I' in-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization," in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, edited by Nathaniel Murrell, William Spencer, and Adrian McFarlane (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), 33. See also Sinfree Makoni, ed., *Black Linguistics: Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 62.

eye, the ‘third eye’, and thus to levels of wisdom, knowledge, perception and “overstanding.”<sup>47</sup> The “I” in Rasta, for that reason, possesses a dual nature – “I” (we) and “I” (eye). The “I” as sight/perceptiveness plays a major role in a Rasta epistemology of peace, even as it plays a major role in their ontology of personhood and communitarianism. To take C. S. Lewis somewhat out of context, he effectively summarizes the situation when he says,

...I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself, and am never more myself than when I do.<sup>48</sup>

As a result, I-an-I understood as ‘eye-and-eye’ suggests seeing reality from the perspective of another “I,” and so walking the proverbial mile in another’s shoes. It suggests a politics of empathy. It suggests a politics of care. At a time when ethnic self-assertion and religious fundamentalism threaten global peace, this outlook appears more than salutary.

#### 4. ‘Powerlosophy’ and political love

Related to this, the concept of the ‘powerlosophy’ of love is an important development in Rastafari thought. On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2011 on a Jamaican radio show on FM100.5, the program host and surprise guest “Sister V” laid claim to this concept. As is

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<sup>47</sup> Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari*; and Makoni, ed., *Black Linguistic: Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas*, 62. ‘Overstanding’ is Rasta talk for ‘understanding.’

<sup>48</sup> C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 141. The original context is one in which Lewis is speaking about a specific approach to reading. The point of contact between Lewis and Rasta, however, which justifies the slight decontextualization, is that Lewis’ notion of “literal” reading being akin to love, knowing, and moral action, resonates lyrically with Rasta’s own sense of a communal I/eye. The eye, of course, is a metonym for reading. To “eye” something, is at some level, to “read” it. This intersection of moral action, knowledge and love is also treated in Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

usual, however, the constituent elements of a concept precede its naming. Thus, the concept was not ‘invented’ on that day. It was only labeled. ‘Powerlosophy’ is a portmanteau word that combines ‘power’ and ‘philosophy’ into a potent cocktail of imagery that, when prefixed to love, signifies the power of the philosophy of love, the philosophy of the power of love and, more elementally, the power of love.

Love, in this construal, is not a passive ‘feeling of attraction’; it is not mere affect. It is an active force for good, for unity, and for peace(s). Indeed, scholars such as William Goode advance a sociology of love in which love functions as an element of social action capable of disrupting and undermining class and racial strata. Pregs Govender too, links love to the courage to speak truth to power.<sup>49</sup> As in the forbidden cross-caste love affair between Velutha and Ammu in Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things*, love, from this perspective, operates as a political force by virtue of its capacity to disturb and democratize.<sup>50</sup>

One aspect of this politicized love comes across in a remark by Prophet James, a Rastaman living in Ghana, who said, “Rastafari is peace lovin’ people! I-an-I love everybody! Even the White man, but not as much as the children of Ham.”<sup>51</sup> Prophet James’ asymmetrical distribution of love, while intimating that the color and racial ceiling in Rastafari has been shattered, has no basis, however, in post-1960s Rastafari I-an-I psychology. In this

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<sup>49</sup> William J. Goode, “The Theoretical Importance of Love,” *American Sociological Review* 24.1 (1959). Though Goode is addressing ‘romantic’ love, his observations about the transgressive nature of love are certainly appropriate in a discussion of how Rastafarians can transcend their erstwhile ethnic parochialism and embrace all of humanity. See Pregs Govender, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2007). Govender is deputy chair of the South African Human Rights Commission.

<sup>50</sup> Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: Random, 1997). The novel is set in Kerala, India, where Velutha is an ‘untouchable,’ and Ammu is the daughter of his boss.

<sup>51</sup> Carmen M. White, “Living in Zion: Rastafarian Repatriates in Ghana, West Africa,” *Journal of Black Studies* 37.5 (2007): 699. “Children of Ham” is a reference to Blacks.



psychology, Whites and Blacks do not receive differentiated quotas of love; true unifying love does not exist between subject and object, but between two subjects;<sup>52</sup> between two “I”s. Indeed, as Lewis remarks, “In love we escape from our self into one another.”<sup>53</sup>

Rasta, as a result, can no longer be a monochromatic movement or religion. It has had to widen its ethnic and cultural embrace under the imperative of its own I-an-I dynamic. In point of fact, data provided by the Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace, an international research organization, indicates that societies with less discrimination, and in which the rights of all ethnic groups are respected, tend to be more peaceful.<sup>54</sup> The powerlessness of (radical and revolutionary) love is thus a proactive mechanism for global unity and peace.

#### **Part 4: Rasta, Reggae, and Peace**

##### **1. Rasta song lyrics**

Reggae song lyrics, in addition, represent another mechanism for espousing a general Rasta viewpoint on peace. It may be convincingly argued that for “bal’ eds” (bald heads, or non-Rastas), reggae songs offer the most accessible entrée into Rasta teachings and thought. For whereas the committed Rastaman or woman has a handful of scriptural documents to peruse and on which to meditate, and whereas they routinely participate in sundry ‘groundings’,<sup>55</sup> ‘bald heads’ have recourse primarily to the collective lyrics of countless reggae songs. These song lyrics legitimately constitute the textual basis of the outsiders’ understanding of Rastafari

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<sup>52</sup> Cassandra Falke, ed., *Intersections in Christianity and Critical Theory* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 30.

<sup>53</sup> C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, 137.

<sup>54</sup> Global Peace Index, “2011 Fact Sheet” (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2011), 2.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Groundings’ are reasoning sessions where Rastafari gather and discuss matters of philosophy, economics, global and domestic politics, religion, psychology, and anything of topical import.

mentalité, and represent a rich vein of psycho-cultural, politico-economic, and theological imagery.

Random examples of the lyrics of international hits such as Alpha Blondy's *Peace in Liberia*, Third World's *Peace Flags*, Culture's *Stop the Fussing and Fighting*, Jimmy Cliff's *Peace*, Burning Spear's *Throw Down Your Arms*, and Lucky Dube's *Peace, Perfect Peace*, reinforce this.<sup>56</sup> However, it is Bob Marley's 1977 song "War," a rendition of H.I.M. Selassie's 1963 UN speech, which perhaps best exemplifies fundamental Rasta ideas that relate to peace. These lyrics are sufficiently significant to quote them in full.

Until the philosophy which holds one race superior/And another/Inferior/  
Is finally/And permanently/Discredited/And abandoned/  
Everywhere is war /Me say war.

That until there no longer/First class and second class citizens of any nation/  
Until the color of a man's skin/Is of no more significance than the color of  
his eyes /Me say war.

That until the basic human rights/Are equally guaranteed to all/  
Without regard to race /Dis a war [This is war].

That until that day/The dream of lasting peace/World citizenship/  
Rule of international morality/Will remain in but a fleeting illusion to be  
pursued/But never attained /Now everywhere is war

And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes/that hold our brothers in  
Angola/In Mozambique/South Africa/  
Sub-human bondage/Have been toppled/Utterly destroyed/  
Well, everywhere is war/Me say war.

War in the east/War in the west/  
War up north/War down south/

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<sup>56</sup> From the albums Alpha Blondy, *Masada* (Issy-les-Moulineaux; St Ouen l'Aumone: EMI music France; distrib. EMI music France, 1992); Third World, *Hold on to Love* ([S.l.]: CBS (Europe); distrib. CBS disques SA (France), 1987); Cliff, *Samba Reggae*; Lucky Dube, *Serious Reggae Business* ([S.l.]: Shanachie Entertainment, 1996); Culture, *Harder Than the Rest* (New York: Caroline Records/The Front Line, 2000); and Burning Spear, *Dry and Heavy* (London: Island Records, 1977).

War - war -/Rumours of war/  
And until that day/The African continent/  
Will not know peace/We Africans will fight – we find it necessary  
And we know we shall win/As we are confident/  
In the victory/Of good over evil....<sup>57</sup>

Here, Marley locates racism and, to a lesser degree classism, at the root of the global problem of war. Africa is treated as the fulcrum around which world peace revolves. In this sense, it could even be said that Africa is made to symbolize the world – “the African continent will not know peace”; and simultaneously, “everywhere is war.” Additionally, the reference to ignoble and unhappy regimes in Africa indicates two things. One, Africa is a part of its own problem. And two, Rastafari is not afraid of being critical of injustice and oppression by Africans in Africa. Being a Black African leader, in Rastafari thought, does not absolve anyone of responsibility for respecting the basic human rights guaranteed to all.

War itself, in Marley’s analysis, is framed in theological terms as the struggle between good and evil. Hence, as long as international racism and classism persist, especially in relation to Africa, evil will thrive everywhere. Marley (Selassie/Rastafari) also holds forth the ideal of world citizenship and international morality as ultimate objectives to which humanity should aspire. It is this ideal, they believe, that provides the framework for sustainable peace.

Implicit in the concept of world citizenship, as well, is the suggestion of a global government; a suggestion of transcending the nation-state. And world citizenship seems an appropriate corollary to the rule of international morality. However, there appears to be some discrepancy at work here. World citizenship implies a post-nation political order. International implies the existence of nation-states. These two do not square. But however this is resolved in analyses of Marley’s embattled prophetic

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<sup>57</sup> From the album Bob Marley and the Wailers, *Exodus* ([S.I.]: Island Records, 1977).

imagination,<sup>58</sup> what is evident is the essential role Rastafarians assign to global morality in nurturing peace(s) on Earth. At the same time, the idea that “we Africans will fight...,” and will fight with confidence and a sense of the necessity of the struggle, indicates a Rastafarian ethic of intervention and affirmation.

These ideas, first articulated by Selassie in 1963, still resonate today. International divisions, neglectful of any universal humanism, persist with a vengeance. According to the 2011 Global Peace Index (GPI), levels of world peace declined for the third consecutive year, although the observed pattern is one of increasing domestic rather than international or regional conflict. For example, in thirty-three nations, the likelihood of violent demonstrations increased during this period. On the other hand, the Index also finds that the ‘war on terror’ is failing, since “twenty-nine nations (particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Europe) experienced a rise in their potential for terrorist acts.”<sup>59</sup> The relevance of Marley’s (hence Rastafari’s) insights and prescriptions is therefore discernible.

### 1.1. Music, the natural environment and peace

In other ways, too, Reggae lyrics indicate the Rasta vision of peace. The Rasta attitude towards the natural environment is communicated very strongly in many of their songs, for Rastas have long expressed an awareness of the relation between treatment of the environment and the human propensity for war and conflict. Put another way, Rastafari has understood that peace is more than simply the absence of conflict; that it requires just, equitable, and productive relationships with our natural resources. But they also understand that power, operating through the

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<sup>58</sup> For more on the concept of prophetic imagination see Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). For Brueggemann, the prophetic imagination evokes a consciousness alternative to that of the dominant socio-political order, critiques that order, and holds up a vision of an alternative community, 3, 6-9.

<sup>59</sup> Index, “2011 Fact Sheet,” 1.

manipulation of space and place, plays an integral role in determining the outcome of that relationship.<sup>60</sup>

Jimmy Cliff's *Save our Planet Earth*, thus audaciously proclaims "You better stop cutting down the forest; stop, you're under arrest; stop killing our animals." He admonishes us to "stop bursting the ozone layer," disturbing the atmosphere, and polluting the air, if we want to live together on this, our only home planet.<sup>61</sup> In his song *Beautiful Mother Earth*, Ziggy Marley's anthropomorphized Earth cries "why did my children forsake me?" And as her tears fall as acid rain, he criticizes the chemical plants for polluting "her sacred land." He also suggests that his own insight into this plight induces in him a desire for harmony.<sup>62</sup> Mutabaruka, for his part, highlights the connection between pollution and the fantastical global imperatives of capitalism in his *Ecology Poem*, as does Junior Murvin in his song *I Was Appointed*.<sup>63</sup>

Notably, whereas Murvin is critical of Wall Street, and Ziggy Marley is critical of industry, Cliff and Mutabaruka lay blame on everyone. Furthermore, they all identify a link between the treatment of "I-ration" (creation) and general destruction of humanity. Unmistakably, they realize the implications of biodiversity loss and other man-made environmental deficits, for universal peace. Justice, as a precondition for peace, includes environmental justice. These assumptions and observations within Rastafarian political ecology are coincidentally supported by the United Nations peace and environmental initiatives, since both Rasta and the UN are familiar with the idea that natural resources

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<sup>60</sup> The relation between space and power is usefully explored in Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 26, 68-168.

<sup>61</sup> Jimmy Cliff, *Save Our Planet Earth* (Levallois: Musidisc; distrib. Musidisc, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers, *Free Like We Want 2 B* (New York: Elektra, 1995).

<sup>63</sup> Junior Murvin and the Upsetters, *Police and Thieves* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Mango, 1977); and Mutabaruka, *Blakk Wi Blak...K...K* (Newton, NJ: Shanachie, 1991).

are important triggers in the outbreak and continuation of conflict, as well as having potential to foster and sustain peace.<sup>64</sup>

## 2. Rasta, food (in)security and peace

Even the Rasta emphasis on growing one's own food holds implications for global peace. This is because of the close relation between conflict and food security. Several studies confirm that territories that lack food security are at risk for conflict.<sup>65</sup> In *Food Bunny Wailer* sings, "If food is the staff of life, should there be famine, war and strife?" and, "that is food! and without it you're in a devastating mood."<sup>66</sup> Food insecurity exists wherever access to, and availability of, adequate and sustainable supplies of healthy and nutritious food are compromised. With almost a sixth of the planet's population being undernourished and therefore food insecure, Rasta's insistence that countries should first seek to account for their own domestic nutritional needs, is timely.<sup>67</sup>

This does not rule out food aid as a temporary form of relief for food insecure territories (though oftentimes food aid is itself a

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<sup>64</sup> United Nations Working Group on Lessons Learned, "From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and Environment" (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Environment Programme, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> Per Pinstrup-Anderson and Satoru Shimokawa, "Do Poverty, Poor Health and Nutrition Increase the Risk of Armed Conflict Onset?," *Food Policy* 33.6 (2008); Saswati Bora et al., "Food Security and Conflict," in *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* (World Bank, 2011); and Ellen Messer and Marc J. Cohen, "Conflict, Food Insecurity, and Globalization," in *Discussion Paper 206* (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Bunny Wailer, *Liberation* ([S.l.]: Shanachie Records, 1989). Bunny Wailer is a major Rasta/reggae artiste from the original Wailers group.

<sup>67</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization, "Food Security," in *Policy Brief 2* (The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, 2006): 1-2. See also John R. Butterly and Jack Shepherd, *Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 4-6.

political tool that contributes to conflict).<sup>68</sup> But in a bold rejection of Malthusian political economy, Rastafari contends that all countries, however 'overpopulated' and impoverished, should strive for at least self-sufficiency on their own terms. Indeed, the sense that global hunger is largely man-made renders this contention even more pertinent.<sup>69</sup> Focus on agricultural productivity has been a staple Rastafari practice since the days of the Pinnacle commune, where members had to plant and grow food stuff in order to survive. On a larger scale, therefore, transitioning to long-term agricultural growth is a critical path to finding stable solutions to food-related conflict in at-risk areas.<sup>70</sup> This is consistent with Rastafari teaching and lifestyle.

Based on figures from the India-based Strategic Foresight Group (a think-tank that does international cost-of-conflict assessments), between 1991 and 2010 the opportunity cost of conflict in the Middle East alone was US \$13.5 trillion.<sup>71</sup> And based on GPI estimates, the total economic impact of a cessation of worldwide violence between 2006 and 2010 would be US \$37.58 trillion. This sum would be sufficient to offset the worst effects of climate change and address other significant matters relating to universal poverty, equity, health, education, environmental sustainability, and hunger.<sup>72</sup> These heavy costs (in terms of life and

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<sup>68</sup> For more on this see Ellen Messer, Marc J. Cohen, and Jashinta D'Costa, "Food from Peace: Breaking the Links between Conflict and Hunger," in *Food, Agriculture, and the Environment Discussion Paper* 24 (1998): 30-32.

<sup>69</sup> Jack Shepherd, *The Politics of Starvation* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1975); and Butterly and Shepherd, *Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation*, 7, 30-33. Note lyrics of *Food* in Wailer, *Liberation*. Rastafarians believe that humans should be fruitful and multiply. They are against abortion.

<sup>70</sup> Shenggen Fan and Mark W. Rosegrant, "Investing in Agriculture to Overcome the World Food Crisis and Reduce Poverty and Hunger," in *Policy Brief* 3 (2008). Also see Bora et al., "Food Security and Conflict," 2. Wailer, *Liberation*.

<sup>71</sup> Sundeep Waslekar, Ilmas Futehaly, and Strategic Foresight Group, *Cost of Conflict in the Middle East* (Mumbai: Strategic Foresight Group, 2009), 8.

<sup>72</sup> Index, "2011 Fact Sheet," 2. Also see The United Nations Department of Public Information, "United Nations Millennium Development Goals," The

dignity, not dollars) are observations that Rastafari has made for many years now, within the 'groundings' that form an essential aspect of their cultural practice.

These observations are also eloquently presented in song, for example, Wailing Souls' *What a Life Worth*, in which they sing about children being devastated by war as a result of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, through no fault of their own. And they sing about the cost of saving a life, and ask what our lives are worth to each other.<sup>73</sup> Thus it may be seen that Rastafari understands peace in civic as well as theological terms, in positive as well as negative terms.

### Conclusions

Yet, despite the evident value for worldwide peace(s), of elements of the Rasta worldview, there are other aspects of Rastafari that militate against acceptance. Rastafari, for example, remains deeply patriarchal in outlook and practice. This translates into an endemic sexism that threatens to suffocate women in the movement. A staunch anti-homosexuality, though consistent with Rasta values, alienates a huge and powerful demographic. The insistence on reparations for African enslavement and a concomitant mobilization to secure transitional justice is seen as bothersome, in some quarters. The association between Rastafari and the youth drug culture; its cult image as a messianic, apocalyptic and millenarian movement; its anti-abortion stance and its exaltation of a man as god, are also important points of contention that make Rasta less attractive to many. All these factors conjoin to foreground the straits in which Rastafari finds itself, before a cynical public. These are negative ways in which Rastafari is imagined in the popular culture and portrayed in film, print and television, and they work against Rasta ideas being taken sufficiently seriously.

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United Nations, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals> (accessed November 1, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> Wailing Souls, *Live On* (Los Angeles, CA: Zoo Entertainment: Manufactured by BMG Music, 1995).



Further, religion in general is often held responsible for much of the great evils of human-kind throughout history, including war. Some scholars have even insisted that our present ecological crisis (and its connection with conflict and war) is a consequence of Judeo-Christian imperialist attitudes toward nature.<sup>74</sup> Religion is seen as fostering tribalism and intolerance, not peace. None of this bodes well for Rastafari, itself having incubated in a moral climate of racial hostility to (White) colonialism. Nor does rejecting the label 'religion' help Rastafari to purge itself of the stigmata thereof.

Nonetheless, there is much in the Rastafari blueprint for peace that can attract the moral endorsement of a public satiated with violence and conflict. Rastafari is far from perfect. Like all religions it is socio-historically contingent, it occupies contested terrain, and it is flawed. But once the expectation of a perfect Rastafari is abandoned, the structural exigencies of food insecurity, environmental devastation, international racism and war compel us to engage critically and creatively with its ideas of peace. Of course, none of these ideas, taken separately, are unique to Rastafari. They are to be found in religions and movements the world over. But when enveloped in a unique Afro-Hebraic formation, with an apotheosized Ethiopian ruler, a repatriationist ethos, a Biblical ('old testament') morality, and a strident anti-Babylonianism, these ideas acquire a different dynamic.

Despite its shortcomings and idiosyncrasies, therefore, by discursively centering Africa and by maintaining ideological links to Biblical Israel, Rastafari has at least contributed a voice to the conversation on global peace. This is the case since both Africa and the Middle East remain political hotspots that impinge on the prospects for such a peace. And if it is the case that a multi-faceted approach could redound to a better understanding of peace(s),<sup>75</sup> then Rastafari's contribution deserves consideration.

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<sup>74</sup> See Lynn White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* (Washington: American Association of Science, 1967); and Peter Scott, *A Political Theology of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>75</sup> Dietrich et al., eds., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Peace Studies: A Cultural Perspective*.

By its own example, Rastafari in the process of reinventing itself has demonstrated one way to develop a culture of peace out of a culture of distrust, antagonism and victimhood. By its own example, Rastafari has come to typify the possibility of greater inter-ethnic and cross-cultural contact in a world increasingly devoid of shared meanings and allegiances. And by its own example, Rastafari has rejected older models of human interaction based on revenge, anger, and the pursuit of tribal power. This is partly the result of an undeclared but functional ecumenism, a deepened political sensitivity, and a mature racial tolerance, which increasingly inform Rastafari negotiations of religious and socio-cultural spaces. There therefore seems to be a useful symmetry of interest between the preachments of Rastafari and the self-preservative impulses of stakeholders on planet Earth. From Black supremacy to a doctrine of one love, Rastafari has charted an exemplary path to peace.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN RELIGIONS AND PEACE**

### **RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND PEACE: PROBLEMS WITH DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

**John Thompson**

Apologists for the faiths usually minimize the distress that can come with religion or that religion can produce. You will not read about the destructive element in religious impulses in the advertisements for the church of your choice. Yet if the pursuit of truth is still to be cherished as a foundational theme in the academy, one must note the feature of religion that keeps it on the front page and on prime time – it kills.

-- Martin Marty

At a recent international conference Pope Benedict XVI decried the rise of religiously motivated violence such as has occurred in Nigeria in the past few months, saying, “Religion cannot be employed as a pretext for setting aside the rules of justice and of law for the sake of the intended ‘good’.”<sup>1</sup> While I think most of us would concur with His Holiness, the truth is that the connection between religion and violence is too complicated to

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<sup>1</sup> “Pope Urges End to Religious Violence,” January 9, 2012, <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2012/January/Pope-Urges-End-To-Religious-Violence> (accessed January 30, 2012).

resolve through pious chiding. It is no secret that relationship between religion and violence has become a major concern for many of us in the still relatively young early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it often seems that violent incidents in which religion plays a large role occur with mind-numbing regularity. Yet the link between religion and violence is by no means a recent phenomenon; most religions have a long history of violence, as anyone who has ever read the Bible or the *Qur'an*, or studied the religions past civilizations as diverse as the ancient Egyptians and the Aztecs knows. Students in my classes certainly are aware of violence committed in the name of religion (who isn't in our post-9/11 world?), and many of them say that learning about different religions in school is a good way to counter the ignorance and prejudice that often feed religious violence. While I hope they are right, I must confess to being rather skeptical that knowledge of the world's various faiths will lead to less violent conflict; in my experience factual awareness need not foster acceptance and tolerance of different religions nor will it necessarily promote peaceful coexistence. Indeed, I would like to press this matter further and encourage us to question the association we may have between religion and peace, and the assumptions informing this seemingly "natural" association. This paper is my attempt to get us to reflect carefully on how we tend to think about religion, violence, and peace. My aim is not to resolve all the issues here so much as to shed light on some often hidden notions informing discussions of these topics.

**Preliminary considerations:  
religion as violent and the problem of definitions**

Before we begin it might be good to note that there is a large and detailed body of scholarship on religion and violence, with some premier theorists (e.g., Sigmund Freud, Rene Girard) arguing that religion by its very nature is marked by violence.<sup>2</sup> Certainly

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the various essays in Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A.A.

there are problems with each of these scholars' views and arguments, and their work, taken individually or collectively, by no means *proves* that religion is inherently violent. Yet their basic claims are serious and substantive, and His Holiness (as well as the rest of us) would do well to bear them in mind.

For the most part, however, discussions of religion and violence end up focusing on peace and what various religions can do to promote it. This is a laudable goal, no doubt, but it begs a very important question: "Is peace truly a common goal among religions?" On the face of it, this question seems like it could be answered empirically through social scientific methods (carefully designed surveys administered to a to a properly defined sample population, with the ensuing results statistically tabulated to produce reliable data). But of course it's not that simple. As is often the case, there are various assumptions underlying this question, and it is these assumptions that I would like to address. The question about whether *any* religion aims at peace hinges on assumptions about what "religion" (or a particular religion) is, as well as what "peace" is. Furthermore, there is a deeper operating assumption here that "peace" is desirable.

Let's start with the first point about what "religion" is. Although this matter may initially take us away from the relationship of religion and violence, it actually will help us see problems that are often go unaddressed in such discussions. Assumptions about what "religion" is generally turn on issues of definition. Defining "religion" is notoriously difficult and much ink has been spilled in various attempts over the years. Usually finding a definition for "religion" entails distinguishing between some essence of a religion and its peripheral/accidental features. In this definitional scheme, a religion's essence is its "core truth," those timeless and eternal teachings that we find in scripture (at least in certain "key passages") or which come directly from the

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Brill (New York: Random House, Inc., 1946); Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1977); and Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

Divine Source (generally via a founder or authorized spokesperson). The accidental features, thus, would be those secondary and even tertiary manifestations of the timeless “core” that appear within history. These latter secondary features include the actual practices, rules and regulations, various institutional forms, adherents, and unlike the “essence,” such features inevitably change and take a variety of forms across different cultures and times.

Jonathan Z. Smith, a well known theorist of religion, describes such essentialist definitions of “religion” as *monothetic*, meaning that they focus on identifying a single, decisive trait shared by all members of a particular class.<sup>3</sup> Defining “religion” (or anything really) monothetically in terms of its essence is quite common, and can be traced back to ancient Greece and the work of Plato and Aristotle. Furthermore, making this sort of distinction between a religion’s “essence” and its “accidental features” is understandable, and perhaps necessary to some degree for intellectual study (especially in teaching introductory courses in the various religions of the world). A classic example of an essentialist definition of religion is E. B. Tylor’s (1832-1917) view that religion is “belief in Spiritual Beings.”<sup>4</sup> Tylor’s definition, while problematic, concisely identifies an essence of “religion,” and fits most popular views of “religion” in the West. Such an essentialist approach to “religion,” however, can be quite misleading – a matter that Smith, for one, addresses at some length.<sup>5</sup> For the sake of our discussion on religion, peace and violence, though, I wish to highlight five problems with monothetic essentialist definitions of “religion,” each of which is related to the others:

Essentialist definitions of religion inevitably treat abstractions as somehow “more real” than actual, observable phenomena. Studying religion becomes a matter of carefully delineating the timeless of essence of “religion,” and seeing how this ideal appears

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<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 2-4.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1 (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), 383.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 1-4.

in different other forms (e.g., “Buddhism,” “Islam,” etc.), and especially seeing how these ideals manifest in actual times and places. This Platonistic way of defining something is very mathematical yet by focusing on abstractions it often leads to reifying what is, in the end, a conceptual construct. When we do this (and we all do from time to time) we are guilty of what philosopher Alfred North Whitehead aptly dubs the “Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.”<sup>6</sup>

Monothetic essentialist approaches to defining “religion” invite a highly selective, even arbitrary choice of “essence.” Typically the chosen “essence” is found in certain select teachings as proclaimed in scripture. Using the example of Buddhism, we can define its essence as those teachings outlined in the Buddha’s first sermon (e.g., the Four Noble Truths, Eight-fold Path, etc.) Indeed, this is exactly what many textbooks do when in their presentations of Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> If we employ such an essentialist conception of “Buddhism,” though, how are we to understand actual practices such as the veneration of the Buddha (and by extension his monastic followers) through prayers and offerings to earn *punya* (“merit”)? The latter is perhaps the most common religious practice in traditionally Buddhist countries yet is not even mentioned in the Buddha’s famous first sermon. Sticking with our essentialist definition above, it would appear that earning “merit” is an inessential feature of Buddhism. On the face of it, though, it is strange to regard a very common and widespread Buddhist practice as “inessential” unless one assumes the essence of “Buddhism,” (like all the essence of all “religions”) can only really be found in the timeless, scriptural ideal.

The essentialism that comes with monothetic definitions also betrays the influence of a strong “Protestant bias” regarding what “religion” is.<sup>8</sup> As several scholars have noted, this “Protestant

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1925), 51.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*, revised ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 99-119.

<sup>8</sup> For details about “Protestant bias,” see Miriam Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of

bias” predisposes us to understand religion in a stereotypically Protestant Christian way that privileges scripture as central to all religions, and with it, a stress on belief in doctrine over ritual practice and community affiliation. Buddhists who venerate the Buddha (as per the example above) commonly are not very familiar with the Buddha’s first sermon or the subtle intricacies of Buddhist teachings such as *anātmavāda* (the doctrine of ‘no self’); their “Buddhism” for the most part consists of the habitual traditions and rituals they have been taught by their parents and other elders. From a perspective shaped by Protestant bias, these “Buddhists” would be ignorant of what is most important to “Buddhism” – the doctrines laid out in scripture. Thus, even though they may engage in regular devotional practices (e.g., visit their local *wat*, and provide material support to the *saṅgha*), when it comes right down to it, they do not really know their own religion.

Monothetic essentialist definitions of “religion” lend themselves all too easily to making the leap from *descriptive* statements about facts to *prescriptive* judgments about value. That is, assuming a simple abstract notion of “religion” encourages not just observation but evaluation of actual events and practices (“facts”), and almost invariably leads to judgments of them falling short when measured against the abstract ideal we have constructed. Sticking with the same Buddhist example, if we hold to the essence of “Buddhism” as scriptural doctrine, then those Buddhists who persist in venerating Buddha through devotional offerings are “mistaken” in their understanding; they do not know what “real Buddhism” is and thus are really not “true” (i.e., good) Buddhists.<sup>9</sup> Getting caught up in such thinking traps us in the “is-

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New York Press, 1989), 3-5 and Robert E. Van Voorst, ed., *Anthology of World Scriptures* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007), 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> This dynamic in the scholarly defining of Buddhism is actually rooted in the way T. W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922), one of the “founding fathers” of the field of Buddhist Studies, presented Buddhism to the Western (especially English-speaking) world. For details see Charles Hallisey, “Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism,” in *Curators of the Buddha*:



ought problem,” most famously identified by the Scottish philosopher David Hume.<sup>10</sup>

Following the same logic in we see in #4, essentialist definitions of “religion” can often serve as a handy way to denigrate entire religions that are different from our own. Again, to use our Buddhist example, since it appears that so many self-identified Buddhists are not “true Buddhists” (as per our definition of “Buddhism” of course) in that they insist on performing devotional acts rather than immersing themselves in the study of doctrine, maybe there is something wrong with “Buddhism” as a whole. Perhaps there is something in “Buddhism” itself that makes it liable to corruption and degeneration. Maybe “Buddhism” just does not really come close to the true essence of “religion” and so is inferior to some other “religion” (say, “Islam”) – at least as defined in terms of some timeless “essence” chosen by the evaluator.

These five problems that I identify above are not major news for scholars of religion. Most contemporary scholars are aware of problems with the essentialist aspects of monothetic definitions and prefer instead to identify sets of key features that are generally shared by anything we call “religion.” That is, they seek to devise *polythetic* definitions. An example of a scholar who goes this route would be sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), who defines religion as “a set of beliefs, practices, and institutions which men have evolved in various societies.”<sup>11</sup> Clearly Parsons presents a more nuanced (and, indeed, better) polythetic definition of “religion” than Tylor’s monothetic one. However, I’m not sure it avoids the five points I outline above. After all, identifying “key features” still amounts to demarcating some “essence,” just a more complex one. More importantly, these five points about issues

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*The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 31-61.

<sup>10</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: John Noon, 1739), 335, <http://books.google.com/books?id=EEo5ombCkzwC> (accessed January 30, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Roger Schmidt, “Studying Religion,” in *Patterns of Religion*, edited by Roger Schmidt et al (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999), 9.

surrounding definitions pose other problems that are often unacknowledged – problems that have serious consequences for dealing with the relationship between religion, peace, and violence.

### **Two examples: Charles Kimball and Keith Ward**

It may be helpful to see how the dynamics of monothetic and polythetic definitions I identify above shape inform how contemporary figures address the relationship between religion and violence. For this analysis I have selected two popular works on religion and violence, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil* and Keith Ward's *Is Religion Dangerous?* Both Kimball and Ward are accomplished scholars who have made valuable contributions to their field, and who have taken on the role of public intellectuals in response to the growing worldwide concern about religious violence. Both of them have also written books in an effort to help the public understand and deal with violence committed in the name of religion. In these books both of them also argue that violence marks an aberration from the true nature of religion. My intention is to identify problematic assumptions both scholars make that are facilitated by their essentialist views of religion, as well as some not-so hidden Christian apologetic concerns informing their discussions.

Let me begin with Charles Kimball. Kimball is an ordained Baptist minister who earned his doctorate in comparative religion with a specialization in Islamic Studies from Harvard University. The former Chair of the Department of Religion and the Divinity School of Wake Forest University, he has written several books on religion in the Middle East and currently is Director of Religious Studies at the University of Oklahoma. His book *When Religion Becomes Evil*, first published in 2002, has become something of a modern “classic” work in Religious Studies, and came out in a revised and updated edition in 2008. More recently Kimball has followed up this book with *When Religion Becomes Lethal*, which builds upon his earlier book but focuses especially on the mixture of religion and politics. Because of its track record, I decided that

*When Religion Becomes Evil* would be more suitable for the purposes of this paper.

As befits a matter of such great importance, Kimball takes the subject of religion and violence very seriously. He opens *When Religion Becomes Evil* with an appropriately even-handed yet cautionary tone:

Religion is arguably the most powerful and pervasive force on earth. Throughout history religious ideas and commitments have inspired individuals and communities of faith to transcend narrow self-interest in pursuit of higher values and truths. The record of history shows that noble acts of love, self-sacrifice, and service to others are frequently rooted in deeply held religious worldviews. At the same time, history clearly shows that religion has often been linked directly to the worst examples of human behavior. It is somewhat trite, but nevertheless sadly true, to say that more wars have been waged, more people killed, and these days more evil perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history.<sup>12</sup>

This is a nice passage. Kimball here very effectively depicts the fact that religion has been marked by both great good and great evil over the course of history, and that this continues to be the case in the present day.

Kimball continues with his reasonable, professorial approach by forthrightly admitting the complexities surrounding the relationship between religion and violence. In fact, Kimball explicitly acknowledges that those who see religion as the problem are right in part, just as are those who say religion is *not* the problem. Simple dismissal of faith or unthinking devotion will not work. Kimball puts it:

Surely a more nuanced response is needed. A clearer understanding of the nature and reality of human religiosity helps us embrace the tasks ahead more cogently. Is religion itself the problem? No ... and yes. Within the religious traditions that have stood the test of time, one finds the life-affirming faith that has sustained and provided meaning for millions over the centuries. At the same time, we can identify the

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 1.

corrupting influences that lead toward evil and violence in all religious traditions.<sup>13</sup>

What Kimball does over the course of his book is to identify five distinct “warning signs” in religious communities that should alert us to when something potentially very destructive will occur: absolute truth claims, blind obedience, establishing an “ideal” time, claiming that the end justifies any means, and declaring holy war. As Kimball notes, “one or more of these five signs always precedes any instance of religiously sanctioned evil.”<sup>14</sup>

In what is particularly welcome from a scholarly perspective, Kimball also squarely faces the problems inherent in defining “religion.” He notes (much as I do above) that usual attempts to define “religion” are limited by our perspectives and the often-fragmentary ideas and images we have, as well as our ignorance. Instead, he suggests that examining data derived from the comparative study of various religions can help us to put together a list of commonly shared characteristics despite specific differences of belief and practice. Among these characteristics are: distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, a communal life structured around an annual calendar of ritual observances, a body of life-cycle rituals to aid individuals through various life stages, social organization with moral codes and ethical principles, and an analysis of the human condition along with a means of attaining some sort of spiritual goal.<sup>15</sup> While we could always quibble over some of these points, Kimball’s polythetic approach to defining “religion” is quite sophisticated and very useful for promoting thoughtful understanding of different religions. Moreover, Kimball takes pains to admit the great diversity both within and between different religions, rightly denying that they are in any meaningful sense “the same.”

Thus far Kimball’s discussion has not proven particularly unique. What is more intriguing, however, is that Kimball goes even further than affirming diversity both within and across

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

religious traditions; Kimball goes so far as to claim that not all religions are equally valid. At this point he explicitly abandons the pretenses of scholarly objectivity for a distinctly normative approach to religion. As he says, "Events in our world today suggest that value judgments are sorely needed. I believe there are criteria that we can use to make informed and responsible decisions about what is acceptable under the rubric of religion and what is not."<sup>16</sup> In point of fact, of course, Kimball has already shown his normative approach earlier by his use of such words as "evil" and "corruption" (to say nothing of his choice of a title for his book) but this passage is significant for another reason: it reveals his key assumption that true/real religion is "good." Kimball has stated that we need to make value judgments and that he will be outlining criteria for us to use in evaluating "what is acceptable under the rubric of religion." The implication is that not just anything is really "good enough" to count as religion.

Even so, Kimball is far too sophisticated to say that *everything* connected to even the best of religions will necessarily be good. He explicitly states that there is potential for evil in all religions. However, such evil is due to corruption of those religions. He observes, "Whatever religious people may say about their love of God or the mandates of their religion, when their behavior toward others is violent and destructive, when it causes suffering among their neighbors, you can be sure the religion has been corrupted and reform is desperately needed. When religion becomes evil, these corruptions are always present."<sup>17</sup> For Kimball, corrupt forms of religion can be identified by one or more of the five telltale signs but, he says, that is not enough. As he puts it, "Whether one is a true believer or a die-hard secularist, it remains necessary to take the next step from the knowledge of these factors that predict *when religion becomes evil* to a clear understanding of *how religion can remain true to its authentic sources* and a force for positive change."<sup>18</sup> Kimball is quite clear in this passage: religion

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 187 (italics in original).

if it is true and authentic to its sources (i.e., its “essence”) is not only “good” but should lead to the betterment of the world.

Let me be clear: I am *not* criticizing Kimball for taking a normative approach to understanding religion, violence, and peace. In truth, I applaud his honesty and think it complements his clear, reasonable tone and style. When I have taught Kimball’s book in my classes, my students overwhelmingly appreciate what he is doing, and the vast majority of them are quite sympathetic to his efforts. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that Kimball, a preacher, is so inspiring, offering hope that we can counteract the violence and corrupting influences of “evil religion” by means of “good/true” religion. As he says, “in my view, people of faith offer the best hope both for correcting the corruptions leading to violence and for leading the way into a more promising future.”<sup>19</sup>

We could say much more about the particular construction of “religion” in *When Religion Becomes Evil* but I have already highlighted the key points Kimball makes. Let us turn now to the other scholar whose treatment of “religion” needs careful examination. Keith Ward presents an example similar to Kimball of someone engaging in a critical discussion of religion and violence albeit one based upon an explicit construction of religion as “good.” Ward, a Professor of Divinity at Gresham College in London, is a prolific scholar who has been at the forefront of the dialogue between Theology and Science. Generally regarded as one of Britain’s leading philosophical theologians, he has authored over twenty books on various topics related to religion. For the purposes of this essay I will look at his book *Is Religion Dangerous?*,<sup>20</sup> a popular and thoughtful response to contemporary critics of religion such as Richard Dawkins and the other “New Atheists,”<sup>21</sup> who claim that religion is based on irrational beliefs and has wrought much harm in human history.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?* (Cambridge/Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> The “New Atheists” refers to a group of 21<sup>st</sup> century writers who have written several best sellers in recent years. “New Atheists” take a militant stand against all forms of religion, vowing to expose all such “superstition” and

In many respects, the title of Ward's book, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, like Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Evil*, furnishes an important clue to how he looks at religion. Like Kimball, so Ward bases his book on a normative view of religion as "good," that is, a powerful force in history promoting moral uplift, personal and social benefits, and peace. This is his starting assumption that he never seriously questions. This does not mean, though, that he looks at the history of religion through the clichéd rose-colored glasses. For instance, Ward readily admits to destructive practices and violence committed in the name of religion such as the Crusades, the Nazi atrocities, and the terrorist acts of Al Qaeda as well as Aum Shinrikyo. Yet none of these examples ultimately sway him. Ward's answer to his title is simple: "No, Religion is *not* Dangerous."

Ward, however, fully recognizes the dangers of relying on simplistic, monothetic definitions of religion. In his very erudite and scholarly fashion, he also notes that the world's religions are extraordinarily complex and quite different from each other. In addition, like Kimball, Ward readily notes that we find great diversity even within a single religious tradition. Nonetheless, he does attempt to articulate a loose definition of religion through several generally shared features. Thus, for instance, Ward writes:

The most basic thing developed religions contribute to social attitudes is a sense of the sacred, of something so good that it is worthy of unconditional reverence. This sense of the sacred calls people to express something of that goodness in their own lives, and to commit their lives to gaining greater knowledge of that good ... every major religion stresses the objective existence of moral ideals, the importance of moral conduct, and the possibility for human individuals and societies of attaining a good and happy life.<sup>22</sup>

Again, we have a polythetic definition of religion listing several key features (a shared sense of the sacred, tendency to

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"fanaticism" wherever it arises. Among the most prominent "New Atheists" are Sam Harris, Daniel C. Dennett, the late Christopher Hitchens, and of course Dawkins.

<sup>22</sup> Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 49-50.

express the sacred in people's lives, commitment to gaining knowledge of the sacred, a source of moral ideals and conduct, offering the possibility for individuals and communities to attain a good life). What is especially interesting with Ward's definition is how explicitly normative it is, and that all of the features clearly stem from and convey a single essential point: religion is good.

Having thus proclaimed the essence of religion as good, Ward can then declare all evil and destructive acts committed in the name of religion as not *really* religious at all. For example, when addressing the charge that religion promotes intolerance of that which is "other," Ward replies, "It is not religion that causes intolerance. It is intolerance that uses religion to give alleged 'moral' support to the real cause of intolerance – hatred of those perceived or imagined to be oppressors or threats to one's own welfare."<sup>23</sup> Throughout the rest of the book, Ward similarly counters all such charges that religion is at fault with denial. It is not religion but "non-religious systems" (politics, economics, etc.) that cause or contribute to violence and destruction. To blame religion is a mistake.

As we can see, Ward treats "religion" as something that can be abstracted and distinguished from its socio-cultural context, that is, its concrete institutionalized forms and practices as well as the actual people professing and enacting their religion. This distinction (which is only possible when one has identified the real essence of "religion") allows Ward to assign blame for violence and destruction committed in the name of religion not to religion itself but to other factors such as human sin, or political interests and institutions.<sup>24</sup> As he puts it in one passage,

Religion does not lead to corruption. Human nature leads to corruption. If we let human beings into our religion, it is going to get corrupted. The major world religions all contain resources to expose corruption and to call humans to repentance. We would therefore expect them to go wrong from time to time – and militant Islam is going spectacularly

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 65 and 78-79.



wrong at present. But we would also expect them to have the resources for redirection towards goodness.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed Ward goes even further in his construction of “religion” as essentially good. The last section of *Is Religion Dangerous?* (pp. 153 ff) constitutes an extended empirical argument that on balance religion has led to more good than harm. What the world needs, in Ward’s view, is *more* religion of the right kind – a claim strongly echoing the similar claim made by Kimball. Ward concludes his book with particularly persuasive rhetorical flourish:

So is religion dangerous? Sometimes it is. But it is also one of the most powerful forces in the world for good. The best way of ensuring that religion is a force for good is for people of good will and intellectual wisdom to play their part in supporting and shaping it – if, that is, they have some initial sympathy with some particular form of its basic presumption that there exists a supreme objective reality and value in conscious relation to which humans can find fulfillment. If they support this, they will of course to some extent spoil it by taking all their own ambiguities and prejudices into it. But at the very least faith can mitigate those shortcomings. At best, religion, the search for supreme goodness, a life lived for the sake of good alone, will help promote the welfare of all sentient beings.<sup>26</sup>

As with Kimball, so Ward’s presentation is emotionally compelling while also being decidedly problematic when subjected to more critical reflection. At the very least, his empirically based arguments in the final sections of *Is Religion Dangerous?* are rather sweeping and call for careful and specific examples to back them up.

In any event, my analysis of both Kimball and Ward’s discussions allows us to see certain points they both share: a justifiable concern for violence committed in the name of religion, a concerted effort to address such horrors critically and responsibly, as well as a passionate response to those strident critics who argue that religion in all its forms is the source of such evil. Both Kimball and Ward also employ polythetic definitions of “religion,”

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 200.

identifying several key features that we generally find in the various and quite diverse religious traditions of the world (although admittedly, Kimball's definition is more detailed and nuanced than Ward's). Nonetheless, both scholars also work from a monothetic conception of religion in a crucial sense – they both define “religion” in its true essence as something “good.” This essentially good thing, of course, is liable to corruption (it can become the basis for “evil”), however such corruption is due not to religion *per se* but to the inevitable failings of we all-too-human beings. In fact, corruption of religions can be overcome (or at least minimized) by truly religious people's goodwill, commitment to truth, and perseverance in pursuit of the ultimate good for all humankind.

One of the most striking things about both Kimball and Ward's discussions is their use of the term “corruption” and their shared view that this corruption is our fault as human beings. This choice of words, and all that it implies, suggests an ever-present threat of impurity, perhaps some moral defect of which we are guilty. In a word, it suggests that the root of the problem is sin. More to the point, it betrays the fact that both Kimball and Ward share a specifically Christian view of the world and the state of humanity. That is, a creation that is originally good has over the course of time become disastrously flawed, a source of discord, pain and iniquity. Fortunately there is hope for the future; that which has become corrupt can be restored to its original purity. It is very easy to see in this narrative the archetypal Christian story of the Fall of Humanity and our Redemption through life and sacrifice of Christ. Most assuredly neither Kimball nor Ward specifically mention a sort of “savior” figure in their books but this metaphorical Christian reading of both Kimball and Ward's discussion of religion as essentially good, and its relation to violence is very much in keeping with the liberal (Protestant) Christian viewpoints each of them espouse.

Linguistic philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have famously argued that our ways of thinking about and engaging with the world are defined by basic conceptual metaphors that

fundamentally shape how we perceive, think, and act.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that one major factor in both Kimball and Ward's approach to the connection between religion and violence is this root metaphor of the Fall. This may not be something we can "prove," but it helps us understand where they are both coming from. It also raises some interesting questions. At the very least one wonders what a discussion about the relationship between religion and violence from, say a Jewish, Muslim or Hindu theologian would look like.

My point with the above analyses is not to argue that either Kimball or Ward is "wrong" *per se*, only that their presentations are selective,<sup>28</sup> and that they rest in part on certain question-begging assumptions. Moreover, their very framing of the issues is informed by a specific religious orientation. Certainly the fact that both Kimball and Ward are ordained clergymen affiliated with major religious institutions (something they share with the Pope, who also holds to a view of religion as "good") suggests that Kimball and Ward might be engaging in a type of Christian apologetics. In and of itself this is not a bad thing, and both Kimball and Ward make no bones about their own Christian perspectives. However, in so doing, they basically assume the role of what Russell McCutcheon describes as "caretakers" rather than "critics."<sup>29</sup> Once again, this does not mean that Kimball and Ward are "wrong," but it does mean that despite their good intentions they do a disservice to their readers. While both Kimball and Ward admit that we must be critical when engaging with religion, they have not been as *self-critical* in their questioning as they could be, nor, I suggest, as they *should* be.

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<sup>27</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>28</sup> Kimball admits to being selective (p. 6) but that is in reference to the specific examples he discusses in *When Religion Becomes Evil*. My point here is that he (and Ward) are selective in the very way they define "religion;" for each of them "religion" is in its true essence "good."

<sup>29</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redefining the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

Perhaps I can best illustrate what I mean with a story. A few years ago I gave a presentation at an interfaith forum on Religion and Peace. My presentation focused on Buddhism, one of my areas of expertise. I began by admitting that I myself am a member of the Buddhist Peace Foundation (BPF), and have been for over a decade. The gist of my paper was that, contrary to popular media depictions, Buddhist is *not* a “religion of Peace,” and that Buddhist history, doctrine and practice are all marked by violence.<sup>30</sup> The rest of my paper detailed some specific examples (the central role of warrior-rulers in helping Buddhism’s early spread, the “soldier monks” or medieval Japan and “punk monks” who maintained order in Tibetan monasteries, the collusion of the Zen Buddhist establishment with the Japanese war effort in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, etc.). By the time I had finished, it was obvious that my presentation had unsettled many in the audience. One audience member, a friend of mine whom I know to be a devout Buddhist, remarked how I had given him some “shocking things to think about.” The rest of the room lapsed into an awkward silence. Finally, one person stood up and asked if the various examples I enumerated really marked departures from the Buddha’s core teachings and thus did not represent “true Buddhism.” A few other audience members mumbled their assent and then looked at me for a response.

I recall momentarily wondering if she or the other members of the audience had actually listened to my presentation, and even considered saying that she was on to something so that I could just sit down. However, I stood in silence for a while longer before replying that I had to disagree with her suggestion, even while I personally sympathized with it. I then very briefly explained how her question allowed us to define “Buddhism” in such a way so as

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<sup>30</sup> There has been a spate of books recently on the subject of Buddhism and Violence. Among the best are Michael Zimmerman, ed., *Buddhism and Violence*, LIRI Seminar Proceedings Vol. 2 (Lumbini, 2006); Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds., *Buddhist Warfare* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Michael K. Jerryson, *Buddhist Fury: Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

to overlook actual historical events, institutions, and practices that are deeply disturbing but that need to be examined and understood. I went on to state that taking such a view of any religion as my questioner did, while understandable, is actually unhelpful when critically taking on the complex relationship between religion and violence in that it allows us to sidestep the entire matter. Essentially if we go this route then we can deny violence committed in the name of religion *really* has anything to do with religion itself – precisely what Kimball and Ward do. However, this makes the matter too easy, particularly for people of faith, because it allows us to disavow things we don't like rather than forcing us to face some potentially ugly truths about ourselves and the faiths we profess. Facing squarely the actual role of violence (and peace) within our religious traditions is just too serious a matter for us to let ourselves off the hook this way.

**Do we even know what we mean when we think of religion as peaceful?**

Finally I would just like us to consider *why* we would think any religion should necessarily be peaceful. In March of 1991 the eminent Roman Catholic priest and theologian Hans Küng gave a talk at the University of California in San Diego entitled “No Peace Among Nations until Peace Among the Religions” in which he argued for the necessity of finding common moral ground between the various world religions as path towards establishing a global ethic. Eventually this quest resulted in Küng's drafting of *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*, an affirmation of basic moral principles drawn from the major spiritual traditions of the world that is intended to serve as the shared basis for people's of diverse backgrounds to work together for the common good.<sup>31</sup> Küng presented this at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, where over two hundred people representing more than forty different faiths signed it.

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<sup>31</sup> Hans Küng, *Towards a Global Ethic*, <http://www.kusala.org/udharma/globalaethic.html> (accessed January 30, 2012).

*Towards a Global Ethic* is a powerful and moving assertion of moral commitments. There can be no doubt that in its words K  ng captures some of humanity’s most noble spirits, and it has clearly struck a chord with many people. Certainly it articulates points with which both Kimball and Ward (not to mention many of my students) would agree. But this focus on religion as a means of arriving at peace – perhaps the best means if we wish to echo Kimball and Ward – strikes me, like monothetic definitions of “religion” in general, as rather arbitrary. In part this is because such sentiments are often based on an essentialist model (in K  ng’s case I believe his view is rather nuanced) of religion of precisely the sort that both Kimball and Ward work with. Furthermore, I think it is also based on the implicit assumption that peace is good, and violence is bad, and that the two can be clearly separated. I, for one, am not sure that this is always the case. Darrell Cole in an article analyzing Aquinas’ views on war points out that although war is certainly contrary to peace, that does not mean peace is automatically good and war automatically bad; if the peace is *not* part of a just order, it is not worth preserving.<sup>32</sup>

In closing let me offer two examples, one scriptural and one historical, that illustrate what I mean and to encourage us to reflect more critically on our understandings of peace, violence, and their relationship to “religion.” In the second chapter of Isaiah there is a famous passage describing a vision of the world united under the rule of God. The most well known section runs thus:

He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide for many peoples;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Darrell Cole, “Thomas Aquinas on Virtuous War,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27 (Spring 1999): 57-80.

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 2: 4 (Revised Standard Version).

This vision of peace has proven to be so inspiring to many people throughout the ages that these words are written on the side of the headquarters of the United Nations. And yet they have been lifted from a much lengthier passage in which the LORD promises wrath and judgment against the people of Judah in which he will rain down terror and destruction for their sins. Those who are familiar with the Bible know we find similar apocalyptic visions elsewhere, most notably in Revelation prior to the coming of “a new Heaven and a new Earth.” Such scriptural imagery, cruel and merciless as it is, inspires terror rather than joy. What does it say that what many take to be the veritable Word of God lingers at great length on the slaughter of the many as a prelude to a final “peace” for a righteous few? I submit that even for the most faithful Christian, there should be something deeply disturbing about such horror.

Turning to an actual historical example, according to most accounts the area around the Episcopal Mission at Pine Ridge, Dakota on December 29, 1890 was quite peaceful.<sup>34</sup> Coming as it did on the heels of the infamous massacre of some three hundred Lakota Sioux men, women, children, I’m not sure many of us would say that the peace after Wounded Knee was “good.” In fact, it’s fairly safe to say this marks one of the worst crimes in American history.

In the end, I think the evaluation “peace = good, violence = bad,” like so many judgments of this nature, is simplistic and often masks tremendous confusion over just exactly what we mean by “peace” and “violence,” particularly in the context of religion. Is “peace” something personal and inner, or is it a social state? Is it merely the absence of war, or are we talking about something more akin to harmony and justice? Are we to understand “violence” as primarily physical, or can it be mental and emotional? Is it possible that scholarly analysis (say, by unreflectively employing certain definitions of “religion”) it itself a violent activity? Must “violence” always beget more “violence”? Can we attain “peace”

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<sup>34</sup> Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 445.

though the use of “violence”? Does “religious violence” just mean conflict between different religious groups? To what extent can we consider violent acts such as blood sacrifice “religious”? And what of the violent imagery so prevalent in our sacred texts and symbols? What exactly does all of this say about us and about “religion”? Asking these sorts of questions and struggling with each other for answers is a daunting task that, while most urgently needed, lies beyond the scope of this paper. But we better start engaging in such discussion if we really are serious about getting to the root of religious violence and working for peace – whether we aim to do this through the medium of religion or not.

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## **PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN RELIGIONS AND PEACE**

### **PARENTS CIRCLE-FAMILIES FORUM: AN ILLUSTRATION OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION IN ACHIEVING PEACE THROUGH NONVIOLENT METHODS**

**Tashia Dare**

#### **Introduction**

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been long and arduous. Blood continues to be spilt over land disputes and the debate over recognition of Palestine as a state. National identities are also at stake here as both Israel and Palestine claim much the same land as their ancestral homelands. This conflict is at the core of the larger Israeli-Arab conflict and has played a significant role in the volatility of the region, affecting thousands of lives. Simply put, the differences of religious and political perspectives and the dehumanizing of “the other” have all contributed to the continuation of the conflict.

One organization is putting aside their religious and political differences in order to humanize the conflict. Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF) is a grassroots organization intended to

bring bereaved families on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict together in the hopes of providing mutual understanding in the effort of achieving peace and reconciliation. Their use of nonviolence, namely through dialogue, is what defines this organization. They want no more deaths, no more violence.

PCFF was established to help members from both sides of the conflict work through their pain and anger while creating bonds between each other, dispelling myths, and creating trust and peace amongst themselves that will hopefully spread to the rest of Israel and Palestine. Religion no doubt plays a role in this process, even though it is not explicitly discussed. There is no question that these men, women, and children who have lost close loved ones to the conflict have turned to their faiths as they have mourned their losses. They have turned such suffering into hope that one day there will not only be peace but reconciliation between both sides that will be long lasting and will finally put an end to the violence.

I begin this study with a discussion on conflict transformation and management as a way to contextualize PCFF. I follow this with a section on reconciliation. This is followed by a brief examination of the terms peace and nonviolence. In the final section, I address PCFF in detail as a case study to show how it specifically illustrates conflict transformation and management in obtaining peace through nonviolent methods.

## **Part I: Terms**

### **1. Conflict Transformation**

Scott Appleby states that conflict transformation is “the replacement of violent with nonviolent means of settling disputes.”<sup>1</sup> Those involved with transforming conflict labor toward making a conflict situation that can be extremely destructive into something productive in the effort of building peace through nonviolent methods. Conflict transformation is not only about

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<sup>1</sup> R. Scott Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 212.

changing competing interests or values but also about the daily and broad historical changes that transform the nature, scope, and functions of communal violence.<sup>2</sup> Transformation of conflict is embedded in justice, radical respect for life, and advocates nonviolence as in the Anabaptist heritage. Since the essence of conflict transformation is to turn a negative into a positive, only nonviolent methods can be employed. Raimo Väyrynen notes that conflicts are always transforming even as efforts to end the conflict do not appear to have made progress.

There are several forms of conflict transformation. These include actor, issue, rule, and structural transformation, conflict management, and conflict resolution.<sup>3</sup> All of these play important roles in a conflict. But not all of them may be effective in any given conflict. The nature of the conflict and the actors involved dictate which methods will be the most beneficial, though by no means are these methods mutually exclusive.

Väyrynen states that conflict transformation may be intentional or unintentional. Intentional transformation “calls for bold political moves.” Actors, rules, and the content of the conflict are deliberately changed in order to provide improved preconditions that allow for such political moves to occur that will help solve the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Unintentional transformation is usually the “by-product of the broader social and economic changes which the actors have not planned and cannot avoid, but to which they have to adjust.”<sup>5</sup> In this kind of transformation the actors involved are those who only feel the effects of the transformation but otherwise had no active part in producing the action leading to the transformation of the conflict. In such cases, the transformation was likely instigated and fulfilled by those in authorities and by outsider specialists.

Conflict transformation must involve people on the ground

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<sup>2</sup> Raimo Väyrynen, “To Settle or to Transform? Perspectives on the Resolution of National and International Conflicts,” Raimo Väyrynen, ed., *New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation* (London: International Social Science Research Council, 1991), 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Väyrynen and Appleby for more on these methods.

<sup>4</sup> Väyrynen, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

(civilians who live in areas of conflict).<sup>6</sup> Johan Galtung notes that all parties must find creative ways to bridge the goals of the actors that are in contradiction with each other in order to create peace. This must be done by the local people themselves rather than calling in outside specialists. This is important since it is the people on the ground who really know what the conflict is about including the cultural, religious, and social contexts. Not going to the root of the conflict and going past contradictions can lead to outbreaks of violence and counter-violence.<sup>7</sup> This is why people on the ground must be the ones to instigate the process of conflict transformation. Taking into account the levels of experience of the people and their priorities, those who take the brunt of a conflict and its violence versus those on the periphery of the conflict who may not have direct contact with the violence, but nonetheless still feel the effects of it, is a vital component of this method.<sup>8</sup>

John Paul Lederach states that “transformation as a concept is both descriptive of the conflict dynamics and prescriptive of the overall purpose that building peace pursues, both in terms of changing destructive relationship patterns and in seeking systematic change. Transformation provides a language that more adequately approximates the nature of conflict and how it works and underscores the goals and purpose of the field.”<sup>9</sup>

Conflict transformation recognizes that conflict is an agent of transforming relationships and organizations. Since it does this, this method gives those who utilize it conceptual support as they move forward in their achievement of peace, including conflict resolution. In the end, Lederach writes that “transformative peacemaking is based on understanding fair, respectful, and

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<sup>6</sup> Elham Atashi, “Challenges to conflict transformation from the streets,” Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, eds., *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace* (London: Routledge, 2009), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Johan Galtung, “Introduction: peace by peaceful conflict transformation—the TRANSCEND approach,” Charles Webel and Johan Galtung, eds., *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (London: Routledge, 2007), 24.

<sup>8</sup> Atashi, 47.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 18.

inclusive process as a way of life and envisions outcome as a commitment to increasing justice, seeking truth, and healing relationships.”<sup>10</sup> This is what those who use conflict transformation must keep in mind as they move in this direction.

A successful conflict transformation situation is one in which the parties, the issues, and the expectations have been transformed in such a way as there is no longer fear of violence erupting.<sup>11</sup> This is not to say there is no longer tension or conflict, but that the conflict is more under control and violence less likely to break out. It takes all parties at deep levels to transform a situation that becomes manageable and perhaps even ends the conflict itself. Transformation is a lengthy process and requires several strategies at varying stages.<sup>12</sup> In short, transforming a conflict takes great time and effort by all involved. It is a complex method, but an ever so important one as it is the most beneficial to all sides.

## 2. Conflict Management

Conflict management is the act of preventing or containing deadly conflict and is a type of conflict transformation. In addressing conflict, one of the primary steps is to bring to the attention those in authority human rights issues and other social problems. By doing so, this helps prevent or deescalate conflict or prevent already existing conflict from spreading. Those utilizing conflict management methods understand that resolving conflict is not simply about ending it but rather to turn the destructive nature of conflict into something constructive, much like conflict transformation. This is how conflict can effectively end in an area,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Wallensteen, “The Resolution and Transformation of International Conflicts: A Structural Perspective,” Raimo Väyrynen, ed., *New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation* (London: International Social Science Research Council, 1991), 130.

<sup>12</sup> Louis Kriesberg and Gearoid Millar, “Protagonist strategies that help end violence,” Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, eds., *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace* (London: Routledge, 2009), 27.

particularly at the grassroots level. It is at this level where individuals can sense when tensions are rising and when conflict may erupt. They are the ones who are the most affected by human rights violations. Religious actors have been especially effective in this area since they often are the ones who have addressed government officials and others in authority concerning human rights violations and conflicts erupting from such violations. In this sense, these actors act as advocates for the people on the ground and usually promote the use of nonviolent methods to solve problems.

According to Lederach, the problem with conflict management is that it focuses on the technical and practical side of peacemaking rather than attaining the broader essence of peacemaking.<sup>13</sup> Instead, conflict transformation is the preferred method as it provides a “holistic understanding, which can be fleshed out at several levels.”<sup>14</sup> For him conflict transformation recognizes that conflict, which is always present in humans, *transforms* relationships and social organizations. While I agree with Lederach that conflict management is not the best method for the above reasons, there are situations in which a conflict is so entrenched in a culture or group of individuals that managing the conflict so it does not become widespread or violent is the only plausible method one can use. Conflict management can be especially useful when used in conjunction with other nonviolent methods of peacemaking.

### 3. Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about bringing people together in order to amend wrongs and is done in situations in which the one harmed is still in contact with his or her abusers, therefore, reconciliation is for those who still have to face their perpetrators. This even means on a large scale, such as a nation against another nation as we see in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Joanna Santa-Barbara states

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<sup>13</sup> Lederach, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



reconciliation “can be thought of as *the restoration of a state of peace to the relationships, where the entities are at least not harming each other, and can begin to be trusted not to do so in the future, which means that revenge is foregone as an option.*”<sup>15</sup>

Forgiveness, meaning “that *the moral debt is cancelled; anger and resentment are dropped; there will be no revenge,*” is one central process in reconciliation and only victims can forgive.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note, however, that forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting the past. This is not necessary in order to forgive. Reconciliation is multidimensional and varies across time, as evidenced in the above statements. It is fundamental in bringing about peace and maintaining that peace for the long-term. This is an important aspect of post-violence/conflict, but it is equally important during conflict.

Wilfred Graf, Gudrun Kramer, and Augustine Nicolescou have argued there are three phases and six steps in conflict transformation dialogue.<sup>17</sup> Step six involves creating and recognizing a new reality, which involves a seeable change in

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<sup>15</sup> Joanna Santa-Barbara, “Reconciliation,” Charles Webel and Johan Galtung, eds., *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (London: Routledge, 2007), 174.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The following are the three phases and their six steps mentioned by Graf, Kramer, and Nicolescou: Phase 1: understanding the conflict formation – step 1: understanding all actors, their behavior and their relations in the context of the contradiction (Analysis of the Present), step 2: understanding the assumptions, attitudes and how they interact with contradictions and the goals (Therapy of the Past); Phase 2: differentiating between “just/legitimate” and “unjust/legitimate” goals – step 3: exploring unconscious assumptions and attitudes and unconscious contradictions and goals (Analysis of the Past), step 4: the analysis of basic needs constellations and fixations (Analysis of the Future); Phase 3: integrating the legitimate goals with an overarching formula – step 5: the construction of new attitudes, new assumptions and goals (Therapy of the Future), step 6: creating new behaviors, an action plan for the present (Therapy of the Present). Wilfred Graf, Gudrun Kramer, and Augustine Nicolescou, “Counseling and training for conflict transformation and peace-building: the TRANSCEND approach,” Charles Webel and Johan Galtung, eds., *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (London: Routledge, 2007), 135-141.

relationships and rises above the conflict.<sup>18</sup> Step six is also the first step in reconciliation. As Graf, Kramer, and Nicolescou state, reconciliation requires transformation of relationships and dialogue among communities so that peace will have a chance to flourish and last.<sup>19</sup> This demonstrates the deep importance of reconciliation. It is one of the final steps toward peace.

Even though reconciliation is a vital part of post-conflict situations since it can help prevent future outbreaks of violence, one of the problems is the assumption that during post-conflict transition everyone is equally interested in facing the past.<sup>20</sup> This is not always the case. Dealing with the past may not be the priority for some people. Truth commissions are one form of reconciliation post-violence and post-conflict and are concerned with the past. Some local people feel that having such a commission is a luxury they cannot afford because they are more concerned about the well-being of their families. Moreover, sometimes these commissions do not help heal a society as some sects of society continue to face violence, inequality, and social and economic depression.<sup>21</sup> Healing can only happen if the people involved feel secure. Without security no one can move forward. Nevertheless, truth commissions have helped heal relationships and are used in numerous settings around the world, including in Eastern Europe between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians and in Guatemala.

Writing “a unified history of a conflictual period” is also a means of reconciliation. Such narratives provide much needed information on all sides of a conflict, allowing it to be open to everyone and for readers to see the “truth” of events during this period. This can be a beneficial process for all parties, a sort of catharsis as well as an opportunity to open pathways for understanding and dialogue. The latter is especially crucial in the development of peace and reconciliation as this provides clarification of why the two groups are in conflict with each other and to dispel any myths or stereotypes of the other side. Parents

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Atashi, 56.

Circle-Families Forum members are actively taking part in understanding each other's national narratives by participating in the "Narrative project." The purpose of this project is to help both sides understand the historical nature of the establishment of the State of Israel and understand each other's perspective on this event. According to PCFF it is not the intent to reconcile the differences of perspectives but to help each other understand one another's points of view.<sup>22</sup>

Reconciliation is what keeps societies together. Forgiveness may not necessarily be involved (there is a fine line between reconciliation and forgiveness), but a sense of acceptance of what happened can help move groups forward and provide reconciliation. Reconciliation is crucial in creating and sustaining peace in societies and among individuals. The process of healing leads to reconciliation and vice versa. Members of PCFF through ongoing dialogue are helping heal each other's personal wounds and that of their countries.'

#### 4. Peace

Peace is a difficult concept to achieve and to practice but nonetheless is possible. It is the end result of actors involved in conflict working together to meet a common goal and it is a full-time job. There are two types of peace: negative and positive. Johan Galtung defines negative peace as "the absence of war" and positive peace as "a societal condition in which structures of domination and exploitation, which underlie war, have been eliminated."<sup>23</sup> Positive peace is preferred as it goes deeper into understanding the situation and knowing how to respond to the problem. For Adam Curle, positive peace is not just an absence of conflictive behavior. Rather it involves relationships in which all

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<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Marc Rudolph, "Faith Tends to Humanize Faith," originally published in *Naperville Patch*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.theparentscircle.com/NewsMain.asp?id=481> (accessed October 19, 2011), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 26.

parties cooperate so that the maltreatment of the powerless by the powerful can be put to an end.<sup>24</sup> Positive peace, for Curle, helps the powerless become more powerful by building up their capabilities and providing material resources that enable them to no longer be victims.

Diversity often leads to conflict, but for Galtung it can be what makes peace. He states that “[d]iversity with inequality is mutual impoverishment, and so is equality with uniformity. Diversity with equality spells peace.”<sup>25</sup> We must recognize the diversity of human beings and utilize such diversity. Diversity does not have to be used against one another, creating hostility or negativity. It is what makes the world interesting and brings various perspectives to any given situation. This said, we must also be careful to recognize that while diversity is wonderful, there is still more that unites us than divides us. We all have the same basic human needs and desires. This must be acknowledged in any time of conflict and applied in efforts to reach and maintain peace.

## 5. Nonviolence

Nonviolence is not passive resistance. Rather, it is active action against injustice and asserting one’s rights without the use of violence. It is a tool of empowerment. Nonviolent methods are not only for pacifists but for non-pacifists who seek and advocate for real social change without violence. Nonviolence provides neutrality and open communication. It is about resisting intolerance and injustice and bringing such problems to the attention of those in authority.

According to Mohandas Gandhi, nonviolence is for those who have courage and strength, it “is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave.... Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with nonviolence...Nonviolence presupposes the

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<sup>24</sup> Tim Jacoby, *Understanding Conflict and Violence: Theoretical and Interdisciplinary Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2008), 25.

<sup>25</sup> Galtung, 24.

ability to strike.”<sup>26</sup> This means that nonviolence takes away the ability to strike against someone using violent action, whether it is physical, verbal, or emotional. One can strike, however, using nonviolent methods such as boycotts, which are often a financial strike against oppressors, just as in the 1950s bus boycott in Alabama.

As Martin Luther King saw it violence not only makes victims of those on the receiving end but also those using it. Individuals turning to violence to solve problems are the primary victims and suffer the greatest harm, that of moral corruption.<sup>27</sup> This is why it is important to promote peace through nonviolent action. The use of violence becomes a vicious circle of continued violence in one form or another, either through physical violence or through verbal and emotional violence. In the end, nonviolence takes moral courage, while violence does not require this element. Nonviolence is for those who have strong constitutions and willingness to take action to change a problematic situation rather than simply turning to violence to solve the problem. “It is based on the courage and humanity of ordinary people and their determination to live in dignity and decency.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Part II: Parents Circle-Families Forum: A Case Study**

Parents Circle-Families Forum: Bereaved Families Supporting Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance, also known as the Israeli Palestinian Bereaved Families Forum, began in 1994 after Yitzhak Frankenthal, an Orthodox Jew, lost his 19-year-old son, Arik, after he was kidnapped and murdered by Hamas activists.<sup>29</sup> Co-founder

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<sup>26</sup> Reuven Kimelman, “Nonviolence in the Talmud,” Robert L. Holmes and Barry L. Gan, eds., *Nonviolence in Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005), 26.

<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Holmes and Barry L. Gan, eds., *Nonviolence in Theory and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005), 68.

<sup>28</sup> Holmes and Gan, 376.

<sup>29</sup> From the outset, Frankenthal made sure that Palestinians were equally represented. Anne Sebba, “Blood ties: how grief could unite the Middle East,” originally published in *Times Online*, January 18, 2010,

Roni Hirshenzon lost his two sons, Amir and Elad, to the conflict as well. Amir was killed by a terrorist bombing, while Elad, five years after losing his older brother and shortly after losing his best friend, shot himself in grief. These two fathers along with a handful of other individuals began an organization, now 500 strong, intended to bring together grieving families on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the hope of ending the conflict through nonviolent methods. They seek peace and reconciliation even in the face of the continued violence. If they, those who have suffered the greatest pain of losing a child, a spouse, a parent, a sibling, can bridge the gap between these two opposing sides, then anyone can.

PCFF's mission is to educate both sides of the conflict, to "offer a breakthrough in people's frame of mind, to allow a change of perception, a chance to reconsider one's views and attitudes towards the conflict and the other side," and to provide a framework of reconciliation that can be incorporated into political agreements in the future.<sup>30</sup> They are a support group and "promot[e] reconciliation [and open dialog] as an alternative to hatred and revenge" even as the conflict continues.<sup>31</sup>

At the grassroots level, "relationships are built and communities are restored after violence" and even during conflict as PCFF has proven.<sup>32</sup> Co-founding member, Aharon Barnea, once said that members of PCFF have paid "the ultimate 'price of no peace.'" <sup>33</sup> For this reason members know all too well how

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[http://www.theparentscircle.org/ActivitiesMain.asp?id=287&sivug\\_id=15](http://www.theparentscircle.org/ActivitiesMain.asp?id=287&sivug_id=15) (accessed October 19, 2011), 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Parents Circle-Families Forum*, <http://www.theparentscircle.org> (accessed October 19, 2011) and Robi Damelin, "Israeli and Palestinian victims break cycle of violence," March 30, 2011, <http://www.theparentscircle.org/NewsMain.asp?id=505> (accessed October 19, 2011), 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Parents Circle-Families Forum*, <http://www.theparentscircle.org> (accessed October 19, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Kriesberg and Millar, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Mohammed Abu Nimer and Ned Lazarus, "The Peacebuilder's Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue: A Psychosocial Portrait of Israeli-Palestinian Encounters," Judy Kuriansky, ed., *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots*

important it is to work toward peace and the effort they must put forth in order for it to be successful. They face the past, the present, and the future all the time in this process.

The philosophy of nonviolence confirms that there is more that unites us than divides us as humans.<sup>34</sup> Members of PCFF, like many other nonviolent organizations and programs, such as Just Vision, Compassionate Listening, and People-to-People, realize and thrive on this principle. They seek the commonality of both groups as they transform their conflict into peace and reconciliation. While the religious beliefs of the conflicting groups may be different as are their histories PCFF maintains that the human beings comprising each group are more same than not.

For members of PCFF, this principle of unity is not pabulum, but a reflection of reality. There is one thing that unites all members of the organization and unites all human beings more than anything else: the pain of loss. Pain as grief is a universal feeling, no matter who you are. Death is a certainty in our lives. Even though we can never escape it, it does not have to be violent. Ali Abu Awwad, a member of PCFF who lost his brother when an Israeli soldier shot him, puts it well when he says, "What unites us is pain. Pain is not political. Pain is not ideological. Because we took a step to meet as human beings, we are able now to sit and to discuss the most complicated political issues."<sup>35</sup> Roni Hirshenzon, co-founder of PCFF, echoes this. Despite his deep pain, Hirshenzon stills believes that humanity can overcome politics. It provides a sense of hope that otherwise would not be there.<sup>36</sup> Hope is what keeps PCFF members committed to the project of conflict transformation, even in the face of derision by other Israelis and Palestinians alike. Pain, as a universal feeling, has allowed

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*Peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Kimelman, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Rachel Shabi, "United by their grief," originally published in *The National*, March 10, 2010, [http://www.theparentscircle.org/ActivitiesMain.asp?id=287&sivug\\_id=15](http://www.theparentscircle.org/ActivitiesMain.asp?id=287&sivug_id=15) (accessed October 19, 2011), 2.

<sup>36</sup> "Another Side of Peace," Ellen Frick and Gretchen Burger, dirs., (Two Bob Productions, 2004).

members of both groups of the conflict to interact with each other at a particular level that otherwise could not have taken place.<sup>37</sup> It has opened channels for communication. While the pain of losing a close loved one runs deep it has not paralyzed PCFF members. They have turned their grief and anger for change for future generations. Bereaved families hold a special place within Israeli and Palestinian societies as they are well respected.<sup>38</sup> This has helped the organization to succeed in establishing initiatives that promote their mission.

An example of this is their outreach program of visiting schools. Palestinian and Israeli speakers are sent to high schools where students can see both perspectives and witness Palestinians and Israelis, Muslims and Jews, working together without violence. These students have the opportunity to observe nonviolent methods in practice and understand that these methods are beneficial and peace is possible. For Palestinian students, this is often their first encounter with an Israeli not in uniform or as an occupier. For Israeli students, this is their first time to see a Palestinian not as a terrorist or as the one they occupy. This is crucial to making peace. The children are the future and if they grow up watching adults openly communicating with each other and working together then they have a positive model to follow, one that does not require violence in order to resolve problems. These lectures allow the students to see reconciliation in action and in turn learn about the other side's needs and fears.<sup>39</sup> PCFF is humanizing the conflict in this way.

*Hello Shalom, Hello Salaam* is another project that has been very successful in humanizing the conflict. This project was launched in 2002 and is a free chat-line and phone service allowing Israelis and Palestinians to talk with one another. This project has demonstrated over the years the willingness of both groups to

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<sup>37</sup> Shabi, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Boaz Kitain, "Grieving but Growing: Palestinians and Israelis in the Parents Circle-Families Forum," Judy Kuriansky, ed., *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 100.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 101.



engage with each other. Over one million calls have been made since the project's inception. While PCFF member Boaz Kitain states that not all calls are positive, the project, nonetheless, has uncovered "the lack of trust and empathy in an effort to encourage dialogue and humanize the conflict in order to ultimately dispel the popular myth that 'there is no partner for peace' and encourage deep social change in both societies."<sup>40</sup> Dialogue allows this to occur, dispelling myths and stereotypes while opening the possibility of mutual respect and understanding.

PCFF is also bringing young people together across the border via social media, such as with the initiative "A crack in the wall" in which individuals on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian border engage with one another by sharing their stories. They are also using the internet with projects like the "Youth Internet Project," an Arabic-Hebrew website for children to write about themselves and their families with others, which promotes dialogue at an early age. Members are utilizing today's tools to make a better tomorrow.

These projects and several others, including radio programs and art exhibits, aim to humanize "the other." People on both sides of the conflict can see the humanity of the other, rather than a faceless enemy. They see that their "enemy" is like them, with the same basic human needs and rights, the right to live freely and support their families. They have dreams and desires. Everyone has the right to these ideals. Humanizing the other is a powerful step toward peace and reconciliation that is sustainable and should not be minimized. If one humanizes his or her opponent, one is less likely to want to harm the other, lessening the actuality of violence. It is crucial to transforming a conflict. One Israeli mother, Robi Damelin, who lost her son, David, to a Palestinian sniper, is an example of this. After hearing about PCFF from co-founder Yitzhak Frankenthal, she realized that "a bereaved Palestinian mother feels exactly the same pain when she goes to sleep as I do."<sup>41</sup> Damelin began working for PCFF tirelessly. She gave up

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Sebba, 2.

her PR company and now goes to schools with Palestinian, Ali Abu Awwad. They have bonded closely, like mother and son.

Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg note the importance of humanizing in the face of conflicts. Rehumanizing one's enemies creates the basis and possibility of peacemaking, while the absence of this only perpetuates negative stereotypes and dehumanization, making violence the only option to meet political goals.<sup>42</sup> Humanizing the other is "key to transforming the relationship from mutual denial to mutual recognition, from indifference or hostility to compassion and empathy."<sup>43</sup> PCFF seeks to humanize the other through continuous dialogue with both sides of the conflict. They understand this to be crucial in their move toward peace. Every activity they develop is about communicating with both sides and education through various media: lectures, workshops, support groups, art exhibitions, and social media.

Actor transformation involves internal changes within the parties involved or the "appearance and recognition of new actors."<sup>44</sup> PCFF fits this method since the organization recognizes new actors in the peacemaking efforts with the acceptance of new members. With the acceptance of new members, there is also a change within the parties themselves for there is a willingness to learn from each other, rather than seeing one another as the enemy without perceiving their humanity.

Structural transformation is the change of inter-actor relations. According to Scott Appleby, it is the end product of conflict transformation and is a concrete way of providing peacebuilding initiatives that promote long-term peace since it addresses the root causes of conflict. Here, PCFF members seek to help each other and while doing so, are changing the relationships between Israelis and Palestinians into one that is accepting of the other and more understanding. The dynamics between the two groups has changed through support groups and workshops, not only those for the

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, "Introduction," Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, eds., *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace* (London: Routledge, 2009), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Nimer and Lazarus, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Väyrynen, 4.

adults, but other outreach programs for the children. Members become much more dependent on each other since they need each other to make peace possible.

Despite their successful programs members of PCFF are often ostracized by those outside the group. Many people on both sides of the conflict do not understand how this organization functions and why people want to be part of it when the conflict still continues. In the film *Encounter Point* (Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha, dirs., 2005), which follows four people promoting nonviolence during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a Palestinian man asks PCFF member, Ali Abu Awwad, “Are you ‘normalizing’ relations with Israelis before there is a solution to the conflict?”<sup>45</sup> While this is a logical question, it nonetheless demonstrates the lack of understanding by others what this organization seeks to do and what other similar organizations hope to accomplish. Members are at risk from their communities. They face political and social opposition, which makes it even more difficult to be part of this organization. There are physical limitations as well due to border checkpoints and the difficulty in obtaining permits to cross the border for workshops and other gatherings.

There are numerous peace and nonviolence organizations in Israel/Palestine working on solving the conflict, but PCFF is unique in that it is working not only for peace but reconciliation. Reconciliation is, as previously pointed out, more often worked on post-violence and conflict, but in the case of PCFF, members are actively working on reconciliation now, during the conflict and violence. This is one of their main objectives. For them, reconciliation can happen at any point in the conflict and post-conflict. Through their support groups they are reconciling differences with each other and with “the other side” as a whole, creating understanding and tolerance while taking away hate and the urge for revenge. PCFF is a positive organization seeking an end to violence while promoting understanding and debunking myths and stereotypes. Understanding another’s perspective helps reduce animosity and fear.

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<sup>45</sup> Nimer and Lazarus, 29.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict transformation, management, and reconciliation are methods used to work through conflict. Even though people hope for and strive for an end to conflict, in reality, conflict will continue in one form or another as it is part of human nature. People are constantly competing for the same resources and have the same needs, fueling conflict and leading to potential violence. Transformation and management of conflict are effectively not so much about ending the conflict per se, but about turning destruction into production and preventing violence altogether or limiting its spread. These methods are effectual by providing means for all parties involved to learn from and about each other, to understand, and to respect each other, and may be even trust the other side. I mentioned earlier about the importance of building up skills of people on the ground in order for them to be able to stand up for themselves, rather than continue to be victims of the conflict. This is a vital aspect to transforming conflicts as the people who have been victimized by conflict and oppressive situations are now able to become their own advocates. Education is the key. Without it no one can move forward.

Members of PCFF are committed to the idea that violence is no solution to the conflict. Only nonviolent methods that allow mutual understanding and respect, that allow open dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation, and that allow peace as an option for the long-term will be accepted. This is how they understand themselves as nonviolent, peaceful people. Nonviolence is the only option for them. They refuse to hate or take revenge. This will not bring back their loved ones. Only peace and understanding through nonviolence will secure a safe present and future for generations to come. This is what they hope for. They want the horrible cycle of violence to end, not only for themselves, but for their children and their children. They understand peace as the end of violence and promotion of reconciliation.

Dialogue is the force behind PCFF. It is what will ultimately bring peace since it opens the channels for understanding, learning,

and expressing oneself. Through dialogue solutions can be brought forward and discussed. Without communications nothing would be accomplished and the violence would continue. Through communicating with one another, stories are shared, common human needs and desires are recognized; the enemy becomes a human being. Through these communications personal and national narratives are shared, providing some kind of unity through personal narratives as well as potentially mending rifts between religious groups, and new perspective and understanding through national narratives. In the course of sharing personal stories, trust is built, tightening the bond among members and allowing for peace and reconciliation to flourish.

Peace cannot come from the end of a gun or from a bomb. Peace can only come from those who communicate with each other, from those who truly listen to the other side. Peace will only come from understanding the other, while recognizing that understanding does not always imply agreement. It also comes from dispelling myths and stereotypes. Tolerance is not enough. These are the ways to transforming a conflict into peace without firing a shot. But dialogue will not solve a conflict alone. Rather, nonviolent action enacting dialogue will.

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