Building a World That Respects Religious Differences

By Derek H. Davis and Charles A. McDaniel Jr.

Photo: Thomas Osborn

After having witnessed the devastation of much of the former Yugoslavia caused by ethnic and religious hatred, the rest of the world is left wondering how such a society can ever be rebuilt. The antipathy of Serb for Croat, of Muslim for Serb, of Croat for Muslim, reinforced by centuries of atrocities perpetrated by all sides, has contributed to what many believe is a hopelessly dysfunctional culture. Although it is impossible to distill the religious element from other influences and determine its exact significance in this conflict, there can be no question that the religious history of the Balkans plays a substantial role in the perpetuation of bloodshed. The perceived complicity of the Roman Catholic Church in the Croats' persecution of the Orthodox Serbs in World War II undoubtedly has contributed to the violent legacy that fuels modern atrocities. Similarly stoking the fires of religious hatred is the Serbs' self-image as the protectors of Christendom, believers that their armies still exist as the last barrier to an Islamic Europe. And Muslims perceive in their Christian neighbors a remnant of the crusaders—blood lustful zealots whose faith calls for the slaughter of women and children in the name of their messiah.

The intractability of religious influence in the Balkans greatly complicates the present stalemate and poses some dangerous questions for world leaders. Will the current precarious truce, imposed only by the incessancy of NATO bombing, hold after the departure of the international peacekeeping force? Will the bitterness that has for so long fueled holy war in the Balkans be contained to that region or will it spill over into neighboring states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia? The immediacy of these questions overshadows the more difficult and important issue of whether this war-torn society can ever begin a meaningful process of healing so that there might be at least the hope of a lasting peace.

Far from isolated, cultures of religious violence fortified by ancient hatred like that of the Balkans are found on every continent in countries large and small, industrialized and impoverished. Similar questions concerning religious-political stability may be asked about nations as diverse as Ireland, Sudan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, the Indonesian country of East Timor, and countless other places where decades, even centuries, of religious persecution have established seemingly insurmountable obstacles to the maintenance of social order. One atrocity begets another in an endless cycle of violence that emanates from humankind's most deeply held convictions. Repetitions of religiously inspired brutality bring to mind Rousseau's dark comment about the impossibility of living together with those one believes to be damned. How is it possible to envision a world that respects religious differences when, in reality, much of the world would be satisfied simply by the suspension of slaughter in the name of truth?

This essay examines the possibility of building a world whose people respect the religious beliefs and practices of others. Identification of past successes in the reconciliation of religious rivals is key to the construction of such a world, just as is the admission of past failures—and there have been many. Institutional impediments to religious freedom have often silenced, or worse, inflamed dialogue between religious groups and deepened animosities between them. The construction of a religiously respectful world requires that these social and political structures must be understood and overcome. To that end, some ideas will be presented for facilitating religious understanding between peoples that presupposes a world order sympathetic to religious reconciliation, if for no other reason than to achieve a self-interested peace. However, construction of this religiously respectful world requires a positive project built on active intervention and responsible risk taking by collective world authorities. Ancient hatreds that contribute to our present situation have not, and will not, resolve themselves. However, if there is indeed a new world order and that order is receptive to learning from past mistakes and willing to courageously take action when called for, the task of bringing about religious peace both within and between nations may not be as hopeless as it often seems.

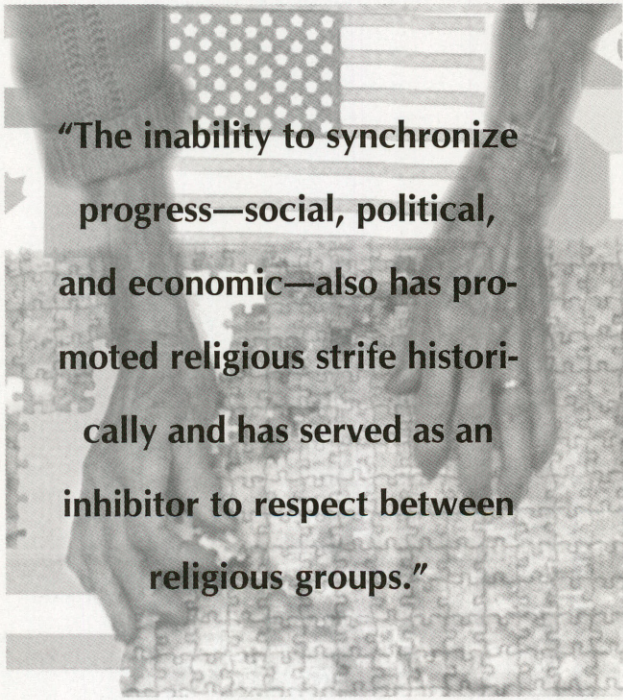# Impediments to Building a Religiously Respectful World

Efforts to promote harmony among religions must take into account cultural inhibitors that have doomed such attempts in the past. These impediments are diverse, existing as basic social values and attitudes, as entrenched institutional interests, and as complex philosophical movements.

One of the most fundamental obstacles is the simple *lack of respect for those of differing beliefs.*[1] Simply stated, the traditionally provincial nature of human thinking about religion often prohibits mutual understanding and leads to conflict. With respect to institutional interests, the *political power and influence of major religions* often has served to restrict the free expression of religious minorities. Countless examples testify to the fact that organized religion is frequently its own enemy with regard to achieving progress in religious liberty. *Political insensitivity* also has served as an impediment to efforts aimed at bridging religious differences. The various institutions of society—social, legal, political—must achieve some sort of synchronicity in the march toward a religiously respectful world. No measure of judicial decisions or legislative fiat, even if overwhelmingly favorable to the cause of religious liberty, will overcome an educational system, for example, with an entrenched bias against religious freedom. Likewise, educational efforts tailored to promote respect for the beliefs and practices of all faiths among society's youth can be dashed by the zealous political agenda of a dominant, religiously centered group.

Recently, the *communitarian revival* that has become prominent in the United States has emerged as a threat to hard-fought gains in the fight for religious freedom and respect. Although the communitarian ideology offers insights into some of the problems that plague modern society, it must not be used as an excuse for retreat into exclusive worldviews that aid in the formation of hostile camps and that exacerbate differences between religious groups. Similarly, the *rise of postmodernism* in rebellion against what is perceived as modernist relativism has established its own impediment to religious respect. Postmodernism's attempt to deconstruct foundations for all knowledge and truth claims has the potential to take on political expression such that it would deny the fundamental rights of others in their own pursuit of truth. If, in the postmodernist view, no foundations for truth are legitimate, then legal protections for such "illegitimate" worldviews are unnecessary.

At the heart of religious difference is theology; yet, theological differences often transcend religious boundaries. The absolute dependence on divine intervention for human salvation in Christianity and the more historicist conception of the chosen people in Judaism clash with ideals of human perfectibility in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and these differences find social and political expression that contribute to intercultural conflict. Theological differences and misunderstandings taint

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communications between cultures that make such conflict inevitable. Paul Tillich illustrated beautifully the nature of such cultural disconnects when he observed of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian cultures that "it is not so much that they [non-Christians] reject the Christian answer, as that . . . they do not ask the questions to which the [Christian] gives the answer."[2] Tillich's singular statement goes a long way toward explaining past failures in the missionary policies of American Christian churches. Supporting Tillich's claim, Joseph Kitagawa noted that "[t]he most ironic dimension of the missionary enterprise was the romantic thinking of some missionaries whose well-intentioned but excessive sentimentality led them to think that Christians in non-Western lands should become carbon copies of Western Christians, with only their skin color remaining different."[3] A principal source of the Western paternalism that ultimately undermined Christian

missionary efforts was a fundamental lack of respect for difference—cultural, racial, and theological.

The period of Western colonial expansion still serves as a testament to the power of political and economic influence in denying genuine religious understanding between peoples. This era witnessed Christian missionaries aiding in the indoctrination, and even the enslavement, of indigenous populations to Western institutions and customs. Bishop Desmond Tutu described the injustice of this era:

> The missionaries were bringing the lights of the Gospel to the dark continent. These poor native pagans had to be clothed in Western clothes so that they could speak to the White man's God, the only God, who was obviously unable to recognize them unless they were decently clad. These poor creatures must be made to sing the White man's hymns hopelessly and badly translated, they had to worship in the White man's unemotional and individualistic way. . . .[4]

There is evidence, however, that such attitudes are abating. Indeed, modern Africa reflects many of the changes that have taken place and that have begun to religiously reshape the world. The isolation and cultural naiveté that supported the colonizing of African souls by European and American missionaries is being eradicated by modern communication technology. African traditional religions are now putting their own mark on Occidental Christian theology that many African people have long seen as culturally biased and, consequently, theologically compromised.[5]

Still, fear and ignorance remain the principal antagonists to a religiously respectful world. These influences often foster withdrawal, providing a haven for those unwilling to go beyond themselves and their own preconceptions. Especially prevalent in the Islamic world is a "fear of anomie" that results from what is perceived as unbridled modernism and the accelerating pace of technological and social change.[6] Modernism seems to stimulate a response from Islam proportionate to the intensity and pervasiveness of the change it inflicts upon Islamic society. Nazi Ayubi has observed of "political Islam"—that force that incorporates the Islamic religion as "a partner in the process of state-building"—that it appears principally to be "a response to regimes that are avowedly more modernist and secularizing."[7]

Yet, there is obvious ambiguity in many Islamic societies toward Western culture. Jeff Haynes has observed that, despite Western misperceptions, there is a "relatively low appeal of fundamentalists electorally" in Muslim countries for the fact that fundamentalists are perceived as "likely to be highly restrictive of personal freedoms."[8] Recent events in Iran and even in Afghanistan support Haynes's conclusion and demonstrate that there is some attraction to the Western lifestyle and its values for many Muslims in these countries. Equally obvious, however, is the attraction to more traditional elements of Islam that often foster a deep distrust or even disdain for Western culture. Acknowledging this ambiguity is a necessary step in building a world that respects religious differences.

The inability to synchronize progress—social, political, and economic—also has promoted religious strife historically and has served as an inhibitor to respect between religious groups. Discontinuities in the development of society give the appearance of injustice, and this lack of synchronization in social development often appears to conform to religious boundaries in separating the "haves" from the "have-nots." Muslims in Europe, Christians in Sudan and Indonesia, and peoples of indigenous faith traditions throughout Africa and Central and South America all have experienced social and economic discrimination that has denied them the material advantages of modern culture. Such discrimination inflames already sensitive religious differences and prevents conciliation. It is acknowledged that socioeconomic progress never will be synchronized perfectly. However, those attempting to build a religiously respectful world must recognize and be willing to address the appearance of injustice brought about by the dislocation inevitable in modernization.

Scholars have observed another impediment to religious liberty in the absence of a conception of human rights in non-Western cultures.[9] However, humbly, Westerners must recognize that a principal reason for the association of the rise in the ideology and language of human rights with the West has been the prevalence of human rights abuses in Western history. The Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years War and positioned individual nation-states as dominant in place of the once "trans-national authority of the Church" brought an end to thirteen centuries of Christendom and its untold abuses.[10] Scott Thomas's observation that separation of church and state is "simply not part of the political culture of the Third World" should surprise no one.[11] The remarkable project of Locke, Jefferson, Paine, and others came
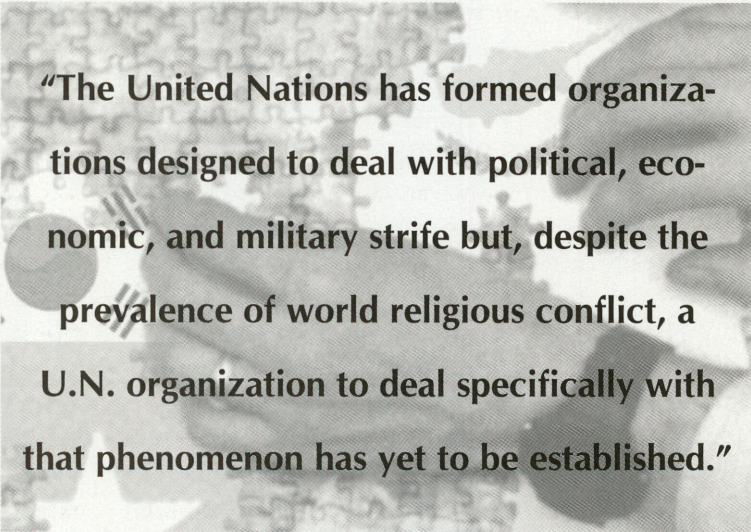
about only on virgin soil and after intense reflection on the imperfections of past social systems that gave rise to the abuse of basic human rights. Even in the environment of the New World, the tendency toward religious establishment remained strong. Westerners who are rightfully proud of their accomplishments in the development of the religious liberty ideal should retain some humility by acknowledging that religious rights are still violated even in Western nations. The West must be encouraging and dutiful without condescension and without resorting to bullying tactics in the promotion of libery to nations that do not enjoy the tradition of religious freedom.

Exacerbating the difficulty in building a religiusly respectful world is recognition that the environment for this intricate and quite delicate construction project grows more indeterminate by the hour. Attempts at religious peacemaking occur in the presence of powerful, though often subtle, forces of globalization and technological advance that are affecting the homogenization of ethnic and religious groups, which often have deep-seated hatred for one another. Fear of "monoculture"—modernism's homogenization of peoples around modern technological values that threaten traditional cultural boundaries—is already inspiring certain conservative religious groups to lash back. In addition, technology is effecting change not simply at the level of cultural values but also at the most basic foundations of our collective self-understanding—those of biology and anthropology. A study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found a genetic link between Jews and Palestinians that extends back some four thousand years, a finding that, although perhaps lending credibility to Old Testament genealogy, also has the potential of complicating modern diplomacy.[12] Scientific discoveries that change our understanding about the historical relationship between cultures and those new technologies that increase the potential exploitation of the developing world by industrialized countries add to the volatility inherent in bringing together peoples of diverse nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

Past Failures to Ancient Dilemmas

The flaws in past attempts to resolve religious conflict are as numerous as the specific instances of such

conflict that are observed in the world today. One may begin identifying the defects with the observation that few if any authoritative international bodies are charged specifically with the task of addressing religious discord. The United Nations has formed organizations designed to deal with political, economic, and military strife but, despite the prevalence of world religious conflict, a U.N. organization to deal specifically with that phenomenon has yet to be established. Special rapporteurs have been assigned to investigate charges of religious rights abuse (recently in Germany, for example, which was accused of violating the rights of Scientologists and other

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religious minorities); yet, a formal organization whose principal purpose is to facilitate the resolution of religious hostility or the resolution of church-state conflict does not exist. So, we must concede at the outset that the international framework to support such a monumental task is simply not in place.

Perhaps as a result of the absence of such a framework, modern efforts at religious peacemaking have too often taken on the appearance, if not the actual form, of police actions. Painfully obvious in modern attempts to promote religious reconciliation has been the overdependence on international peace-keepers—men and women who are often placed in socially complex and volatile environments and expected to act as both policing agents and social workers. Members of these forces are generally ill prepared for such missions, lacking knowledge of local languages and customs, having little experience as participants in multinational peacekeeping efforts, and serving under tentative world leadership. Tenuous standoffs in Palestine and Kosovo illustrate futility in

the mission of occupational forces brought in after prolonged periods of religious violence. Though such forces exist as something of a necessary evil, they must be seen as the most temporal of solutions to the most intransigent and transcendent of problems. The very presence of blue-helmeted peacekeepers serves notice that something is very much amiss in the social-political-religious structure of the culture to which they have been introduced. Their presence often adds another element of antagonism that further destabilizes social order. Still, such forces undoubtedly will continue to be pressed into service for the very lack of internationally agreed-upon alternatives.

The potential venues for international peacekeepers, even when narrowed to regions that experience specifically religious conflict, seem limitless. They could be used to separate Christian Armenians from Muslim Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus, to suppress the cyclical resurgence of Catholic-Protestant violence in Northern Ireland, to deter assassination attempts by Sikhs and Hindus in the now nuclear Punjab, and to prevent Shiites in Iran from hanging Baha'is who refuse to convert to Islam, to name only a few possibilities.[13] The sad fact, however, is that the blue helmets have come to symbolize the limitations of such peacekeeping missions. These are police actions that can accomplish little more than to deter immediate violence and subtly soothe the embarrassment of the modern world. The peacekeepers are pacifiers meant to mask and understate the world's religious hatred so that modern states can interact and their industrial economies transact in relative and ignorant peace. Consequently, international forces have become defeatist symbols that represent the extreme difficulty of bringing about religious peace and instilling respect for human rights coterminously in regions of the world where such values are unknown.

Another flaw in modern attempts to bridge religious conflict has been the generally narrow focus of such efforts. Getting rival leaders to address their differences at the peace table is a significant step toward mutual respect; yet, it is only one step. The unending hostilities between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East testify to the limitations of political efforts that focus narrowly on specific issues. Respect for religious and human rights must move in concert with a larger social vision for there to be the possibility of a lasting peace. However, Irene Bloom has observed critical differences in religious and secular thinking about "rights" that make such movement difficult. Bloom observes of religion that there is "an

unmistakable particularism involved not only in the ways religious doctrines are preserved and transmitted but in the ways religious communities are defined and organized." About human rights thinking, however, it is "commonly presented as conceptually unencumbered, being modern and Western in its origins, secularistic in its persuasions, and, above all, universal in its claims."[14] Bloom's observations suggest that a more contextual mode of human rights thinking is called for in which unique cultural complexities are addressed to include the ways in which those complexities differ from Western preconceptions.

Abstracting human rights issues from their cultural context undoubtedly has contributed to difficulties in reconciling differences between the Muslim world and Western societies. Theocratic factions within Islam reject the possibility of religious pluralism found in the Western liberal state, and the common linkage of religious tradition between Islam and Christianity only worsens the resulting tension. To many Muslim fundamentalists, Christians are not of another faith but are apostates of "the" faith—Trinitarian heretics of the one true monotheistic religion. It follows then that popular sovereignty that is the basis of most Western governments is considered by many Muslim groups to usurp the divine authority of God. Such ideological differences are not like petty squabbles over geographic boundaries. They extend to the very core beliefs of societies and the philosophies around which they are ordered.

The ideological disconnect between Islam and the West represents the fact that a delicate balancing act inevitably will exist between allowing a sufficient degree of religious particularism to enable the preservation of traditional identities and simultaneously ensure that the practices of those groups being preserved do not infringe upon individuals and other groups in society.

Finally, efforts at building a religiously respectful world often have become subsumed under and subordinated to the goal of achieving social justice. Shivesh Thakur has observed that it is a "mistake to regard religion as a tool of social justice."[15] There is an essential paradox between the two, for "social justice is about the distribution of 'social goods'—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and so on; and religion is about turning our attention away from merely earthly concerns and towards a transcendent, other-worldly order of being and values. . . ."[16] Here, Thakur has captured the dualistic element that has served to sabotage many attempts in the achievement of religious respect. In the
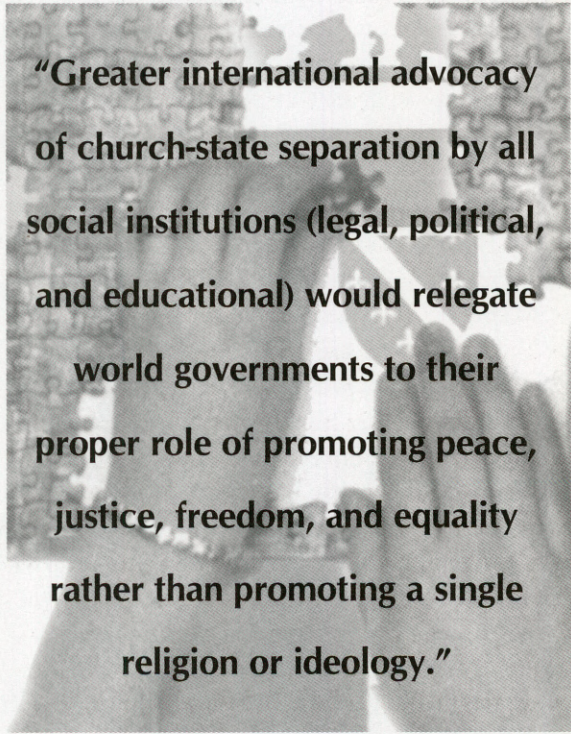
United States, for example, the Social Gospel movement was the synthesizing of Christian theology and social justice run amok. The movement was an attempt to harmoniously reconcile ideologies that must necessarily exist in some state of tension (as Thakur observed), and it was doomed to its disappearance for its utopian aspirations. Amelioration of social and political inequities does not address the mutual recognition of the "other" as heathen. The larger question is: Can true religious respect exist where one group believes that those outside its own religious culture are hopelessly mistaken in their ultimate beliefs, irrespective of social and economic differences?

Religions are flawed human institutions with sacred cores, and the clash of the sacred between religions and the inability to delineate sacred from temporal elements within religions has precipitated as many wars as the existence of social injustice. The methods used in attempting to bridge religious differences likely will differ from those developed in the pursuit of social justice, though often they will complement one another. History is replete with past efforts that confused the quest for political order and social justice with religious respect in attempting to bridge religious barriers. These efforts were throttled by the "isms" that were the underlying constructs of such bridges: Roman Catholic paternalism teamed with imperialistic mercantilism; Protestant realism and zealous anticommunism; religious ecumenism and global capitalism. All these constructs ultimately have proven unstable for religious bridge-building, though doubtless that was never their sole intention. Not coincidentally, they all suffer from the same structural flaw—a common disrespect for the traditions of those communities to which bridges were attempting to be built.

It should be noted, however, that not all historic efforts at religious reconciliation have been abysmal failures. A period of global ecumenism that extended through much of the twentieth century contributed disproportionately (in historical terms) to the formation of institutions to help bring about peace between the world's religions. The original World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1893 as part of the Columbian Exposition—a long forgotten but important event in world religious history in which one of the founding principles was that no religious group would be pressured into sacrificing its truth claims.[17] In 1944, the Federal Council of Churches created the Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace whose chairman was the eminent John Foster Dulles. The Commission developed the

"Six Pillars of Peace," which mixed tactical measures such as the "reformation of global treaties" and "control of military establishments" with more abstract principles like "autonomy for subject peoples" and the "right of individuals everywhere to religious and intellectual liberty."[18] Another group, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) was highly influential in the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948.[19]

In addition to the Universal Declaration, three other significant international documents were developed in the twentieth century with the aim of

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promoting principles of religious liberty: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religious Belief (1981); and the Vienna Concluding Document (1989).[20] Each of these documents addresses abuses of religious freedom by expounding certain rights thought to be of such significance that they should be universally applicable to the world's citizenry. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, states that "[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion," and it insists that "[n]o one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice." Similarly, article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights prohibits incitement of hatred against others because of their religion and protects religious minorities from being denied the enjoyment of their own culture.

Yet each of these documents suffers from the same limitations. They are not "self-executing" in that these "rights" documents are not automatically enforceable upon a given nation; they must be enacted through each nation's own political and judicial processes. Secondly, they are not active in the sense that they do not initiate and promote cultural initiatives designed to address religious conflict and abuse. They are statements of principles that the majority of the world finds agreeable with respect to the religious liberty of all citizens.

Similar efforts in the development of religious and human rights documents continue today though they are often overlooked perhaps because of their often vague declarations and the perception that past attempts to influence societies have been failures, as observed in the continuation of religious persecution and human rights abuse. The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions appointed a commission headed by Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Kung that drafted a declaration called "Toward a Global Ethic." The declaration condemned all "aggression and hatred in the name of religion" and reinforced previous statements of the Parliament in support of religious freedom.[21] Yet, the question must be asked, What truly can be accomplished by essentially powerless international organizations that issue general condemnations of unspecified behavior? Groups that genuinely seek solutions must be willing to get down-and-dirty in working to transform the very human institutions from which religious hatred emanates.

Models for Construction of a Religiously Respectful World

How then should we avoid the failures of past attempts and initiate a positive project of building a world that respects religious differences?

Of special concern, how can we begin the process of reparation in societies where religious conflict is endemic? In societies where religious hatred runs deep and violence is commonplace, enactment of legislation and participation in international treaties will have limited immediate effects on the institutions of the society from which conflict emanates. These cultures require more active programs tailored specifically to their own needs and facilitated by international groups organized to address such conflict.

The religious history of any culture is indelible. Persecutions and pogroms leave historical imprints that endure and generate grievances that, left unresolved, fester into bitter, pan-generational hatred. Yet, cultural wounds can be healed. A positive model for such reconciliation exists in South Africa's Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, established in October 1994 to help bring together those groups so long separated by the ethnic alienation enforced by apartheid. The commission is brutally honest in its approach, being founded on six basic principles: (1) to gain a comprehensive understanding of all human rights abuses under the apartheid system; (2) to grant amnesty to those who make full disclosure; (3) to allow victims to tell their stories to the world; (4) to restore "human and civil dignity" to victims; (5) to report to the nation the commission's findings; and, (6) to make recommendations as to the prevention of future violations.[22]

These sessions of national confession have at times been excruciatingly painful, with the result that Bishop Desmond Tutu, head of the commission, has himself "quite seriously wondered how much truth we can tolerate."[23] Yet, the relative paucity of violence during the transition of political power in South Africa serves as testimony to the power of individual and institutional confession. And, the inclusion of religious influence in the development and operations of the commission (Bishop Tutu is Anglican and each session of the commission begins with Christian, Jewish, or Muslim prayer) has perhaps signaled a new era in the mobilization of religious resources for peacemaking purposes. It is said that the model for justice that the commission is attempting to achieve is not "retributive" but rather the "restorative" justice of Jesus Christ. L. Gregory Jones has commented that the commission is "one of the most dramatic and hopeful signs of an authentically Christian approach to political life to emerge in many years."[24]

It is in this fostering of an attitude of national repentance that one can observe stark differences between the situations in South Africa and Kosovo. In South Africa, the infusion of repentance, a value associated with Christianity, into a secular commission whose end purpose is the restoration of human rights and the initiation of national healing, has brought about significant results. By contrast, Walter Wink has described NATO's attempt to coerce Serbian repentance through violence as counterproductive,

engendering even more animus and lessening the prospects for peace. Ominously, the United Nations' efforts in the reconstruction of Kosovo to date have emphasized legal, political, and economic priorities to the exclusion of ethnic and religious initiatives. Judiciary panels have been established but, in contrast to South Africa, these legal structures are far more concerned with the prosecution of war crimes than the facilitation of repentance and healing. Even with its more limited agenda, the U.N. has had great difficulty constructing an impartial judiciary and in compensating judges adequately to minimize the possibility of corruption.[25]

However, one might properly observe that the South African experiment attempts to heal damage done primarily by racial and ethnic violence. Can this model be extended to address the special needs of religious reconciliation? Are there examples in the modern world where such a process of institutional confession has been used to promote the healing of wounds inflicted by religious persecution? Can such a process be used to engender genuine respect for the people, institutions, and practices of other religions? The Roman Catholic Church appears unilaterally to have begun a similar, though smaller scale, program to reconcile itself with those who historically have been subject to its abuse of power. Pope John Paul II has issued decrees of apology for the Church's sins of commission and omission in the face of Nazi atrocities toward Jews and other persecuted groups in World War II. A process of mutual confession with the intention of reconciliation also could be attempted in an effort to bring together the long divided Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communions. Though a papal apology for the sack of Constantinople in 1204 would border on the absurd, there are legitimate grievances for hostilities the memories of which have lingered into modern times and that have perpetuated the division between these churches. The reconciliation of two of the world's largest religious institutions would be a hopeful sign that, even after centuries of hostility, peace is possible.

Perhaps a more relevant model is found in Israel and its efforts to develop a "multi-disciplinary peace curriculum" for its tenth grade students in attempting to bridge the differences between Jews and Palestinians. This peace curriculum consists of courses in sociology, history, and literature, combined with classroom encounters between Jewish and Palestinian students and in-service teacher training.[26] Thus far, the program has included thirty-two Israeli and Palestinian schools, around two hundred teachers, and approximately three thousand tenth grade students. Interestingly, Sarah Harel, director of the Ministry of Education's department for peace initiatives, credits a program developed for schools in Northern Ireland that was designed to resolve Catholic-Protestant differences for serving as a model for the Israeli program.[27] In the Irish school initiative, Protestant children are asked to analyze a Catholic narrative and Catholic students examine a Protestant narrative. The two groups then come together to develop a proposal for reconciliation, sharing ideas in planning their joint rapprochement project.

Another important development in Israeli peace initiatives has been recognition of the role of language in fostering peace and, consequently, the promotion of instruction in Arabic for Jewish students. Currently, Israeli Arabs are well versed in Hebrew by the time they enter high school. However, Jewish students traditionally do not learn Arabic even though the language is spoken by a large segment of the population. [28] Bridging the language divide is a key element of the Israeli peace initiative.

A third component of the peace program is the establishment of Arab-Jewish community centers that sponsor various projects, including a "Festival of Holidays" in which Arab, Christian, and Jewish holidays are celebrated. The festival, "symbolizing coexistence and understanding, offers exhibits of works of art, fairs, concerts, and an international conference of religious leaders."[29] Recognition of the sacred symbols, beliefs, and practices of religious groups is essential to the development of respect between religiously diverse peoples, and the content of the Israeli peace initiatives acknowledges this fact.

It is suggested here that a hybrid of the South African and Israeli peace programs described above may be a workable answer to facilitate religious understanding between peoples, especially in regions where violence is historically entrenched. The population of a religiously torn society must never be viewed as a homogeneous entity. Older generations that have experienced violence firsthand often may require an extensive period of national confession and healing similar to that being undertaken in South Africa to heal the wounds of apartheid. Younger generations, who have witnessed or experienced less direct religious persecution but who have been acculturated to the prejudices of their ancestors, may be more recep-

tive to educational and intercultural initiatives like those underway in Israel. A combination of these methods that targets distinct population groups allows different cultural segments to undergo therapies specific to that group's needs. Older populations that must overcome lifetimes of bitter memories are allowed to progress more slowly toward tolerance before more aggressive educational efforts are begun. However, younger individuals who have experienced little in the way of direct persecution (or have yet to persecute) will move into more advanced stages of the reparation process more quickly.

There must be sensitivity to the fact that these generational groups necessarily interact, so each program must prepare its participants for that interaction. Openness is critical. Older individuals must be made aware that their children and grandchildren are being educated in the languages and traditions of those of other faiths with whom they must live. Likewise, truthful explanations must be given to younger groups for the confessional stage through which their parents and grandparents are progressing. The purpose of peacekeepers, the history of violence, the reasons for a particular group's persecution or isolation . . . nothing should be withheld from public scrutiny.

Conditioning the International Community

The models illustrated in the South African and Middle Eastern experience should not be interpreted as panaceas; however, they do represent encouraging signs of an elevation of thought in the resolution of ethnic and religious conflict that acknowledges cultural realities. Other, more general, steps also are required to prepare the international community for religious reconciliation.

Basic steps must be taken to establish a climate of religious liberty worldwide apart from action that targets reparation of damage done by religious conflict in specific cultures. The first of these steps is the implementation of existing treaties that govern human and religious rights.[30] Unfortunately, the United States has been neglectful in this area and has been rightly chastised for preaching human rights while being unwilling to bind itself to certain human rights provisions of international treaties. The United States could set an example for the world by implementing article 18 of the 1981 International Cov-

enant on Civil and Political Rights.

As an extension, governments around the world should be more proactive in developing and enacting their own legislation designed to stop religious persecution and promote religious freedom. Agencies within governments should be formed and assigned the task to oversee the implementation of such legislation.

Third, a greater emphasis on educating the world on the prevalence and severity of religious persecution is called for. More conferences and symposia developed for this expressed purpose would help inform the world's citizens of the intransigence of religious persecution and of the need to dedicate more resources to work toward its elimination. Established human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Christian Solidarity International, and the International Religious Liberty Association could be more active in developing and supporting such an educational initiative.

Finally, greater international advocacy of church-state separation by all social institutions (legal, political, and educational) would relegate world governments to their proper role of promoting peace, justice, freedom, and equality rather than promoting a single religion or ideology. Educational institutions particularly can be important in helping to instill in the culture a basic understanding and respect for the importance of separation of powers and its consequences for individual liberty. The lessons of history are invaluable as an instructional tool in such an endeavor.

The introduction of models for religious reconciliation, the reinforcement of international treaties and "rights" documents, and the attempts to revalue social institutions in favor of religious liberty must not be clouded by a naive idealism. Reinhold Niebuhr's words remain instructive in delimiting realistic from idealistic outcomes in the attempts to reconcile peoples and their traditions:

> I persevere in the effort to combine the ethic of Jesus with what might be called Greek caution. . . . I might claim for such a strategy the full authority of the gospel except that it seems to me more likely to avoid dishonesty if one admits that the principle of love is not qualified in the gospel and that it must be qualified in other than the most intimate human associations. When one deals with the affairs of civilization, one is trying to make the principle of love as effective as far as possible, but one cannot escape the

conclusion that society as such is brutal, and that the Christian principle may never be more than a leaven in it.[31]

We must, like Niebuhr, forever be mindful that though the world's nations and their respective religions engage each other with messages of peace, the shadow of nuclear missiles reflects the intransigence of political ideologies and ensures that survival retains its preeminence. Any attempt to bridge differences between religious groups must be carried out with a reverence constantly mindful of Cardinal Newman's words: "O how we hate one another for the love of God."

Notes and References

1. For a more extensive examination of impediments to progress in religious liberty, see Derek H. Davis, "Thoughts on Religious Persecution Around the Globe: Problems and Solutions," *Journal of Church and State* 40 (spring 1998): 279-87.

2. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. R. C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 204, quoted in ibid.; Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa, *The Quest for Human Unity: A Religious History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 10.

3. Kitagawa stated that the sole aim of missionaries in initiating dialogue with other cultures should not be to have non-Christians "reassess their theological and philosophical resources." See ibid., 10-11.

4. Desmond Tutu, "Whither African Theology?" in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, eds. Edward Fashole-Luke et al. (London: Rex Collins, 1978), 365.

5. Jean-Marc Ela has identified the problem of the colonial Christian legacy in Africa that contributes to the "fragility of churches almost totally bereft of the initiative of reflection and research on the problems of faith in the African context." However, he also observes the "indigenization" of the Christian faith in Africa through the "birth of the independent African churches, the springboard of the indigenous religious movements and their deep motivations." Many of these independent churches mix Christian doctrine with elements of African traditional religion to achieve a distinctly African Christianity that is spreading throughout the continent. See Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986).

6. Shivesh C. Thakur, *Religion and Social Justice* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 78.

7. Nazih Ayubi, "The Politics of Islam in the Middle East with Special Reference to Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia," in *Religion, Globalization and Political Culture in the Third World*, ed. Jeff Haynes (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 91.

8. Jeff Haynes, "Conclusion," in *Religion, Globalization and Political Culture*, ed. Haynes, 252.

9. See Jack Donnelly, "Human Rights and Human Dignity: An Analytic Critique of Non-Western Conceptions of Human Rights," *American Political Science Review* 76, no. 2 (June 1982), 304.

10. Scott Thomas, "Religion and International Society," in *Religion, Globalization and Political Culture*, ed. Haynes, 39.

11. Ibid. 39.

12. Dina Kraft, "Study: DNA Ties Enemies," *Waco Tribune Herald*, May 10, 2000, section A, 9.

13. James A. Haught, *Holy Hatred: Religious Conflicts of the '90s* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1995), 12-13.

14. Irene Bloom, "Introduction," in *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*, eds. Irene Bloom, J. Paul Martin, and Wayne L. Proudfoot (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2.

15. Thakur, *Religion and Social Justice*, 3.

16. Thakur sees "'natural' inequalities and disadvantages as part of a supernatural or 'transcendental' design. . . ." Attempts at social justice on the part of the modern state have as their goal the elimination of such differences—hence the paradox. See ibid., 45-46.

17. Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa, *The Quest for Human Unity: A Religious History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 207.

18. C. Dale White, *Making a Just Peace: Human Rights and Domination Systems* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 15-16.

19. Ibid., 17.

20. For a more extensive examination of these four documents, see Davis, "Thoughts," 279-87.

21. Quoted in Haught, *Holy Hatred*, 21.

22. L. Gregory Jones, "How Much Truth Can We Take? South Africa's Christian Experiment for Finding Healing from its Violent Past," *Christianity Today*, Feb. 9, 1998, 19-20.

23. Quoted in ibid., 21.

24. Ibid., 22.

25. To make matters worse, members of the U.N. force charged with keeping the peace rarely speak the local languages and "hardly have time to acclimatize before their tour of duty is over." See "Reconstructing Kosovo," *The Economist*, Mar. 18, 2000, 47.

26. Siegfried Ramler, "Schools for Peace—A Bridge to Reconciliation," private e-mail correspondence from Ronald Hilton, Apr. 18, 2000.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. For a more thorough analysis of positive steps toward worldwide religious liberty, see Davis, "Thoughts," 286-87.

31. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 196-97.

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