

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON RELIGIONS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY:

Mediation towards Social Cohesion in Urban Areas

PRELIMINARIES



ALBERT LÓPEZ

DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION AREA OF “LA CAIXA” FOUNDATION

Ladies and gentlemen; Mr. Albert Royo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Department of the Vice President of the Catalan Government; Ms. Brigitte Colin, Official Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO; Mr. Agustí Colomines, Director of Unescocat; and Ms. Marguerite Barankitse, Coordinator of Shalom House in Burundi:

In the name of the “la Caixa” Foundation, I am pleased to welcome you to CosmoCaixa and to thank you for attending the International Congress on Religions and Cultural Diversity, which opens today.

We here at CosmoCaixa are pleased to host this Congress, Co-organised by Unescocat and the “la Caixa” Foundation. With the sponsorship of UNESCO and the support of Barcelona City Council, the Catalan Government, and the Fundació Pluralismo y Convivencia, this Congress has brought together here today more than 250 individuals, professionals and stakeholders. Moreover, it will allow us to debate, in several working sessions over three days, some of the major new challenges derived from living together in a world that is becoming progressively more globalised and which inevitably leads towards more multicultural societies.

The Social Work Section of the “la Caixa” Foundation has, in recent years, made what we term a *social turnaround*—a return to our defining reason for coming into existence—and has progressively dedicated a growing part of its resources to social needs. The new Immigration Programme, begun this year, is a part of these efforts. This project aims to answer the new challenges of coexistence derived from multiculturalism in order to promote understanding among all citizens and strengthen social cohesion. The integration of people arriving in a new country is the basis of this social cohesion. When a person arrives in a new country, he faces a series of difficulties, mainly resulting from his lack of familiarity with the country: the administrative system, the education system, the healthcare system, the culture, social guidelines, religious guidelines and any resources that the new country might make available to immigrants.

We believe that mediation as a prevention resource (not just as a means of resolving conflicts) and information are essential tools for improving the process of integrating new arrivals to a country. The Social Work Section of the “la Caixa” Foundation has chosen mediation as the main focus of its Immigration Programme via the creation of a new intercultural mediation network covering all Spanish autonomous communities. We are convinced that mediation, understood in the broadest sense of the word, implies a bi-directional dimension and involves bringing people together—specifically, the receiving society and the population of newcomers.

Because of this, when Unescocat asked us to help them organise this Congress on religious mediation, we did not hesitate to offer them our support. In addition to the “la Caixa” intercultural mediation network, our Immigration Programme includes two other lines of action: publication of materials and resources, and organisation of training activities to spread knowledge.

Let me highlight some of our most important publications. In collaboration with Unescocat, we created *What is this Country Like? (Cóm és aquest país?)* a widely used practical guide that has been published in the languages of Spain’s main immigrant groups (Spanish, Arabic, French, Chinese, Russian and Romanian). We

have also published the *Directory of Immigrant Associations in Spain*, the first document of its type published at the national level. During this Congress, you will all have the chance to obtain both of these publications.

In creating the Immigration Programme, the Social Work Section of the “la Caixa” Foundation is joining the longstanding efforts of other institutions or administrations—indeed, those represented by some of you—as well as other private individuals.

We wish to add our contribution: to support and complement with our actions and initiatives the work already in progress, for the benefit of coexistence in our society.

Finally, we especially wish to thank the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia for once again placing its trust in the Social Work Section of the “la Caixa” Foundation by inviting us to help organise such a prestigious congress on religions and cultural diversity. We trust that events such as this one will serve to advance knowledge and improve coexistence and mutual understanding among all citizens, regardless of their origins or beliefs, and inspire dialogue and communication.

Thank you, and welcome to CosmoCaixa, one of our organisation’s main centres in Barcelona. Thank you for your attention and your attendance, and may you enjoy productive days of discussion. Many thanks to all.



BRIGITTE COLIN

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNESCO SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues:

It is a great honour for me to represent UNESCO today at this congress on mediation toward social cohesion in urban areas through intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Before speaking about my topic, let me briefly review the historic background of our joint cooperation with Unescocat within the framework of UN-HABITAT/UNESCO's cooperation.

Both UN-HABITAT and UNESCO are actively working towards the Millennium Development Goals, which state that the international community will spare no effort in strengthening 'respect for all international human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development'. The Secretary-General's road map for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals notes that a rights-based approach to development is important both for distributing development gains and ensuring equal participation in the development process.

The first of the eight Millennium Development Goals is the eradication of extreme poverty by 2015, and now, in 2006, we are in grave danger of lagging behind in our commitment to reducing poverty. In a rapidly urbanising world, a rights-based approach means that all citizens should benefit from what cities have to offer in terms of access to income-generating opportunities, land and housing, water and sanitation, education and health care. Recognition of these rights in national policies and legislation is critical to bringing about a fundamental change in our approach to sustainable human development.

Over the past 60 years, the human rights affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) have gradually become recognised, expanded and incorporated into the ordinary lives of individuals and social groups, thus expressing the needs, questions and claims of our times. However, there are many in the international community who have argued that certain rights need further elaboration at the national and regional levels on the basis of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as the right to develop, the right to safe drinking water and the right to a clean environment, which would contribute to the needs and rights of all city dwellers, regardless of their religion, age, gender, race, economic status, etc., so that they may fully enjoy urban life with all the services and advantages the city has to offer and play an active role in city management as part of their responsibilities.

This problem is also related to the issue of civic education: how to train citizens to live harmoniously in an environment called 'the city'? UNESCO is convinced that citizen education and training is the basis of a sustainable development of our societies.

The UN-HABITAT/UNESCO project was created to promote an international project identifying good practices in law and urban planning; interreligious municipal councils; citizens' municipal charters on rights and responsibilities; the participation of women, youth and migrants in urban management and their spatial and social integration in order to increase urban social cohesion. All these topics are included under the umbrella

of UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Urban Governance, and in UNESCO's Strategy on Human Rights and Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

The second meeting of our working group was hosted in March 2006 by the city of Barcelona with the support of the International Association of Educating Cities and in close collaboration with Unescocat. In Barcelona, the meeting addressed questions of social cohesion, the most appropriate ways of addressing interreligious issues, questions of local context, political will and bottom-up vs. top-down approaches based on specific presentations.

The overall conclusion of the meeting was that the city is a collective space of the citizens and their rights and responsibilities, and that no individual rights can exist without collective rights and vice versa.

The interest of major cities like Porto Alegre, Barcelona and Montreal demonstrated in Vancouver in June 2006 during the World Urban Forum encourages our UN HABITAT/UNESCO team to go on with this research on all aspects of urbanisation, particularly with regard to the social segregation that exists in so many of our cities, the fragmentation of urban space and capacity-building to enable local authorities to cope with the new challenges posed by urbanisation.

Several UNESCO normative instruments, documents and reports have addressed the relationship between cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and between religious diversity and interreligious dialogue as instruments for building strong, inclusive and peaceful societies. Specific reference is made to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2003), the Declaration of Principles of Tolerance (1995), the Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace (1994), and the Report on the Culture of Peace presented by the Director-General of UNESCO to the UN General Assembly according to General Assembly resolutions 60/3, 60/10 and 60/11. Accordingly, the following considerations should be made:

Most cultural and social phenomena are neither intrinsically positive nor negative for social cohesion. Beneficial or harmful effects depend on the way in which these phenomena are used by societies: there can be 'bad' and 'good' uses. Religion, secularism and secular thought are to be considered from this perspective.

Religious and spiritual traditions, as well as nonreligious convictions, have been historically ambiguous because they have led to conflicts and wars. At the same time, they have been engines of harmony and peace¹, as mentioned in UNESCO's Report to the UN General Assembly on the Culture of Peace.

Intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity are indissociable and interdependent phenomena. Religious diversity and inter-faith dialogue are essential aspects of intercultural dialogue.

Like philosophical convictions, religious and spiritual traditions can contribute to social cohesion, the inclusiveness of cities, the construction of a culture of peace at the local, national and international levels, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence, as mentioned in UNESCO's Declaration of Principles of Tolerance (1995).

1

The UN has recently developed a project on the role of religious institutions and networks in fostering peaceful resolution of conflicts (cf. UNESCO Report to the UN General Assembly on the Culture of Peace [A/61/175], 8).

These positive resources can be promoted and mobilised without involving negative influences in the context of a secular/laic framework based on human-rights-based approaches and existing international instrument²; thus, the ethical and spiritual resources of convictions and religions can be used as long as society's institutions 'accept and respect the multicultural character of the human family'³ and insofar as they adhere to education for tolerance as outlined in UNESCO's Declaration of Principles of Tolerance (1995).

The International Congress on Religions and Cultural Diversity: Mediation towards Social Cohesion in Urban Areas will launch an international comparative study on criteria for and methods of mobilising and promoting the positive resources of religions and convictions by gathering scientific studies and good practices and encouraging networking. The role of mutual knowledge in shared spiritual and ethical values will be taken into account in order to promote joint action towards social cohesion, in particular in urban settings. Religious and spiritual traditions and nonreligious convictions, as well as interreligious dialogue, are important components that demonstrate how cultural diversity is present in our society. They are also indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels, as mentioned in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

This congress is focused on major international examples of mediation in urban areas and on outcomes in social science research that policymakers could use to achieve greater social cohesion and inclusiveness in cities. This is the main concern of the UN-HABITAT/UNESCO project 'Urban Policies and the Right to the City: Towards Good Governance and Local Democracy' and of the CLT projects on intercultural dialogue in cities, for which Unescocat is a major partner. These projects include an international survey of best practices, the analysis of major cases, and lessons learnt to improve urban governance, inclusiveness and intercultural dialogue in urban areas.

The relevance of the congress to UNESCO's programmes

This multi-sector congress is a tangible contribution to UNESCO's main programmes in the social and human sciences and culture.

In the area of social and human sciences, the congress focuses on human rights concerns and social transformations, in particular in urban areas undergoing accelerated social transformations. The congress aims to identify good practices related to new processes that counter various forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, while promoting equal access to and enjoyment of basic human rights such as freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The good practices developed by the congress will be proposed as additional tools to the International Coalition of Cities Against Racism, a UNESCO flagship activity. The congress is consequently focussed on linkages between social transformations and policy priorities, with a particular interest in the interrelation between international migrations and social cohesion in urban settings. It will contribute to an inventory of urban policies that enhance conflict prevention and mediation as well as good social cohesion practices for urban areas.

2

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), Art. 2, 1, Resolutions, v. I, Records of the General Conference (28th Session, 1995), UNESCO, Paris, 2005, pp. 83-95; *Déclaration Universelle de l'UNESCO sur la Diversité Culturelle*, Art. 4-6, in Katerina Stenou (ed.), *Déclaration Universelle de l'UNESCO sur la Diversité Culturelle*, Série Diversité culturelle, no. 2, UNESCO, Paris, 2003, pp. 4-5.

3

Declaration of Principles of Tolerance, 2.3 (*ibidem*).

In the area of culture, this congress aims to give specific examples of ways to deal with cultural diversity at grassroots levels. Due attention will be given to the need for examples of prospective cultural policies as well as means of enhancing intercultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding. I wish to mention that UNESCO is entrusted with the forthcoming World Report on Culture. This initiative will be presented to you later on this morning by Mike Millward, General Coordinator of this work at UNESCO. The strategic underpinning of promoting intercultural dialogue includes improving knowledge of the relations between cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in a globalising world. In January 2007, more than 50% of the world's population will be in urban settings. UNESCO aims to explore the requirements and potentialities of intercultural dialogue to foster cultural pluralism and thus help prevent intercommunity conflicts in urban areas. A study on urban cultural diversity was launched this year by the UNESCO Culture Sector with the United Cities and Local Governments. This congress will promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue through good practices and deep reflections. How can intercultural and interreligious dialogue help prevent and manage conflicts related to cultural and religious diversity in an urban environment? The congress may contribute to the thematic approach to cultural pluralism in urban environments and interreligious dialogue, in support of the United Nations Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations, with the objective of building the capacity of stakeholders and decision-makers in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue management. The congress is linked to UNESCO's approach to cities ('humanising the urban environment') and the promotion of interfaith dialogue, as it addresses interreligious dialogue as a part of a broader intercultural dialogue. The involvement of religious leaders and communities in active prevention and resolution of community conflicts mobilises ethical and spiritual traditions in favour of social cohesion, building new urban citizenships and community identities.

This Unescocat congress also focuses on the UNESCO strategic objective of 'safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilisations'. The work of UNESCO's Dialogue Among Civilisations, in particular since the Rabat Conference of June 2005, has repeatedly stressed the need to translate all international declarations and statements on interreligious dialogue into concrete and sustained action. Consequently, UNESCO considers that Unescocat should establish a set of good practices for interreligious prevention and mediation of urban conflicts as a very concrete contribution to UNESCO's work.

The UNESCO General Conference recognises the importance of dialogue among peoples, cultures and religions, which is a guarantee of respect for cultural diversity and a factor for building peace and social cohesion, and reaffirms the need to devise educational tools and specific forms of teaching. Consequently, UNESCO will pursue, through various channels including the UNESCO Chair, studies on the place of religion in interfaith and interreligious dialogue, and strengthen activities designed to promote respect for and dialogue among all cultures. The Unescocat initiative illustrates how UNESCO Centres may assist UNESCO in implementing the programme approved by the member states, with the financial support of private sponsors such as "la Caixa" and public ones such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Catalonia. This efficiency is due to the dedication of the men and women working at Unescocat. The Director, Agustí Colomines, his Deputy, Onno Serroo, and the entire Unescocat team should be congratulated for their work.

Finally, I conclude my address by encouraging active dedication throughout the Congress. I hope this important meeting will be a great success. I thank you for your attention.



ALBERT ROYO

SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CATALAN GOVERNMENT

Ladies and gentlemen,

It may seem cliché, but it is important to remember that our nation, Catalonia, is a country of borders, one historically enriched by migrations from the north and the south. This has made it into a melting pot where peace, the love of the freedom, a language of its own, and the will to open itself to the world have become common values.

It is important to remember this today, on World Migration Day. Catalonia today is a country of immigration, just as it has been on so many other occasions. But it has also been a country of emigration. Just as, in the 1960s and 1970s, we received people who were fleeing economically depressed areas of Spain, and just as today we are receiving people fleeing famine, war or a lack of vital expectations in far-off countries, Catalonia was also—not so far back—an emigrant country. Hundreds of thousands of men and women from Catalonia were forced to flee to other countries in Europe and the Americas to escape from Franco's fascist troops.

Our country and its citizens, then, have some experience in managing cultural diversity. All things considered, the choice of Catalonia and its capital, Barcelona (as a paradigm of the aforementioned melting pot), for this first International Congress on Religions and Cultural Diversity, could not be more fitting.

Perhaps partially in response to these facts, our country is unusually eager to project itself, to open itself to the world and to participate in the major debates and challenges of the international community. This eagerness shows in the efforts of the Catalan Government to build a proper model of foreign action that satisfies a double need: on the one hand, the need to position our country in a ways that allows it to contribute responsibly and effectively to world governance and, on the other hand, the need to advance in self-government by assuming responsibilities in international relations.

In terms of foreign affairs, the Catalan Government wishes to act with the same responsibility and sensitivity as a state. We can seek a state of our own, but we must earn it, and we must explain why we want this state and what we will make of it. In short, we must first work, and then to make our claim. For this reason, and in response to Catalans' historical eagerness to project themselves to the wider world and to participate in major international debates, the Catalan Government intends to review its foreign policy. Specifically, the Department of the Vice President of the Government, the organ responsible for the executive branch's foreign activities, plans to create a new administrative structure that is coherent and capable of managing Catalonia's current foreign relations and opening up new lines of action. The creation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, which groups together the former Secretariats of International Relations and of Foreign Cooperation, is merely one step in this direction.

Catalonia's preferred means of taking foreign action is to establish relations with multilateral organisations, and especially with those of the United Nations system. Catalonia finds in these organisations the possibility of contributing constructively to major international debates. In these debates, our country cannot and does

not wish to remain on the sidelines. The Catalan Government will not hesitate to speak in the first person to the main international forums and work to become an increasingly relevant agent in a world where the debate on important issues can no longer be reserved exclusively for states.

The Catalan Government is fully committed to a multipolar world that is fairer, more peaceful and more sustainable. As a consequence, the Government resolutely supports world governance mechanisms, especially those of the United Nations. In the last two years, the Catalan Government has signed several agreements with United Nations agencies and funds. This reflects Catalonia's commitment to this organisation and positions the country as an international actor of the first order. As an example, the agreement we signed two years ago with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has permitted our government to be invited to the meeting of that Agency's donors, held in Amman this past week. Seated beside state delegations and representatives of other United Nations agencies and funds, the Catalan delegation had the first-hand opportunity to learn the details of UNRWA's work in the occupied territories, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. While we gained access to information that was crucial to shaping the Catalan Government's future commitment to UNRWA, the other delegations saw how a sub-state government, the first to do so at this level to date, participated directly in a world debate. In the field of development cooperation, the Catalan Government has signed agreements with the United Nations Development Programme, the FAO, the Millennium Campaign, UNIFEM and the UN Population Fund. In many of these cases, the Catalan Government was the first sub-state executive body to collaborate with these organisations.

However, for a country such as Catalonia, collaboration with UNESCO is especially important. This organisation is, without a doubt, one of the international organisations most closely related to our country. This is true for a variety of reasons. Since UNESCO's activity focuses on the fields of education, science and culture for the benefit of development, progress and peace, Catalonia has been interested in its policies since the 1960s. In UNESCO, Catalonia has found a forum where it can contribute its experience in managing multilingualism and building peace through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Our country has built a respectful society from its internal plurality, while making the defence and promotion of the Catalan language and culture a factor for social cohesion. Catalonia has extensive expertise in these areas, so it is especially predisposed to collaborating with UNESCO.

As Catalonia has consolidated its political autonomy and worked towards self-government, Catalan civil society has learned how to lead Catalonia's relations with UNESCO. Most especially, the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, created in the early 1980s, promotes the policies of UNESCO in Catalonia while also positioning itself as an intermediary between civil society, academia and the Catalan Government, on one hand, and UNESCO itself, on the other.

The intensity of its activity, as well as its eagerness to help Catalonia explore all ways of increasing its presence in UNESCO, has allowed participation in this organisation to become a key part of Catalonia's foreign policy activities. In 2003, then-President Jordi Pujol signed a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary-General of the organisation. This agreement set out a clearer and more direct role for the Catalan language and culture in UNESCO and established a leading role for the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia in relations between the Catalan cultural reality and the Catalan Government, on the one hand, and UNESCO, on the other. UNESCO's special significance for Catalonia is reflected in the explicit mention of this organisation in the Catalan Statute of Autonomy of June 2006, which, with certain limitations, calls for the participation of our government in UNESCO.

Today we open an event of special significance with regard to diversity management in complex societies like ours. Interreligious dialogue is an essential tool for improving mutual understanding and building a more cohesive society in the face of the challenges presented by recent phenomena such as immigration. Thanks are due to UNESCO, Unescocat and the Social Work Section of the “la Caixa” Foundation for organising this Congress.

Events such as this one show us how, through active and responsible participation in international organisations, Catalonia is contributing to world governance while enriching itself with work and dialogue in fields of common interest, such as, in this case, the promotion of interreligious dialogue as an instrument of social cohesion and diversity management.

I am certain that this meeting of minds will be a success. I am convinced that the discussions of this Congress will result in major contributions to a field that is essential to the building of our societies.

Thank you very much for your attention.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS



MARGUERITE BARANKITSE

HATRED WON'T HAVE THE LAST WORD

Greetings to all. Greetings to my brothers and sisters,

I would like to ask you to do me a small favour, which is to put down all your pens, put away your notebooks and really put your hearts into what I'm saying.

Because there is nothing to write. Absolutely nothing, really.

I'll start with a short anecdote. When I received this invitation and I saw it was from UNESCO, I said to myself, 'We're coming up on year's end again. They've got some extra money left over that they weren't able to spend,' because that's what happens in my country, Burundi. At year's end, towards the month of December, banners suddenly appear everywhere announcing seminars on any and all topics imaginable. So we go from one seminar to the next, and sometimes it can even be entertaining. So I said to myself, 'Is it really worth travelling so many kilometres to leave my country, Burundi?' I have to travel from Burundi to Rwanda, then Kenya, Amsterdam, Madrid, and then the final leg. So I asked myself, 'So really, woman that I am, what do I still have to say before major assemblies?' I thought about the matter for two days and concluded that 'nothing happens by chance in life'. And I told myself, 'I'm going. I'm going and I'm putting my soul into it, but perhaps only to speak a foreign language to them.' I will therefore disturb you. I come from an extremely neglected country, Burundi. Even to begin speaking about Burundi, you always have to add: 'Burundi, the country next to Rwanda.' Because, when one speaks of Burundi, surely even you wonder where it might be. But for me, it's my homeland. And therefore my mother.

When the war broke out in October 1993, the Germans who were working with me put me on their helicopter. They told me, 'Come on, let's flee! There's nothing left, we must leave!' And I said, 'No. A country is like a mother. When my mother suffers, she needs me. You can't abandon you mother when she's suffering. I'm going to stay here.' The World Bank ranks Burundi among the three poorest countries on the planet, saying it is 1% wealthy, 9% non-poor, 40% poor and 50% destitute. But I'm not ashamed. I come from a country that has spent 40 years at war, but that the world has not mentioned.

It took the genocide in Rwanda for a few lines to appear about the history of Burundi. One day, it vexed me when I was invited, like today, to New York by UNICEF and I said to myself: 'Even if you don't talk about my country, there is more than just oil in the world, there are your brothers and sisters, because I am convinced that the world is one big family, but if we were now, at year's end, to see the waste going on at all these shops, how one celebrates the holiday of humanity commemorating how God became man so that we could become God, we should really cover ourselves in ashes and shame. In this family some die from overeating while others die because they have nothing.' Why did I create this centre? Why did I suddenly rebel on October 24, 1993, a day that neither my children nor I will ever forget? That was thirteen years ago. Burundi has undergone atrocious experiences, in '65, '72, '88... to the point where people had to flee the country. We had a population of seven million. Two million were abroad, in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda, because there was social injustice. I'm 50 years old and in my country life expectancy is thirty-nine for women, so I've already stolen 11 years. So, since childhood, you can say that I have lived these wars. But I belonged

to a privileged family because I am Tutsi and in Burundi, it was the Tutsis who were in power.

My story begins when I rebelled against my own family, when I was teaching in '81, and I said: 'No, I cannot continue to teach. I am Christian, that is, I am God's child and everyone, everyone in this world is a prince or a princess; we cannot live in dichotomy. If I go to mass every day, that means that the people I encounter are my brothers, sisters and children.' So I refused to teach because in the school, the class that I was teaching I had only two Hutu children, and everyone else was Tutsi, even though that region was 98% Hutu. So I went to the director. I said: 'This is a time bomb. I cannot continue to live in falsehood.' And that was it. They revoked my post as a teacher. It was written on the bulletin board that I sow the seeds of discord, and that I do not deserve to be a teacher. So I said to myself: 'To get back at them, I will adopt.' I didn't want to get married—for an African woman, not getting married is first of all humiliating for the family. I said: 'I'm adopting a child, I'm adopting a child who is not...' I am very Catholic, so you'll understand, and my family was very Catholic. I adopted an Anglican child, a Hutu from the south. I brought him to my family and they said, 'That's it, the curse has begun.' They told me: 'If you want to leave, no one's stopping you, but don't come here with a Hutu child, and to boot, a Protestant. Have you lost your head?' So I began to wander, saying to myself: 'I'm going to look for work.' I looked for a job teaching at an SOS village, 'SOS-Kinderdörfern', the villages for orphaned children. They gave me a job, because I wanted to teach, but after six months they kicked me out as well. So I wondered what I was going to do. At that time I had a bit of money, because I had taught and my family did not need that money. I built myself a small house and began to raise children. I raised four Hutus and three Tutsi children. I said to myself, 'I'm going to show them, these stupid people who hate one another, that it's possible to live in happiness, because we have been created only to make others happy.' That is the beautiful, sublime human calling that the United Nations should put under strategy, mechanisms, assets and expected results. Because when I ask

for aid, that's what they ask me. I say: 'What?' They give me a form. 'What are your goals?' I say, 'To love.' 'And the mechanisms?' 'To love.' 'And the assets you have?' 'An overriding confidence in providence.' 'Is that your foundation's asset, really?' I said, 'Yes, with that I can succeed. And if you give me aid, I can assure you I will not let you down.'

And then the war broke out and there I was with a group of Hutu and Tutsi children. Sixty members of my family were assassinated. I am Tutsi and I had Hutu and Tutsi children. I tried to follow the Hutus, but the Hutus said: 'We won't be able to hide you, Maggy. You cannot go with us to the Tanzanian refugee camps.' So I asked myself, 'Where will I go?' I tried to follow the Tutsis who were moving to take refuge at Tutsi military camps, but they said: 'With your Hutu children, you can't go with us.' So I said, 'It doesn't matter. I'll go to the church.' So I called everyone. I said to the Hutus who were fleeing: 'Come with me, we'll show them it's possible together.' I hid them in a large hall because their numbers were growing. Unfortunately, we hid there on October 22, 1993, and two days later, the Tutsi army, along with the Tutsi militia, came to evict me, looking for Maggy wherever she is. So they surrounded that building and I recognised the people of my family. I went out alone and locked the hall behind me. I told them: 'There are no assassins. Even if there were assassins, they are still our brothers and sisters. We don't have the right to harm life.' They didn't let me speak. They tied me up and assassinated seventy-two people in front of me, to punish me, because I had said I belonged to a more noble family, the family of God's children. But when they tied me up, I told them, 'You will never bind me, you will never get to my soul, and my soul, even if you kill me, will continue to work.'

Those were the beginnings of my struggle, which is not a struggle but rather the fostering of the noblest values of belonging to the human family. So then a young man came up, seeing I had been bound. I told him: 'If you untie me, I could give you some money. But you would also have to hide the children.' So he untied me and I gave him the money. He then became corrupt and began to protect twenty-five

children that day. But I couldn't find my own seven children. I thought: 'I've struggled for nothing. Lord, you are a liar. You are not a God of love. I had said I would show my Burundian siblings that the Burundian population, both Hutu and Tutsi, can live together in peace, and suddenly they have assassinated that which gave me hope, the very foundation, the meaning of my life.' And I began crying amidst all those corpses, but when I went to the chapel, I heard my seven children saying: 'God is God like you told us, a God of love. We are all here, saved by miracle.' Then I realised it was possible to fight. So I took refuge at a German social worker's house.

Then I began to build. I asked the children, 'What should we call our house?' The children said, 'Shalom.' I said, 'Shalom, really? A Hebrew word? With the anti-Semitism there is in the world, my children! Do you really want to attract even more...' But they said: 'No! Christ was Jewish and it is an international word. It's got to be Shalom, no ifs, ands or buts.' So I said, 'OK, Shalom it is, then.' We began to take in all the children and mothers who had survived. I even forgot all the atrocities I had experienced. We built houses. After three years, we built a new centre, which we called the Oasis of Peace. Some months later, we built other centres, where journalists from the world over, even from as far as Japan, would come to see this madwoman from Burundi. The first article, which was published in *Libération*, was entitled, 'The Madwoman of Burundi.' And in *Géo*, they wrote: 'A Saint in Hell'. And I noticed the Spaniards called me 'The Angel of Burundi'. And our mother, the Catholic Church, wrote a few times that I was the new 'Saint Catherine of Sienna'. And in *Le Monde*, they wrote 'The African Mother Theresa'. Nonetheless, I have but one title, and that is what I just told you. I have 10,000 children: Protestants, Muslims, etc., from the Congo and Rwanda, who have grown up. I've built 500 small homes where children of all religions live together, because I am convinced that never, never will hatred have the last word. With this conviction, I was even able to build a cinema. Do you know why? I realised people weren't talking to one another anymore. So I asked myself: 'How can we bring them back together?' I

asked for funding and, at a time when there were bombardments, I built a cinema. So the people came and watched the films in the evenings, and after each film, I engaged some psychologists to explain and comment on the films, and people started talking to one another.

But as I said, in the same town where I was, were those who had murdered, including members of my family. I said to myself: 'They are criminals; they must also be included in our project.' We began with the children, who would go to visit their parents' assassins. People said to me: 'You're going to send the children to the assassins' houses?' I replied, 'Although they are assassins, they remain our brothers. And I, as a Christian, I refuse to... I believe in humanity. And what I need is not the past. I'm interested in how humanity can use its past to make a better future.' So I accompanied the children to visit the criminals. At first, the criminals refused to open their doors and then the children would sing Shalom. Then they would open the door... 'We are bringing you the word Shalom and we ask you to apologise to us.' Then we built some small houses together and they eventually became our friends, and would help wash the prisoners. I would wash those who had burned people alive... my 10 paternal aunts. And a man asked me when I was washing him: 'Maggy, why are you doing this?' And I replied, 'Gaspard, because despite everything, you remain my brother.' Then he said: 'I've lived like a dog but I'll die like a human being.'

But the war continued. Ten years of civil war. There were even women who took up arms. I said, 'But they are mothers. How can they do this?' We got more involved. We undertook an initiative for demobilisation, ahead of the World Bank and government projects, by going among the *maquis* and telling them: 'A mother's calling is to create life and enhance it. Please lend me your hearts. If you can come, I'll teach you how to start a revolution, like me, because this is one.' So these women, former combatants, came with us. So in this great project, I have children victims of war, children suffering from AIDS, ex-combatant children, ex-combatant women, ex-prostitute women who

were raped by the war and then kicked out by their husbands, and as they had no hopes left, they would become prostitutes. We went to see them, too. So it's a real monument of hard work, but done quite simply, because, as I said to myself, 'We often take ourselves too seriously and forget what is essential, that is, why we exist.' Some people were believed to be VIPs—'very important people', and no one even greeted them. Because we were supposed to remain at a distance, as they were very, very important. But I tell you, we are all—and we have forgotten this—we are all princes and princesses made in the image of God. We must remain on our feet, because we wear a crown—and I will finish here—that no one can take away from us. No one.

And that is how we built our town. I live in the east, where everyone wants to come. The expatriates who came to work for the United Nations would say: 'Oh, we must go to the capital because there is no swimming pool here.' So I said: 'Oh, it boils down to a pool, does it? I'm going to punish you.' So I put in a pool and now, at the weekend, those expatriates are paying for their pool dearly. You can see the children going to the cinema in the late morning on Saturdays. As they go by they greet them, and they see the misery. Because you don't know how much falsehood there is in this world, how many conferences there are on the eradication of poverty. We are constantly going back and forth, those of us who love these conferences, every weekend with a new aim: the struggle against poverty; after that, the struggle against AIDS; then, environmental protection. And so we are always on a flight somewhere. But on site, imagine if you had to go there...

We should truly bring out this cohesion that comes from the bottom of the heart, and God—and I don't give a damn what people say—has not given us religions. He has given us but one religion: the religion of love. So with that, we will change the face of the Earth. My dear brothers and sisters, this is a mother's heart that is suffering. I am a mother, as they say, to over 10,000 children. I have come to deliver this message and I hope that after this, when you leave this hall, you understand that your

children are in Africa, along with your brothers and sisters, and that it is a disgrace for humanity that though there are so many people suffering out there, Europe can forget Africa. We do not forget you.

We will make you miserable until you understand that there will never be cohesion as long as some die because they don't have a single euro while others die in opulence. And they boast of their holidays, of spending a week here, a week there... because they are so bored. This is a cry of alarm from a mother who's suffering. And I have come, I have travelled so many kilometres, because I know, I know that one day, people will understand that we were created to be happy. Thank you.



SHABNAM OLINGA

RELIGION AND MEDIATION: A BAHÁ'Í PERSPECTIVE

The importance of religion and mediation in the world today cannot be overstated. Religious fanaticism has

wreaked civil strife, terror and human suffering upon religious communities and entire nations. The crises we are now encountering are interrelated aspects of a universal spiritual crisis. From this perspective, the role of religions becomes very significant in mediation and conflict. *'When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a new spirit realised within, a new power descends.'*

Religion is the greatest force in society, as the founder of the Bahá'í faith, Bahá'u'lláh, declared: *'The purpose of religion is to establish unity and concord amongst the people of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife.'* In order to understand the role of religion in conflict, we need to fully grasp the constrictive function of religion in creating a peaceful and prosperous global order. Therefore, spiritual principles can transcend any particular culture, and religion and nationality can have a transforming effect. Religion wields the power to mobilise the minds and hearts of people.

This paper explores the relationship between religion and conflict, discusses the role religion plays in the community and highlights best practices from the Bahá'í faith with some examples of interfaith activities in Uganda.

Introduction

Compared to the eighteenth century, the present time is as the dawn after darkness. The world is stirring with new life, thrilling with new ideals and hopes. Things that a few years ago seemed impossible dreams are now accomplished facts. In the midst of an age convulsed by moral crisis and social disintegration, the need for understanding

about who we are as human beings is vital to the achievement of lasting peace and well-being. Historically, such insight about human existence and behaviour has been provided by religion. Its indispensable function in addressing the universal inclination towards transcendence, and its essential role in civilising human nature throughout the ages, have been central to defining human identity as well as promoting social order. Through its cultivation of humanity's spiritual nature, religion has ennobled the lives of people everywhere and has engendered cohesion and unity of purpose within and across societies.

Albert Einstein, a thinker many decades ahead of his contemporaries, repeatedly warned of the urgent and desperate need for a new way of thinking in a nuclear world: 'The unleashed might of the atom', he wrote, 'has changed everything except our thinking. We are consequently moving toward an unparalleled disaster. We shall need a substantially new way of thinking if mankind is to survive.'

A realisation that we must change our attitudes and our values before we can change our behaviour is now spreading rapidly amongst people all over the world. This realisation has caused more panic as people do not know where to begin and think it is too late to do anything. We have to go one step further in our understanding of the problem and realise that the crises we are now encountering are interrelated aspects of a universal spiritual crisis. It is from this perspective that the role of religions becomes very significant in conflict mediation. As explained by Abdu'l-Bahá, a central figure in the Bahá'í faith, 'When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a new spirit is realised within, a new power descends and a new life is given.'

Religion and conflict

We need not look far to find numerous examples in the world today of the civil strife, terror and human suffering that religious fanaticism has wreaked upon religious communities and entire nations. Its pernicious influence can be found at the root of all too many of the wars, conflicts and other ills undermining peace in the world, including the problem of terrorism.

Fanaticism represents a perversion of religion and is directly contrary to the humane teachings brought by the founders of all the great religions of the world. Bahá'ís believe that the purpose of every religion is to promote unity among all the peoples of the world, and to outlaw war and violence in human affairs. All the major religions have taught the golden rule. The violence and disruption associated with religious fanaticism testifies to its spiritual emptiness. Fanaticism destroys the very foundations of human solidarity by dividing the world into contending factions, each believing itself to be superior to others and to have an exclusive claim on religious truth. These actions and attitudes negate the very purpose of religion.

Fortunately, the contemporary phenomenon of religious fanaticism does not signal the dawn of a new era of religious strife. Instead, it represents the dying convulsions of doctrines and societies that have openly defied the altruistic teachings of their own faiths. Fanaticism may seem to prevail for a time on the international scene, but ultimately it will die an ignominious death as peoples around the world come to recognise and rediscover the unifying truths enunciated so clearly in all the great religions of the world.

Among humanity's diverse civilisations, religion has provided the framework for new moral codes and legal standards, which have transformed vast regions of the globe from brutish and often anarchical systems to more sophisticated forms of governance. The existing public debate about religion, however, has been driven by extremists

on both sides: those who impose their religious ideology by force, whose most visible expression is terrorism, and those who deny any place for expressions of faith or belief in the public sphere. Neither is representative of the majority view, and neither promotes a sustainable peace.

Men and women of goodwill can contribute to hastening the end of religious fanaticism. They can do this, first, by living up to the high ideals of love, unity and tolerance that lie at the centre of their own religions or beliefs.

Conflicting ideas do not necessarily lead to conflict of persons; the Bahá'í international community suggests three principles that will help immeasurably to overcome the obstacles to achieving this freedom.

The first principle is recognition of human fallibility and acceptance of the fact that, however true a person may hold his beliefs to be, he must recognise that his understanding of them is limited by his own limited nature.

The second is confidence in the ultimate triumph of truth if we will but seek it with perseverance and humility.

The third is the recognition of our common membership in one human race living in one small world, the solution to whose problems demands the profoundest thought and best effort that every human being can bring to the task.

In addition to the above, the proponents of every system of religion or belief, in consciousness of these three principles, will, while holding to the beliefs that inspire their lives, be enabled to credit their fellow human beings of other beliefs with having the same idealistic intention for the benefit of humankind, and will have no difficulty in working with them for the advancement of all people.

The major stumbling block which stands in the way of universal tolerance in matters of religion is the fact that the religions of the world are generally

viewed as entirely separate entities. They are identified by their differences, rather than by their similarities, and this inevitably means that they are seen as being in conflict with one another.

If all people, of whatever belief, work together for the betterment of humankind, this very collaboration will help break down the barriers of ignorance and prejudice that divide them and remove the very root of religious intolerance.

Role of religion

Religion, the Bahá'í scriptures affirm, 'is the source of illumination, the cause of development and the animating impulse of all human advancement', and 'has been the basis of all civilisation and progress in the history of mankind.' It is the source of meaning and hope for the vast majority of the planet's inhabitants and has a limitless power to inspire sacrifice, change and long-term commitment in its followers. It is therefore inconceivable that a peaceful and prosperous global society, a society that nourishes a spectacular diversity of cultures and nations, can be established and sustained without directly and substantively involving the world's great religions in its design and support.

Writing of religion as a social force, Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í faith, declared: *'Religion is the greatest of all means for the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein.'* *'The purpose of religion', Bahá'u'lláh states '...is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife.'* The true and lasting peace toward which we all aspire depends on unity. Through a unity that embraces and honours the full diversity of humankind, all problems can be solved. When applied on a universal basis, the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated, an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions, will undoubtedly reveal the salutary power of unity. The building of a global society based on cooperation, reciprocity and genuine concern for others is the ultimate expression of unified action. In short, the core spiritual values held in common

by the world's religions contain the principal means for the reconciliation and advancement of the earth's peoples.

To understand the role of religion in conflict, we have to fully grasp the constructive function that religion offers in creating a peaceful and prosperous global order, as well as the destructive impact that religious fanaticism can have on the stability and progress of the world.

For religion and religious communities to play a positive part in conflict mediation in urban centres, religion should not be looked at merely as a channel for the delivery of goods and services but as one of the major stakeholders in the development of any community.

As a means of promoting religious unity, Bahá'u'lláh advocates utmost charity and tolerance.

It is tragic that religious intolerance should so frequently be the cause of dissension and strife in the world, since the stated purpose of every religion is to promote unity and peace. To quote from the Bahá'í writings: *'O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity.'*

Religion must therefore educate humanity in *'the spirit of love and fellowship'* and thus eradicate divisive prejudices.

In order to play its part in overcoming the prejudices and suspicions now afflicting the world's faith communities, religious leadership must devote attention to these commonly shared spiritual precepts rather than doctrinal differences or claims of exclusivity. Let each religion demonstrate its capacity to guide the world's inhabitants to peaceful coexistence, moral rectitude and mutual understanding, rather than spreading enmity, fear and intolerance. The recent trend toward interfaith

dialogue around the globe offers a positive example of how disparate communities can work together to broaden visions and shape public discourse in a unifying way. Religious leaders are in a unique position to draw attention to the potentialities and promise of the present moment in human affairs, and to challenge all key societal players to action.

Religion wields the power to mobilise the hearts and minds of the people and to urge them forward on the path toward peace and mutual understanding. It has a moral authority and an ethical sensitivity that complement the resources and expertise of governments and civil groups. Indeed, religion has been at the heart of many of history's great social movements. The special role of religious and spiritual leadership is to take a long view—not from an ivory tower, but with a perspective that is detached from immediate exigencies and the often partisan struggles of day-to-day political life.

Best practices

Bahá'ís live as a minority in every country of the world and come from virtually every background. They can testify from experience that the upholding of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a practical possibility as well as a vital necessity for the development of the well-being of humankind at this crucial point in its history. Where there is love, unity, tolerance and idealism, a people flourishes; when it is afflicted by ignorance, prejudice, division and hatred, it sinks in a quagmire of unending disasters.

The Bahá'í faith is concerned with the renewal and advancement of society. Bahá'u'lláh's writings aim to effect a transformation in the spiritual and material conditions of humankind. Bahá'í communities around the world advance the processes leading to world peace, particularly in the areas of human rights, the advancement of women, moral education and sustainable development by working with their governments, the United Nations, national and international nongovernmental organisations and other international agencies.

Bahá'u'lláh sums up the implications for today in words written over a century ago and widely disseminated in the intervening decades: *'There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you. Cleave unto that which draweth you together and uniteth you.'*

Inspired by this perspective, the Bahá'í community has vigorously promoted interfaith activities from the time of its inception. Apart from cherished associations that these activities create, Bahá'ís see in the struggle of diverse religions to draw closer together a response to the Divine Will for a human race that is entering collective maturity. The members of our community will continue to assist in every way we can. We owe it to our partners in this common effort, however, to state clearly our conviction that interfaith discourse, if it is to contribute meaningfully to healing the ills that afflict a desperate humanity, must now address honestly and without further evasion the implications of the overarching truth that called the movement into being: that God is one and that, beyond all diversity of cultural expression and human interpretation, religion is likewise one.

Interfaith dialogue can be an important step in conflict mediation, and Bahá'ís have been vigorous promoters of this.

The Bahá'í community of Uganda, for instance, is vigorously participating in numerous interfaith initiatives and actions on the local, national, subcontinental and continental levels. The following are but a few examples of such endeavours.

1. On the local level, and as a faith-based organisation, the community has partnered with

the following initiatives in the troubled northern and northeastern parts of Uganda: the Acholi religious leaders in northern Uganda and the Karamoja Cluster, a small-arms initiative.

2. On the national level, the Bahá'í community is a member of the Uganda chapters of the following initiatives:

- The Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), which is actively engaged in creating interfaith peace-building momentum and channelling it towards finding permanent solutions to the chronic civil conflict in both Uganda and neighbouring countries.

- The Faith-Based Initiative for Overcoming Corruption (INFOC-U), a coalition of various religions and faith-based actors that seeks to overcome corruption through moral empowerment and leadership.

- World Religion Day observances, which took place for the first time in Uganda in the town of Entebbe upon the initiative of the Entebbe Bahá'í community, with participants from various faiths and parts of the country. We are currently in contact with the Ugandan postal service to issue a commemorative stamp for this occasion in January 2007 or 2008.

3. On the subcontinental level, the Bahá'í community of Uganda is actively participating in the ongoing preparations for the UN-sponsored Peace Conference for the Great Lakes Region.

4. On the continental level, the Bahá'í community sent delegates to the Second IFAPA Peace Summit in Johannesburg in April 2005. The summit witnessed constructive dialogue between delegates of many warring factions from around the continent and the launch of the Cry of Mothers in Africa, an initiative that will work to improve life for African children and women.

The promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding among the diverse segments of the human family cannot be a passive or rhetorical exercise. All forms of provincialism, insularities and prejudices must be directly confronted. Unfortunately, religious prejudice is a particularly virulent influence that continues to block human progress. Overcoming its corrosive effects will

require deliberate and sustained effort. Toward this end, innovative and substantive education programmes are essential. But so too is an attitude of true humility among all those who believe in a loving and almighty Creator.

At this juncture of our evolution as a global community, the search for shared values beyond the clash of extremes is paramount for effective action. A concern with exclusively material considerations will fail to appreciate the degree to which religious, ideological and cultural variables shape diplomacy and decision-making. In an effort to move beyond a community of nations bound by primarily economic relationships to one with shared responsibilities for one another's well-being and security, the question of values must take a central place in deliberations and be articulated and made explicit.

Conclusion

An understanding of the basic tenets of each faith and an explanation of the similarities of their messages can be crucial in mediation. It is therefore obvious that if religion is to help meet the manifold challenges confronting the world community, it must be free of ignorance, prejudice and animosity.

Spiritual principles that transcend any particular culture, religion and nationality can have a transforming effect on individuals if they are effectively incorporated into the mediation process. Reminding people of religious and spiritual values may prompt them to reflect on their own convictions and have the moral courage to look within and consider how their own attitudes and behaviours may contribute to escalation.

Whatever justification exists for exercising influence in matters of conscience lies in serving the well-being of humankind. At this greatest turning point in the history of civilisation, the demands of such service could not be clearer. *'The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable; Bahá'u'lláh urges, 'unless and until its unity is firmly established.'*

To play a constructive role in shaping humanity's future through conflict mediation, religious leaders must focus on the core of positive moral values held in common by all religious traditions, rather than on differences. We may each believe our religion is the best, but we must respect the spiritual choices of others, even if we think that they err. If there must be competition among religions, let each strive to excel in guiding people to peaceful coexistence, moral rectitude and mutual understanding.

I would like to end with these words of Bahá'u'lláh to one of his followers over one hundred years ago: *'Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely afflicted world the remedy it requireth.'*

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STEIN VILLUMSTAD

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Oslo was the venue for an important meeting two weeks ago. Senior Iraqi Sunni, Shiite and Christian leaders met to address escalating sectarian tensions and to stand united for social reconstruction and nation-building. The participants rejected labelling people 'infidels' and using this as pretext for killing, stood firmly against those who try to spread extremism, and emphasised the principle of respecting the other party's opinion. The religious leaders called for ongoing dialogue amongst various religious and ethnic leaders by holding regular conferences, organising visits, forming peace teams for troubled areas and holding public gatherings that bring together all sects in public events.

The Oslo meeting was convened by the European Council of Religious Leaders in cooperation with Religions for Peace. The ECRL is a regional council of Religions for Peace. Religions for Peace first convened Iraqi religious leaders in Amman, Jordan, in May 2003. At that meeting, the Iraqi religious leaders called for the formation of an Iraqi Religions for Peace council. Since then, the Iraqi religious leaders have met again in Baghdad, Amman (Jordan), Kyoto and Tokyo (Japan), Seoul (South Korea) and London (United Kingdom). In partnership with Religions for Peace, the Iraqi religious leaders have also engaged in cooperative humanitarian assistance.

In early May of this year, religious leaders of Kosovo met in Peja. Their venue was an old and symbolically important Orthodox monastery. They issued a statement with a call for reconciliation and respect for cultural and spiritual values and infrastructure. At the end of the meeting, the participants—Muslims, Christians and a representative of the Jewish community—walked through the streets of Peja to visit churches and mosques. Both the conference

and the walk were covered by a great number of media outlets. This event was prepared and hosted by Norwegian Church Aid, with the participation of the European Council of Religious Leaders and Religions for Peace.

The activities of Religions for Peace in Iraq and Kosovo illustrate how the organisation works. In areas of conflict, Religions for Peace attempts to engage the religious leaders and their communities in conflict transformation. Their approach is not to be confused with official conflict management or peace negotiation processes. Rather, they aim to complement and strengthen peace efforts through the spiritual and moral assets of religions.

Comparative advantages of religious institutions

Many people question why religions and religious communities should be brought into the peace-building agenda. Religion is seen as the problem. Katherine Marshall of the World Bank has listened to this criticism and organised the most common arguments in what she calls the 'four Ds':

- Religions are *divisive*. They are competitive. Either you are with me or you are with someone else. This divisiveness creates conflict.
- Religions are *dangerous*. They are anti-development, anti-democratic, patriarchal and against reproductive health for women.
- Religions are *defunct*. They are losing importance (at least in many parts of the West) and not worth focusing on.
- Religions are *delusive*. They take an emotional approach as opposed to building on professionalism and rational thinking.

These four Ds cannot be outright dismissed. If

religions are part of the problem, they obviously need to be part of the solution. We therefore need to ask what position religions should take in conflict transformation and peace-building.

Twenty-three million out of the 25 million people in conflict zones and 35 million out of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS could be reached through their religious communities. The most fundamental issue Religions for Peace is trying to address is: How do we use existing religious communities as building blocks for multi-religious cooperation to transform conflict, promote peace and advance sustainable development around the world?

Eight hundred religious leaders from 100 countries and from the world's main religious traditions met in Kyoto, Japan, in August of this year. The Religions for Peace World Assembly addressed the issue of confronting violence and enhancing shared security. The Kyoto Declaration strongly urged religious institutions to become engaged in conflict transformation and peace-building. At the Assembly, focused dialogues were facilitated for delegates from conflict-ridden areas: Sudan, Israel-Palestine, the Middle East, Iraq, Sri Lanka and the Korean Peninsula. The religious leaders were deeply engaged, and the potential of religion was clearly demonstrated.

The Carnegie Commission⁴ identified five clear comparative advantages of religious leaders and institutions in dealing with peace and reconciliation:

A clear mission and message, which resound easily with those belonging to religious communities and often with people far beyond their traditional constituencies;

A permanent widespread historical presence in society at large and in local communities in particular;

Well-developed infrastructure, often including sophisticated communications networks that link local, national and international offices;

Legitimacy, enabling them to make clear and courageous statements during crises; and

A traditional orientation towards peace and the promotion of respectful human relations.

Religious symbols and ceremonies should be added to the list as a crucial aspect. Religions have symbols and ceremonies for confession, repentance, forgiveness, grief and communion. These symbols and ceremonies have emerged from age-old experiences with perpetrators and victims as members of the religious communities. The ceremonies are recognisable and predictable for both the perpetrator and victim, and they create an atmosphere of trust.⁵

Added values of interreligious cooperation

A tribute to the Reverend Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of the Buddhist organisation Rissho Kosei-Kai and co-founder of Religions for Peace, was held in New York last week. His vision was crystal clear: 'Interreligious cooperation should be on top of everyone's list of peacemaking'. His argument was that interreligious cooperation constructively processes the relationship between 'the self' and 'the other' in the spirit that humankind is one people.

The symbolic power of cooperation is especially important in situations where religions are implicated or have become entangled in violent conflict. Cooperation in these situations can effectively undercut the exploitation of religion as a source of conflict and bring to the foreground the

4

Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Prevention and Management of Deadly Conflicts*. Carnegie Corporation, New York, 1997.

5

The argument in this paragraph is found in Atle Sommerfeldt, *Ingen snarvei til forsoning*, in Inge Eidsvaag (ed.) *Demokrati og fredelig konfliktløsning*, Universitetsforlaget AS, Oslo, 1966, pp. 39-53.

moral imperatives for justice, reconciliation and the rule of law that can be found in all major religions.

But cooperation does more. It also provides a powerful way to engage the enormous—and still underutilised—assets of the religious communities to advance peace and development in a combined way. And these assets are large. In many countries, the religious communities are the most developed and inter-connected social infrastructure present, reaching from the smallest village to the capital and beyond. They are also marked by moral and spiritual traditions that have great power among their adherents and relevance for peace and human well-being. When mobilised and equipped, these religious communities can be harnessed for needed advocacy and the delivery of important services related to the challenges of peace and development.

Cooperation is substantively powerful because it can help diverse religious communities to align their unique and often complementary strengths around shared concerns, identify common goals and offer efficiencies in the provision of needed mobilisation and equipping. Moreover, cooperation among religious communities establishes a mode of operation that can facilitate the establishment of strategic partnerships with other public institutions and agencies committed to addressing similar challenges, without at the same time engaging those public institutions in advancing particular sectarian beliefs.

Thus, cooperation among religious communities is a powerful symbolic and substantive key to both ameliorating the entanglement of religions in conflicts and constructively and efficiently engaging them in helping to solve the major challenges of building peace and advancing development.

With their potential for involvement and comparative institutional advantages, multifaith organisations are well positioned to be:

- Forums for contact, facilitation and dialogue;
- Awareness-builders and advocates; and
- Actors in specific conflict situations.

The strength of institutionalised cooperation

One good principle is to develop mechanisms in good times, in preparation for stormy weather. An observation was made in Norway in the aftermath of the ‘Mohammad cartoon’ storm. The discourse in Norway was handled relatively constructively, and the Norwegian government came out in a balanced way. The secret behind this was that an interfaith mechanism was already in place when the crisis hit. Trust had been built between the members of the mechanism, and credibility had been developed beyond its normal reach. The government immediately consulted this body. Ongoing consultations within and between member organisations helped shape a constructive dialogue and prevent serious conflicts. The secret was that a mechanism and trust had been built over time.

Religions for Peace has a basic principle for working with existing religious structures. A sound organisational linkage to existing, legitimate and representative institutions of the respective faiths is essential to fully harvesting the assets of the religious traditions.

Interreligious mechanisms can successfully be built on existing religious structures. Inter-faith structures rooted in their respective religious traditions have legitimacy and sustainability beyond enthusiastic individuals. Religions for Peace is currently affiliated with inter-faith structures in about 70 countries and four regions. Most of these structures prioritise conflict transformation, peace-building and advocacy for vulnerable children.

Interfaith action (approaches and areas for religious institutions working together)

In the context of conflict, it is important to see dialogue as an element that moves religious communities and leaders to take action toward peace-building, social reconstruction and reconciliation. Most actions are taken by local communities. Statistics currently show that most violent conflicts occur at the community or state level, rather than the international level. Interstate

wars peaked in the mid-1980s. Even civil wars and social conflicts have decreased since the early 1990s, but there were still close to 40 serious conflicts being waged in 2003.⁶ Therefore, the most likely interreligious conflict transformation actions are those linked to local or national conflicts.

Cynthia Sampson⁷ identified four approaches or areas of action for religious institutions involved in peace-building that, in the experience of Religions for Peace, have proven relevant and appropriate:

Education includes nonviolence training for use in confrontational stages of conflict. Conflict transformation training is needed in hot conflicts and in post-conflict phases. One segment of the latter is 'preparing people for peace'. Training in human rights, nonviolence, conflict resolution and the principles and processes of democracy are elements.

Advocacy is historically known through the Mahatma Gandhi movement. Examples of it include the role played by religious institutions during the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the role of the churches in the 'People Power' revolution in the Philippines, and the efforts of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum in the country's peace process. Religious actors can successfully play intermediary roles. The World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches mediated a peace accord for Sudan in 1972. The role of St. Egidio in settling the civil war in Mozambique is well known. The mediation by the Interreligious Council of Sierra

Leone contributed to the country's peace accord in 1999.

Observation provides a watchful physical presence intended to discourage violence, corruption, human rights violations and other threatening and undesirable behaviour. Religious bodies and religiously affiliated humanitarian and human rights organisations are present in most conflicts in the world. Examples of observation include providing humanitarian assistance, monitoring human rights and observing elections. Civilian peacekeeping teams are a more activist form of observation. Religious 'peace teams' are in place in a number of conflict areas, including Central America and the Middle East.

The various roles have strength and value in different stages of a conflict. While education and conscientisation are relevant in the build-up to a violent conflict, observation, negotiation and confrontation are particularly relevant interventions during open conflict. Education and advocacy are key in the post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation phase.⁸

Religious leaders fall into the category of 'middle-range leaders' in John Paul Lederach's well-known three-level pyramid of conflict transformation actors. Religious leaders have direct access both to the grassroots level and the top national political leadership level. Their access to the grassroots is through their own religious communities, or 'constituencies' in sociological terminology. Their access to the top leadership is through their representative mandate from smaller or larger constituencies within the larger community. Their strategic potential to make a difference in conflicts is considerable, and transcends different levels in national and international contexts. It is, however, necessary to explore further whether religious institutions are equipped to operationalise this potential. They are not necessarily skilled in conflict transformation. Orientation, training and

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Ted Robert Gurr, Monty G. Marshall and Deepa Khosla, *Peace and Conflict 2001: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, Centre for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2001. Andrew Mack (ed.) *Human Security Report 2005*, The Lieu Institute for Global Issues, 2006.

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Cynthia Sampson, 'Religion and Peacebuilding', in: *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, D.C., 1997.

8

Adam Curle, *Making Peace*, Tavistock Press, London, 1972.

accompaniment are essential to releasing these potentials.

Some observations from interreligious dialogues

Finally, let me return to some observations drawn from a limited number of cases in which religious leaders have been involved in conflict transformation processes. I will briefly describe two cases in which I was personally involved.

In 1997, the Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) took courageous steps to end the extremely cruel and inhumane civil war in that country. Their actions included a daring trip to the bush to meet with the RUF rebels and ask for the release of abducted children. More than fifty children were released. Their actions brought them to the official negotiation table in Lomé in the spring of 1999, during which the government and the rebel movement tried to reach a peace accord. Later, IRCSL was heavily involved in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

When the war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998, an initiative was taken to encourage consultations with and between the religious leaders in the two countries. The four religious groups in the respective countries met several times in a secure setting abroad. Finally, they made highly public and publicised joint visits to their respective capitals, Addis Ababa and Asmara. They were the only groups from the two countries to meet in this way, and they specifically did so in a public manner. People in the two countries were given hope.

Although a much broader body of experience would be necessary to draw any conclusions, it is tempting to make some observations that might be useful in similar processes.

If religion is not at the heart of the conflict, tensions between the religious communities may be overcome in a common search for the greater good.

A common platform of explicitly stated, deeply held and widely shared values may serve as a strong instrument for joint action in conflict situations.

Religious communities in search of peace should not primarily engage in a philosophical or theological dialogue. Rather, they should use dialogue as a platform for joint action.

Religious leaders seem to have the best chances of influencing political and military conflicts by staying within their primary religious mandate. Their credibility and legitimacy seem to be bolstered by coherent words and deeds within this mandate. Individual religious leaders may be respected politicians. As a group, however, religious leaders do not seem to have strong political credibility. Their ability to mobilise their respective faith communities for peace count more than their ability to act as 'diplomats' towards the parties involved in the conflict.

It is critical to link faith-based peacemaking to secular and political processes and authorities.

Key individuals who hold both secular and religious authority can be effective resources in bridging divides.

Governments may overlook individual religious leaders and communities, but when they unite in search of peace, governments are encouraged and pushed to take their initiatives seriously.

In their search for peace, religious leaders have made powerful use of symbolic actions as entry points for gaining influence. These actions, however, must be followed up by tangible efforts to alleviate the suffering of the victims of conflict.

These tentative observations support the basic notion that the main assets of religious communities are social, moral and spiritual, and that they have great potential when applied cooperatively for peace.



PIOB UDOMITTIPONG

ENGAGED BUDDHISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

First of all, we have to be straightforward: religions can be used to propagate either peace or war. Look at how many national, regional and global wars have been waged in the name of religion.

Second, we have to understand nature of conflicts. As a Buddhist, I feel conflicts are a part of life. The Buddhist tradition proclaims three common characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), state of suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*). The state of suffering connotes the suffering derived from continuing, never-ceasing conflicts, which may give us unpleasant feelings in our everyday life. In the worst-case scenario, in which we handle conflict-driven suffering improperly, it may lead us into actions that cause massive damage to ourselves and others. Therefore, to overcome suffering, one needs to understand its nature: things change constantly and one can deal with things using the not-self approach.

Instead of denying the existence of conflicts or attempting to eradicate them, we may need to endeavour to understand their nature and approach them with critical mindfulness and understanding. Conflicts are here and everywhere, and fundamentally, they start from within our minds.

Why, then, are religions used to propagate violence?

To illustrate this point, I offer an example from the restiveness in the southern provinces of Thailand, which are inhabited by many Muslims, although Buddhists are the majority nationwide. In the past two years, 5,000 people have died, ten of thousands have been injured and extensive property damage has been caused as a result of bombing, physical

attacks, arson, etc. Remotely controlled explosions take place almost everyday in this once peaceful community. It started with the shooting and attacking of security officers, and it has now escalated into rampant shooting of civilians. There has been a mass exodus of people from the three southern provinces to other parts of the country. This massive violence is unprecedented in Siamese history, considering our rather peaceful coexistence among believers of many traditions and religions.

It is very difficult to understand this conflict. Normally, religions tend to be singled out as the main reason for terrorist attacks. The media, in particular, tends to blame Islam, which is more common among the population there, as a main reason for this ongoing conflict. In my view, however, it is too simplistic to look at the problem in this way. If we conclude that religions are a major cause of conflict, then how can we explain the peaceful coexistence of believers in Thailand over the past millennia?

Problems in today's society have become more complicated and far-reaching. Our approach to both causes and solutions must therefore become more sophisticated, as well. In addition to the religious identity issue that has given rise to unprecedented violence in southern Thailand, we tend to believe that the economic divide between the three southern border provinces and the rest of the country can explain the problems and point us toward a solution. According to statistics from the Thai National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), these three southern provinces have lagged behind much of the country, economically speaking.

Politically, the central government usually assigns incompetent officers to administer affairs in the

three provinces. Through manipulation by the media and conventional education, people in the three provinces are portrayed as the 'other' people, those who are different from us. And through a militaristic approach, the situation has flared up into unprecedentedly extensive terrorist actions.

In my society, religions may contribute to social cohesion and development in two ways.

At the social level, many religious leaders have been successful fundraisers. This has led to construction of hospitals, schools, daycare centres, libraries, roads, etc. A case in point is the Phra Bath Nampu temple in central Thailand, which was converted into a hospital and equipped with high-tech facilities. It has drawn a lot of resources from the public, yet it has failed to provide a peaceful transition for many people living with AIDS (PWLAs). Physically, the PWLAs may be well looked after, but mentally, how can one tolerate being excluded from one's family and community and left to one's own devices? They are treated as if death is their only destiny. A villager I met recently told me how he drove his HIV-positive brother there and, a few months later, the brother died. It is a quick solution that satisfies the needs of modern people who have less time for intimate care and sharing. But is this solution sustainable, and does it help anyone attain a higher level of spiritual fulfilment? Probably not.

At the structural level, many Buddhist leaders, including monks and nuns, have developed initiatives to address impoverishment. They have helped villagers find work in order to solve their own problems through collective approaches such as rice banks, buffalo banks, local currency, local markets, non-chemical farming, savings groups, reforestation, community forests, etc. The collectiveness of these activities is made possible by the intrinsic respect local people traditionally pay to the Buddhist leaders. Trust is crucially important to the sustainability of these collective activities, which have proven to have the lowest levels of debt default. Social networks have been combined with spiritual elements to guarantee debt servicing and

make sure the money is genuinely used to address the people's gravest problems.

Buddhism may also be able to address another crucially important issue: the approach to fear. Fears basically arise from either attachment to something or hatred. We feel attached to the things or people we love, and we fear that we will one day lose them. We also fear those who hate us, those who make us suffer.

At the time Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, her first book, *Freedom from Fear*, was being published. In the book, she explains how she and her compatriots fought nonviolently against the military dictatorship in Burma. She meditated daily on loving kindness and extended her compassion to both the oppressed and the oppressor. In fact, the military junta had organised a general election in 1990 in which her political party, the National League for Democracy, won a landslide victory. However, the military junta not only refused to transfer power to the newly elected members of parliament but also put her under house arrest and brutally cracked down on her supporters.

I had the honour of translating her second book into Thai. It was an anthology of her serialised articles first published in the Japanese newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun* more than 10 years ago. I cannot help being inspired by her peaceful approach toward those who torment her and put her nation in jeopardy. In her 52 pieces of writing, she vents no hatred or frustration, but love and understanding toward the brutal military junta that has over the last 4 to 5 decades accumulated its power through brutal suppression. Thousands of people have died and many of her pro-democratic colleagues have been tortured while lingering in jail. Many of them died of a lack of medication. The crowded environment and lack of sanitation in Burmese prisons has led to the spread of diseases including tuberculosis. Many of her jailed colleagues died of preventable diseases like this one, and their family members have been left to face harsh economic, social and political realities.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself has been under house arrest for more than 15 years now. Despite calls from global communities, her release has not been granted. Yet what she cultivates every day is not hatred toward those who have been tormenting her, but love and understanding.

It is interesting, though, how one can approach anger or hatred with a new way of thinking. Instead of approaching it as a static power, we may change our thinking and treat it as transient energy. Therefore, it is common in Buddhist traditions—the Tonglen practice in Tibetan Buddhism, etc.—to practice converting this rather negative energy into positive energy.

The important thing is to bring out the awareness of one's anger, greed or delusion in order to surround it with mindfulness. Then this defilement can be transformed into compassion and wisdom. Thich Nhat Hanh, a well-known Vietnamese Buddhist monk, says that anger is like a closed flower. The flower will bloom when the sunlight penetrates deeply into the flower. If one keeps breathing and concentrating, mindfulness will infiltrate the anger. When sunshine penetrates a flower, the flower cannot resist. It has to open its heart to the sun. If we keep breathing on our anger, shining our compassion and understanding on it, our anger will soon crack and we will be able to look into the depths and see its roots.

I would like to end my speech with a quote from Sulak Sivaraksa, who unfortunately was unable to make it here today. In the Buddhist culture, the word *abhaya*—fearlessness—is equivalent to forgiveness. And on 'forgiveness', Mr. Sulak has this to say:

'Buddhism teaches me to forgive the so-called enemy. Indeed, without an "enemy", we can never improve our minds to be calm in the face of difficult situations. However, we must cultivate the realisation that the real enemies are within us: greed, hatred and delusion. In other words, external enemies are really a projection of our inner fears. Once these internal enemies are overcome

we will not perceive external enemies. All sentient beings will be our friends. There is no such thing as a nonrelational "I"; we all are interrelated and depend on one another. We should be grateful to all sentient beings, not only human beings. Without trees, we will not be able to survive either. Hence, I have learnt to be grateful to all, and it is beginning to pay off.'

Therefore, with the understanding of 'inter-relatedness' and 'interdependence', one cannot hate others, but rather will treat them like 'fellow human beings who are doomed to perish to birth, decadence, illness and death', as the Thai saying goes. And this concept of 'inter-relatedness' and 'interdependence' brings us closer to the notion of 'social cohesion', which is a major theme of this conference. With the understanding that we depend on one another, this social cohesion can be possible. But at the same time, we must approach conflicts by understanding the structural causes that give rise to social injustices. Instead of blaming particular individuals, as Daw Aug San Suu Kyi and other individuals in similar situations might understandably have done, we should look at the structural causes and address the corrupt systems that give rise to these social injustices.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



MICHAEL MILLWARD

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

1. UNESCO and interreligious dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is an important component of intercultural dialogue. It should be considered an entry point to countering extremism and fanaticism and to ensuring human security and social cohesion as well as sustainable development. It targets fragile groups such as migrants, women and children while striving to cover, as far as possible, sensitive areas.

There have been a number of initiatives in these areas, for example:

- **Reconciliation.**

In East Africa (some countries of the horn of Africa) southern Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya, women's interfaith associations will be trained for mediation and reconciliation and a manual will be produced for this purpose. This activity is being undertaken together with the World Conference of Religions for Peace. In the same spirit, together with the Association 21 Century located in Tbilisi, a TOT (training of trainers) programme will be carried out beginning January, bringing together women from the three Caucasus republics.

- **Capacity-building.**

In partnership with the regional UNESCO Chairs, the Oslo Coalition for Peace and the Central Asian Women's Cultural Network, UNESCO is developing a workshop on pedagogical materials related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue: training of trainers, preparation of the conference's proceedings, and preparation and publication of teaching materials produced by the regional UNESCO Chairs on intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

- **Information.**

Within the framework of promoting cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue, and in order to encourage a better awareness of interreligious dialogue, UNESCO is developing an introductory manual for youngsters on the cultural and ritual aspects of Christianity and Islam. It offers an objective and detailed description of each unique aspect and explains its symbology and meaning. This manual is steered by a committee of religious and pedagogical experts. The pilot project is aimed at Lebanon and subsequent versions will be proposed for neighbouring countries. This activity has been undertaken together with the Beirut Office.

- **Research on contemporary issues.**

Misunderstandings about religious facts, cultures and practices are being addressed through an adult-education course at the University of Geneva. This course was initially offered to journalists. Since the third year, it has been open to individuals who are in contact with other cultures and confessions. At the end of the course, students must write a report on their speciality, taking into account the lessons learnt. The last session of this course covers the representation of 'God' in all cultures.

- **Cross-disciplinary issues.**

With colleagues from the AIDS/HIV programme, UNESCO is currently undertaking a joint study aimed at better understanding religious communities' stigmatisation and discrimination of this deadly disease and exploring how they might help dispel these stereotypes and prejudices.

2. Ambiguities of the notion of interreligious dialogue

The notion of interreligious dialogue, understood as dialogue between representative authorities of the major religions, entails some problems. Not all major religions necessarily have representative authorities.

Religions do not dialogue. The people who belong to the various religions interact and eventually engage in dialogue.

We need to rethink the conditions of 'dialogue' among cultures and religions. This is the main proposal of the next UNESCO World Report on Cultural Diversity (May 2008).

3. Some working hypotheses of the World Report on Cultural Diversity

- **Purpose of the report:**

In keeping with UNESCO's role as an international laboratory of ideas and an intellectual clearing-house in its areas of competence, the Organisation is pursuing its programme of intersectoral World Reports. Each Report focuses on a specific global issue, with a view to stimulating international reflection by assessing relevant worldwide developments, mobilising the international community and determining future action. The Reports offer the added value of putting together interdisciplinary insights that illustrate UNESCO's commitments in the fields of education, science, social sciences, communication and information, and culture.

The first report, on knowledge societies, was published during the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, November 2005). The next report, to be published in early 2008, will explore the manifold aspects of cultural diversity. Conclusions reached about the phenomena commonly grouped together under the term 'globalisation' are all too often hasty, partial or provisional, in view of their cultural implications.

There exists a great deal of received wisdom in this regard, even though a considerable amount of uncharted territory remains to be explored. This report aims to submit some of this received wisdom to international scrutiny and to propose pilot methodologies to examine the extensive areas that still need to be signposted. In parallel to the approach embodied by the international instruments recently adopted by UNESCO, multiple different approaches to the issues raised by cultural diversity are likely to emerge. This report seeks to do justice to these diverse ways of understanding diversity. Indeed, while the Mexico City World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT, July 26 to August 2, 1982) seems to have closed the debate on culture in the broad sense, the debate on the plurality of cultures remains unresolved, particularly in view of the resurgence of the concept of civilisations, whether regarded as a source of conflict (the 'clash of civilisations') or as an attempt to establish a new world order in recognition of diversity (the 'dialogue among civilisations'). More than ever, a thorough review of the interactions between cultures and religions seems to have a place on the agenda, as does a review of the links between cultural identity and dignity (or its corollary, humiliation) and between culture and the future. We should start thinking about the conditions for the sustainability of cultural diversity, since we need to protect 'the fact of cultural diversity' rather than trying to preserve a particular state of diversity, as though it could be given 'heritage' status. This is more than a conceptual issue; classification of the underlying challenges should enable decision-makers to agree on priorities if we want culture to be a factor of social cohesion rather than social disruption and conflict.

- **Context:**

It is particularly timely that we should now tackle such a complex issue, in light of the recent completion of an all-encompassing set of standard-setting instruments comprising the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer

of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the Berne Copyright Convention (1952; revised in 1971), the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954 and 1999), the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). The second UNESCO World Report will assess the impact of ongoing transformations on the manifold aspects of cultural diversity, create a stimulating dialogue between the various approaches to monitoring developments in the world's cultures and, finally, revisit the origins of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by consensus in 2001. It will also stress the importance of cultural diversity in education, science and communication.

The report is intended for a broad readership encompassing the general public, national and international decision-makers and officials, the scientific and intellectual communities, civil society, the media and the private sector. It will require the collaboration of qualified experts from a range of disciplines and geographical areas.

- **Political use of the issues:**

Too often, political pronouncements on cultural diversity serve to perpetuate the irreconcilable nature of divisions, which are exaggerations if not pure fabrications motivated by realpolitik. In the post-colonial context, the world has seen a proliferation of nation-states whose time is far from over, contrary to the predictions in the 1990s of the advent of post-national states. Competition between nation-states often serves to justify the instrumentalisation of diversity or cultural characteristics for political ends, whether because they appear as the *raison d'être* of a struggle for independence, because in the name of national unity their preservation

in a given state serves to legitimate a policy of assimilation, or because the desire for them to be recognised internationally justifies the adoption of a new exchange regulation designed to promote a more equitable form of sharing. The international community's hesitation to recognise the rights of indigenous peoples are an eloquent illustration of this point. In this regard, politics often leads to shortcuts and simplifications that can prove dangerous, as genocides and other forms of ethnic cleansing have shown. Denial of the historical flexibility of cultures and ignorance of the fact that they are the product of complex processes of negotiation and interaction are responsible for the return of the old colonial idea of civilisation in its most unacceptable form, namely the proposition that civilisations (as a plural concept) are in confrontation. Everyone seeks to refute this view, despite the fact that it is enshrined in institutional language at the highest level (e.g. 'dialogue among civilisations').

Now is the time to adopt a new standpoint by rediscovering the ties that unite us in diversity and becoming more attentive to marginalised cultures.

Furthermore, religious diversity could contribute, through better understanding, to better coexistence and, hence, social cohesion.

- **The need to reopen inquiries into the mechanisms of mutual understanding:**

Apart from the need to inquire more deeply into the mechanisms of interculturality and transculturality, cultural change, modernisation, etc., we should ponder the mechanisms of mutual understanding and the possibility of converting to another person's viewpoint. There are grounds for wondering whether 'dialogue' (in the sense given to the word by Greek Platonism) is still the best paradigm for exchanges between cultures (since it tends to involve fixed positions and the orchestration of confrontations, which, even under the watchful eye of the logos, can become a weapon in the hands of politicians). Are

there not other models of cultural interaction, such as 'pathways', 'explorations', etc.? What lessons can we draw from reflection on the role of translation? How well does universalism stand up to the criticisms that may be levelled at it, such as the fact that it is often based on an assent that is merely opportune rather than on a genuinely shared viewpoint? The report should put forward recommendations aimed at promoting cultural diversity as a factor for peace and cooperation between peoples.

At this point, let me clarify what I mean by a respectful relationship to another's culture. A respectful interest in the diversity of another person cannot be satisfied by a colourful song-and-dance folk spectacle torn from its true context. How can one instil genuine curiosity in the real meaning and value of a cultural object and practice within its own setting? Is such a task of mutual comprehension an easy one? Does it not imply active participation by the cultural communities concerned, based on respect for the choices that could be theirs to share (or not to share) with others—knowledge that ought to be reserved for the select few?

Cultural diversity is often a challenge to coexistence. The globalisation of representations, desires and imaginings, particularly as a result of the media, has led to close contact between modes of life and outlooks that were previously remote from one another. These now see themselves as centre and periphery, creating what some would describe as a 'colonisation' of minds and giving rise to many difficulties. The report should arguably offer political decision-makers advice on making informed choices about the new challenges they face. In this new context of intermingling, with cultures and religions displaying an ever-higher profile, the relationship between public and private space takes on new importance. While there must be a dividing line between the freedom to express one's beliefs and the demands of communal existence, how can this line be drawn? We should now take stock of the wealth of national

experience in this regard and its impact on the management of difference, whether positive or negative.



MACLEORD BAKER OCHOLA

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM PEACE WORK IN CENTRAL AFRICA

My topic this afternoon is religion and mediation in urban contexts. According to many anthropologists, there are as many religions as there are community-based identities in the world. Anthropologists further claim that African peoples are very religious in every aspect of life. Religion, from the African perspective, is an encounter with God, the creator of the universe, on a day-to-day basis. Religion, therefore, is a way of life in relationship with God, with all the living-dead ancestors of all the cultural communities of the world, and with one another. In this context, religion becomes the focus of the life activities of every community in the world. In Africa, every human aspect of life bears elements of religion. For instance, there is religion in agriculture, hunting, marriage, politics, economics, social activities, and finally in death as well as in life after death. Religion therefore is a common ground where peoples of different cultural identities can come together in the presence of God, who is holy and pure.

In religion, peoples of different cultural identities continue to enjoy wonderful fellowship with all their living-dead ancestors on a daily basis. From the African perspective, our living-dead ancestors are very much part of our lives here on Earth. I think it is even so with Christians, who believe that the saints are part of us. Religion, therefore, as a unifying factor in human life, offers all peoples of the world the best opportunity for peaceful human coexistence. In this context, religion is very instrumental in conflict prevention and transformation throughout the world.

A good example is the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, a Christian-Muslim cooperation working for peace in the Acholi subregion of Uganda. This initiative is unlike any other in the world. It has

already brought much comfort and harmony to the lives of many communities in northern and north-eastern Uganda through its intervention and intermediation mechanism. It has also helped both the Jie and Acholi communities to realise that coexistence is the only solution for their future lives and destinies together. Thus, interfaith cooperation between different religious affiliations is the only path to peaceful coexistence for all peoples of the world.

Mediation A: As a member of the core team of ARLPI, I had an opportunity to witness a terrible drama. A violent conflict broke out between the Jie and Acholi communities in February 1999. The Jie warriors from the Karimojong subregion came and attacked the Acholi community in Agago County, their district. Over eighty innocent people were brutally killed, women and girls were gang-raped, and the whole population of Agago County was displaced to the trading centres of Patongo and Kalongo. The people were displaced without basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter. There were no medical provisions or sanitation facilities for the displaced people, who had to fend for themselves under nearly unbearable situations. The massive population displacement lasted for *three months*. Unfortunately, there was no response from the government of Uganda throughout the time that the people of Agago were living in massive displacement. The displaced people at the two trading centres were left to fend for themselves. However, as soon as the Jie warriors left the affected areas, the government quickly responded by supplying the locals with 100 guns per subcounty in Agago County. The intention was for the people of Agago to take revenge against the Jie community for the atrocities they had committed against the Acholi people.

ARLPI strongly protested this move by the government of Uganda. According to ARLPI, the move was tantamount to an incitement of one ethnic group against another. It was therefore suicidal. All the same, the government went ahead and supplied the locals in Agago with a 100 guns per subcounty. However, these few guns could not be used against the Jie warriors, who had hundreds of thousands of guns. The government was fully aware of all these facts, but still allowed the Karimojong warriors to defend themselves against the cattle rustlers from the Tobosa tribe in Sudan and from the Turkana and Pokot tribes in Kenya. This was a divide-and-rule policy, because only the Karimojong warriors were allowed to have possession of illegal guns in Uganda.

ARLPI took the initiative to intervene through mediation between the Jie and Acholi communities. ARLPI used persuasion to help the Jie and Acholi communities to resolve their violent conflicts through peaceful dialogue. The Jie-Acholi peace mediation began in earnest in November and December 1999 and continued in January February 2000. The end result of the peace mediation was very wonderful and fruitful because the two communities eventually realised that peaceful coexistence was the only remedy to their violent conflict. The two communities needed each other if they were to coexist and preserve their future destiny peacefully together.

Mediation B: There was an incident at Barlonyo, a camp for internally displaced people, in April 2004. It was alleged that LRA rebels massacred over 2,200 innocent people at the Barlonyo IDP camp in the Lira district of the Lango subregion. This brutality inflicted by the Acholi people upon the innocent people of Lango infuriated the Langi people. All of this resulted in bitter ethnic sentiments against the Acholi people. Thus, there seemed to be a plan to kill all the Acholi people in the Lira and Apac districts of the Lango subregion. A prayer was officially organised in the city of Lira to remember those killed in the massacre at the Barlonyo IDP camp. However, things did not go as planned. All of a sudden, there was a riot in Lira during the memorial prayer for

the dead. There were some people in the crowd with bad intentions who wanted to cause major problems between the Lango and Acholi tribes. However, the UPDF military promptly intervened and successfully prevented a genocide between the two communities, who had lived together peacefully for centuries. Nevertheless, a few people were killed by the rioters in Lira. As usual, ARLPI immediately took the initiative to intervene through mediation between the two tribes to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. Once again, the peace mediation between the Lango and Acholi tribes was brought to a successful conclusion. Thus, the two communities were miraculously saved from the brink of genocide.

Mediation C: The Bokora and the Pian are two ethnic groups in Karimojong subregion that have been very active in the cattle-rustling campaigns along the border with the Kapchorwa, Mbale, Kumi, and Soroti districts in north-eastern Uganda. While the Jie are not from the same subregion, they have actively terrorised the districts of Apac, Lira, Pader and Kitgum through cattle-rustling campaigns, especially in recent years. The Bokora and Pian tribes became increasingly active in cattle-rustling along the border with the Teso in recent years, especially from 1999 to 2001. The Bokora and the Pian warriors not only looted the cattle and property of the people of Teso, they also raped the women and girls. Their sexual abuse, violence and exploitation became a weapon of war against innocent populations in Africa. Sexual violence, therefore, is specifically used to stigmatise and demonise the victims. It is also used to dehumanise the entire population that has become vulnerable to, and at the mercy of, the powerful. The Itesots were harassed so much that the situation between the people of Teso and the Bokora and Pian tribes became very dangerous and explosive. The people of Teso formally requested that the ARLPI intervene between the Itesots and the people of Bokora and Pian through mediation. After holding several meetings with the warring tribes in Lira, Soroti and Moroto, the Itesots and the people of Bokora and Pian all agreed to respect each other's human dignity and

to coexist peacefully. The border-crossing attacks were greatly reduced, almost to a minimum. These successes in mediation between the warring ethnic groups show how much credibility ARLPI has in the eyes of the Ugandan public.

Mediation D: ARLPI is currently playing a very significant role as observers and consultants in the ongoing Juba peace talks between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army in southern Sudan. The Lord's Resistance Army is a rebel group in northern Uganda. The physical presence of the Archbishop John Baptist Odama, in his capacity as chairman of ARLPI, in the Juba peace talks is the symbol of ARLPI's credibility, confidence and trust in the eyes of the public, the government of Uganda and the international community. We are very optimistic that both the government of Uganda and the allied rebels will listen to the cries of the peoples of northern and north-eastern Uganda for peace now. Our special tribute goes to the government of southern Sudan, especially to Dr. Riek Machar, who is the principle party mediator of the Juba peace talks between the government of Uganda and the allied rebels. Thanks be to God that the Juba peace talks have stayed on course since July 2006. The high levels of the government and the LRA have therefore shown their commitment and seriousness in the Juba peace talks. Without a doubt, the government's seriousness and commitment in the peace talks will give the civil populations in northern Uganda the confidence to go back home peacefully.

Lessons learnt: Growing from our experiences in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions, the destruction of communities stands out as one of the greatest lessons learnt from armed conflicts, in Africa in particular and the in world in general. In my country, Uganda, armed conflicts have destroyed many communities in the Luwero triangle in central Uganda, and in West Nile, Acholi, Lango and Karimoja in northern Uganda. Armed conflicts have also destroyed communities in the Teso subregion in north-eastern Uganda and in Kasese and Bundibugyo in western Uganda.

In Sudan, especially in the southern region, armed conflicts have wrought much destruction on civilian populations for over fifty years now. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, the story is the same, because armed conflicts have left a mark of destruction upon many communities. In Somalia, armed conflicts have left the country without a legitimate government for over fifteen years now. Meanwhile, the armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo have assumed a new dimension. For the last few years, the DRC has been experiencing some of the worst intrastate identity-based conflicts. Ugandan military involvement in the DRC's internal affairs has created a new political problem in Africa. For instance, the DRC has accused the Ugandan government in the International Criminal Court of looting the DRC's natural resources. The ICC ruled in favour of the DRC and ordered the government of Uganda to pay many millions or billions of dollars to the DRC for looting and killing the innocent people of the DRC.

However, it was not the entire population of Uganda that did these bad things to the people of the DRC. Basically, the government of Uganda then in power committed these deeds against the people of the DRC without the blessing of the entire population of Uganda. I'm not even sure if all this was done with the blessing of the parliament of Uganda. All the same, let me put the record straight: the government of Uganda in power at the time should be solely responsible for these military incursions into the DRC. However, this does not mean that the people of Uganda must run away from their collective responsibility for what was done by their government or for what subsequent governments may do in the future. The conscience of the people of Uganda is very clear in this matter.

The second lesson learnt from the armed conflicts in Africa is that the gun that kills millions of children is foreign to us all in Africa. This lesson calls for very strict control over the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that could easily find their way into the hands of the wrong elements within African society.

The third lesson learnt from the armed conflicts in Africa is the importance of leadership as a prerequisite to sustainable peace and development. Good leadership can also guarantee the future destiny of a society. Poor leadership creates poverty, dependency, insecurity, redundancy, immorality, fear and uncertainty. Drunkenness flourishes in a situation where dependency and redundancy reign supreme in the lives of individuals. The Bible says that leadership without a vision will lead the people of God to perish politically, socially, economically and spiritually.

In the last forty years of African independence, poor leadership in many African countries has reduced the African peoples almost to the state of animals controlled by instinct and fear. African children have been dying of poverty, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition in the midst of plenty, as if they were not human beings with parents and responsible governments. The last forty years will certainly go down in the history of Africa as a legacy of man-made violent conflicts, poverty, disease and HIV/AIDS. It is completely beyond human imagination to think that African children can continue to die of man-made violent conflicts and of malnutrition in the midst of plenty. Africa is the continent of plenty, of religions and of peace. It was indeed in Africa where Christ, as the first refugee on Earth, was warmly received, welcomed, fed and accommodated.

That is Africa. The land of pride, religions, love and peace. Amen.



DENA MERRIAM

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION BY EMBRACING MULTICULTURALISM

Good morning. I am very glad to be here with you today to talk about why multiculturalism is an important positive social value. I thank the organisers for bringing together such an impressive global network of individuals working for greater inclusion and the celebration of plurality.

I will base my remarks on my experiences over many years of working with different faith communities, and especially with people in conflict areas. I believe that change happens at the grassroots level, the local level, and filters up from there, as opposed to the other way around. Change won't come from the top. So the way we regard others and treat people of other faiths and cultures at the local level will affect how cultures and religions interact globally. What we do here matters.

Unfortunately, religion is often manipulated in conflict situations to exacerbate differences between people and to inflame passions. This makes our work in the interfaith world harder. I have found that when you bring two sides together, they quickly acknowledge that religion is not at the root of the problem—it is political. Often the conflict is really about land or resources. But religion is a powerful tool because it carries such intense conviction and emotion. It taps our core, our identity, our sense of who we are, our ancestry, etc. So we need to give serious thought to why we are so threatened by issues of identity.

Many people in the interfaith world recognise the need for a deep reflection on the state and progress of interfaith work. Have we come to know each other better? Have we come to respect one another, or are we still only tolerating one another? Would we prefer that multiculturalism go away?

Do we want to go back to having homogenous societies? Or has integration of different cultures and religions become a key value of our time? Are we ready to embrace multiculturalism as a step forward in building a global community, a global identity? Are we ready to let go, to a degree, of our old identities—I'm a Christian, I'm a Muslim, I'm a Jew—and shift the focus to the fact that first and foremost we are human beings—with more similarities than differences?

Even in the interfaith world, I have found resistance to truly embracing pluralism. Often we give lip service to this concept. But if we are to prevent religion from being used again and again as a means of dividing people, we need to shift our perception of religious pluralism—from something that we have to put up with to a core value and need of our time. When I first started doing interfaith work in the 1990s, I was shocked at how little representation there was from the Hindu and Buddhist communities. The East didn't exist, or wasn't acknowledged. It wasn't relevant to most people. Interfaith work meant getting Christians, Jews and Muslims together to speak peacefully with one another in the hope of letting go of ancient wounds.

Today, there is token representation from the Eastern traditions, but the interfaith world still doesn't function as a global community. It is still mainly an Abrahamic reality. This is unbalanced. We will never achieve our objectives of global harmony until we become more inclusive and more global. We must continue to work to expand our definition and understanding of what it means to be truly multicultural in order to enable religious pluralism to play a positive role in our society. We must challenge existing definitions and concepts if we are to mature as an interfaith movement. Above

all, we must seek balance—balance between East and West, North and South, male and female, so that one religion cannot claim predominance over another, so that religion will no longer be a tool of war.

I want to share with you two recent experiences relating to pluralism and how it can function in a conflict situation. This fall, I put together a delegation of American religious leaders to go to Syria to meet with government and religious leaders there in the effort to open dialogue between our two countries. This was before the Iraq Study Group report came out in the US. Now dialogue with Syria is an accepted position. But at the time, it was not. But I believe religious leaders can and must lead peace efforts, so we went. Everyone expected a delegation of Christians and Muslims, and maybe a rabbi, but we had two Hindus in the delegation, including an American swami.

This totally shifted the concept of America. I had wanted to include a Buddhist as well, but the timing didn't work out. When we met with the religious leaders, we explained that we are a multicultural society and that the Hindu community has become a core part of who we are. I can't tell you how many barriers this broke down. I decided after this never to put together a delegation of American religious leaders that did not include a Hindu or Buddhist. If we want to embrace multiculturalism, we must expand our vision and acknowledge the many forces now shaping our society.

There's another reason for this. We desperately need new thinking, new energy and new insight in our interfaith work. The faiths of the East have a great deal to offer. They bring a new perspective. They don't carry the same historical baggage as that carried by the Abrahamic faiths. They bring a new and much-needed neutrality to interreligious relationships.

The second experience I had recently was a dialogue we organised in November between religious leaders from the Middle East and Asia. This took place in Beirut. The dialogue was conceived by the

Armenian Patriarch in Lebanon. He saw the need to bring in new energy, so he asked me to bring a delegation of Buddhist and Hindu leaders from Asia to Beirut.

Between the Abrahamic and Eastern faiths, there was clearly a different language—and it was interesting and challenging to get a meaningful dialogue going. Clearly, much more interaction is needed. When the Buddhist and Hindu leaders met with the spiritual head of the Shia community in Lebanon, you could feel that they were worlds apart. But the important thing is that they wanted to know each other; they wanted to understand each other's reality. It was a first step.

Political and economic ties are growing rapidly between the Middle East and Asia; so too must spiritual ties grow. The same is true for Africa. The relationship between countries in Asia—in particular China and India—and Africa is leaping forward. So too must spiritual ties grow. So we are now in the middle of organising a summit of African and Asian religious leaders for next spring.

For the West, interest in the Eastern religious traditions has been growing steadily over the past several decades and can now be found in even the smallest cities and towns. This can be a very positive force and can greatly enrich our concept of multiculturalism, which hitherto has extended mostly to the Abrahamic communities. At the local level, these faiths can help neutralise tensions between Christians, Muslims and Jews.

At the local level, there can be far greater inclusion of groups thus far left out of interfaith work. There are many benefits to this.

Two years ago, we were organising a summit of Palestinian and Israeli women in Jordan. We decided to bring a group of Buddhist nuns, a Hindu woman swami and two Buddhist lay teachers who were followers of the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist leader now living in France. In addition to a Protestant woman minister and Benedictine nun who were co-chairing the event,

they were to serve as the moderators of the dialogue. When one of the prominent Israeli women saw the Buddhist nuns on the agenda, she called and asked what they were doing there. They have nothing to do with this conflict, she said. I explained that they would be neutralising forces.

Well, more of the Israeli and Palestinian women gravitated toward the Buddhists than to any of the other facilitators. Why? Because they were neutral forces. They didn't have the shared history and so could approach the problem from a different perspective. There was no danger of them rehashing the past or taking a defensive position.

I had the same experience when we organised a meeting of Iraqi women. I invited a group of Buddhist nuns from Taiwan to function as observers—to help keep a neutral space. Such bonds were formed that some months later when we organised a meeting of women faith leaders in Taiwan at the monastery of these nuns, we invited some of the Iraqi woman. One of the most devout Muslims of the group came. The nuns received her very warmly and invited her to join them for the 5:00 am morning chant. When I heard about this I was a little concerned and made sure she knew that it was optional. But when I got up the next morning to go there myself, I found our Iraqi Muslim woman chanting and doing prostrations along with the Buddhist nuns. She found it a wonderful experience and later told me that this had been an opportunity she would never forget. I was so glad to see that she didn't feel threatened by the experience. Her identity had not been challenged. She was able to use the experience to grow and understand more of the global reality. She had found beauty in a foreign culture.

She didn't become less of a Muslim by attending the morning chant. This brings me to my last point, which is about freeing ourselves from the need to cling so tightly to our given identities.

Early in the interfaith movement, we spoke a lot about the need to learn tolerance, to tolerate one another. That is no longer enough. Just putting up

with one another won't help bring peace to our world and to our cities. Tolerating each other has not brought an understanding of our essential equality, our human unity. It allows us to keep the belief that our religion, our culture, our race is really better than the others—but we have to tolerate the others. Shortly after the war in the Balkans ended, I went to the region and met with the religious leaders who had recently formed an interreligious council. It was clear that they were only tolerating each other and, to be honest, they really couldn't stand one another. I thought to myself: How will they build a healthy society if they can't like, if not love, one another?

Today, in our interfaith work, both locally and globally, we must come to honour the truth in every faith. No one religion has a monopoly on truth. Different approaches to universal truth have been developed over time to suit different cultures and time periods. They all have value and are but different expressions of one reality. If we truly come to understand and know Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism and so on, we will respect and ultimately develop deep appreciation for the beauty of these faiths.

When I came back from this recent trip to Syria, I told one of my sons I had fallen in love with Syria because of the people and the culture. My son looked at me and said: 'What culture have you not fallen in love with?' It is true, and I can say the same about the religions. As we learn about and become close to members of each community, we can come to love and honour all religions. And yet I am more committed to my own religious practice as a result, because it is the right one for me. I think many people secretly fear that the encounter with the other will dilute one's own faith. I have found the opposite to be true.

To make multiculturalism a positive reality, we must let go of our fear of losing our identity. I'll end with a parable from the East. There were five blind men who were trying to describe an elephant. One described the trunk and said, 'This is what an elephant is.' Another described the leg and said,

'No, this is what an elephant is.' The third felt the tail and said, 'This is an elephant,' and so on. Let us put all the pieces together and treasure our distinct visions, while recognising that we each have a piece of the whole. We have a much richer vision, and perhaps a better interpretation of reality, when we put our pieces together.



RAJIV VORA

SWARAJPEETH: A NONVIOLENT RESPONSE TO THE VIOLENCE OF MODERN CIVILISATION

Good morning to everyone. So far, this event has been a great experience. I have opened up to share some of my recent experiences because they are related to my own understanding of religion and others' understanding of the religion beyond all religions: that is, the religion of truth and the religion of nonviolence. When nonviolence flows into all areas of life—the economic, political, cultural, and spiritual—then we have a term. It is a Vedic term which was invoked by Mahatma Gandhi in his fight for the freedom of India. To define what freedom must be for India, he used the term *swaraj*.

This campaign has to do with an organisation of which I am chairman: Swarajpeeth. We created this organisation fifteen years ago. India has a tradition of nonviolence, as you know. And because of Mahatma Gandhi's great work, there are a number of people, organisations and institutions working in this field. So I'm not the only one, but I certainly was born, brought up and trained in this tradition. But as we know, every institution and tradition has its own lifespan.

In 2002, many of us woke up to this very painful reality when we had one of our biggest communal conflicts in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, one of our megacities. It was a Hindu/Muslim riot. Many of you must have heard of that. Normally, in such conflicts, there would be a force of Gandhian people using nonviolence in the true sense. But by this time, the strength was very inadequate because the decadent religious city has grown faster than the strength of the pure religious city of righteousness, which can stand against the decadent use of religion and religiosity. I was travelling to various places at that time, trying to understand the situation and meeting people who were suffering. I wrote something. Because I am a Hindu, my first duty is

to be critical of the religion to which I belong. So I did that. I wrote something, about six pages. What I wrote was basically a conversation I had with one of the seniormost pontiffs of the Hindu religion, or *Shankaracharya*, as we call them. This particular *Shankaracharya* was very positive about all these things (nonviolence, etc.).

Because this riot involved a Hindu element, I had a dialogue and I wrote it down. This dialogue was basically on nonviolence, and basically on Hinduism. What is essential Hinduism? When Mahatma Gandhi brought essential Hinduism in practice and onto the floor of the freedom struggle, the entire Indian community was transformed and sublimated into looking at even their adversaries as their friends and into fighting them with compassion. There are two traditions: those who fight for justice are always one tradition, and those who give us the teachings and the message of compassion are the other. These two traditions had always been separate, but here, with Mahatma Gandhi, we see that these two traditions were combined: we will fight with justice, but we will also fight the adversary with compassion. So we had a dialogue and then I wrote it down and it was translated into six languages. We have about thirty official languages, so six is not much. But they were important languages with big followings, and one of them was Urdu. So some Muslim friends came up. It was published in many leading Urdu newspapers, almost the full one and a half pages, the complete dialogue.

I was invited to some centres of Islam. I live in Delhi, which is adjacent to a large province called Uttar Pradesh, the central province. Western Uttar Pradesh is the seat of one of the biggest Islamic schools, the Deoband School, which is second

only to Saudi Arabia. All of authorised Asian Islam, including Pakistan and other countries, is governed by the Deoband School. So it is a very important school. Western has a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims that is sensitive and communal. The people invited me to have dialogues with them. To my astonishment, I found that the leaders of the Muslim community, even the clergymen, were not so much in pain about what happened in Gujarat, which was really very bad. Rather, the highest thing on their minds was what was happening to Muslims and Islam the world over since 9/11. That was their central concern. That was at the top of their minds. That was worrying them, and they were indignant about it.

On the first anniversary of 9/11, I wrote an editorial in a journal to remind the Indian people of our own 9/11. We must mourn the dead, I wrote; we must remember what happens when hatred becomes the ruling sentiment. But this 9/11 has reestablished the age-old cycle of violence and counterviolence and legitimised even greater violence in the name of counterviolence and counterterrorism. It is such a coincidence that even this cycle of violence and counterviolence, extremism and imperialism, was broken permanently on September 11 about a hundred years back, in 1906, with this great weapon of nonviolence, which is today known everywhere as *Satyagraha*. Adherence to direct nonviolent action was born on September 11, 1906. Such a coincidence.

When I was talking about this 9/11 in the US last year, somebody told me—very interestingly—that coincidences are the language of God. Isn't that wonderful? So I said, 'Here is a message from God.' I said this to the agonised minds of our Muslim brothers: Look, here lies the answer. If you are agonised, if this pains you and troubles you so much, then isn't it our duty to find an answer to it? If we are troubled by this new image of Islam and Muslims, which is being created in order to declare that particular people are terrorists and that a particular philosophy, idea of life and religion breed terrorism, it is our duty to counter this propaganda. But how do we do that? That is the main question.

And I said, 'Here, the answer lies in the other 9/11.' At the birth of *Satyagraha*, Muslims were shoulder-to-shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi in Johannesburg. They contributed to this great weapon of deliverance in the times of modern civilisation, which is the incarnation of violence in all forms of life—political, economic, cultural and spiritual. The symbiosis of all this violence is what we call modern civilisation. To deliver humanity out of this, we needed a weapon whose range went beyond that of any bomb or weapon. So here was this truth force, this love force, whose range is beyond that of any nuclear weapon. And this was born as a joint action between Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. It was the highest day of our communal, religious, spiritual and political unity. It was the day we learnt how to transcend and sublimate extremism when we are repressed by imperialism.

This is the dialogue Mahatma Gandhi created, on forms of imperialism, on forms of violence in all areas of life, and on how to overcome them and deliver humanity into a new way of life, into new way of thinking, and into a new way of worshipping. This appealed to them. I gave them this example. Of the four small books that Mahatma Gandhi wrote during his life, the first was *Satyagraha in South Africa*. In one of the chapters, he dedicated the entire book to Mr. Muhammad Kachhalia, a Muslim gentleman. He dedicates the entire book, which is the story of the first collective political experiment in the history of humanity, to a Muslim friend of his who was an ideal example of *Satyagraha* during the South African experiment. The leading members of the *Satyagraha* movement were Muslims, although there were Parsis and Hindus too. But they needed to be reminded.

I'm sure most of you have heard of Badshah Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Pashtun, from the freedom struggle of India. At more than seven feet tall, he was the tallest man in the history of nonviolence. He was born of this most 'savage' race, as the Pashtuns are known—it is said that if you point a finger towards them, they will sever your head. Mahatma Gandhi describes how violence and self-honour are symbiotically related in their identity, and how at

every quarrel they are the first to wield the stick, wield the knife and kill an individual as they would kill an ant. And then he says: What is the magic of this man, Badshah Abdul Ghaffar Khan, that he has turned this severely violent, most savage-looking people into the best soldiers of nonviolence? If you read their story, the most glorious chapter in the history of direct nonviolence was written by his Khudai Khidmatgar, the Red Shirts, as they were known. It was a force of more than one hundred thousand people, at whom even the British empire shook. In their first show of nonviolence, the band was facing British soldiers and the Pashtuns, and they said, 'Look, it is in our blood to raise our hand. So if we are insulted, we are uncontrolled, it is beyond us not to respond without the most severe violence. But we want to adhere to nonviolence. We are disciples of Badshah. So tie our hands.' So their hands were tied behind their backs so that they wouldn't raise their hands. And they were severely beaten up. But this is how they raised this force. So I said, 'Look, this is your legacy. This is our combined legacy.' And Badshah Khan called nonviolence *Satyagraha*, the weapon of the Prophet. No less than that.

Somehow this message was very appealing to them. We had to work hard on that. But at the same time, we know that India and many of these countries are experiencing the onslaught of globalisation and therefore the continuous and speedy pauperisation and dispossession of artisans, small peasants, farmers, etc. This community, this entire region, is basically dominated by the farming community. They are peasants. They are artisans. So they are also negatively affected by globalisation. So with all this combined disaffection, people are in search of an answer. Because there is disaffection, there is frustration and violence. There is envy. If you live a life which I envy, it will certainly inspire violence in me. A spiritually decadent life also creates envy in others. The West has to think of that and discover how to live a life that does not create envy and inspire the demon in others. The roots of terrorism are less in somebody's religion, and more in the lives of people that create a life of envy and violence. These are the roots.

We had a dialogue on terrorism and on the idea of *swaraj*, an ideal state where nonviolence flows in all activities of life, which gives individuals and communities real sovereignty, power and identity. Where an individual's identity is retained and transcended, his sectoral identity sublimates into a larger identity. Nonviolence, I find, is all about that, because the human being has a quest to sublimate his identity from smaller to higher, and at the same time to retain the power and dignity of the unique identity. He aims to submerge himself, to see himself reflected in as large an identity as possible, to see his identity reflected in his community, his community's identity in his national identity, and his national identity in his global identity. If I don't see the reflection of my identity in any of these higher planes, then I'm going to reject those planes and be adverse to them. These are the problems. There are multiple problems. I am just glossing over these things.

So, this was the dialogue. Then people started organising public meetings in various towns. We had very good public meetings on this 9/11. And all this 9/11 business is not about creating tolerance. We used to talk a lot about tolerance and intolerance. Not anymore. My basic business, I always say, is to create intolerance. My basic quest is to create disaffection—disaffection towards the evil that modern civilisation is creating and imposing on people, its exploitative nature. But this disaffection must be sublimated into finding an answer in such a way that you don't become the same as those you are fighting against. You must not demonise yourself, but rather liberate yourself from that. Therefore, we talk of nonviolence. We talk of compassion and oneness. We say that civilisation is a curse even to Westerners, and even to those Indians who have become agents of this civilisation. However, as people, everyone throughout the world is one and the same. They are the extended self of myself. This is what our religion teaches us: *aham Brahma asmi, tat twam asi*. (I am Thou, I am the Brahma). This is the teaching of religions, but this teaching doesn't flow in life today. Mahatma Gandhi brings this dialogue of essential spiritual culture into the political field, the economic field,

the cultural and intellectual field, and the moral field.

Essentially, the teachings of Islam are against materialism. This is unique. I tell my Hindu friends that we cannot fight modern civilisation if we fight amongst ourselves. It was only when Hindus and Muslims joined forces that they were able to deliver us from colonial rule. But in fighting amongst ourselves, we won't be able to deliver ourselves from the forces of modern enslavement in the name of a civilising mission, because both religions are essentially anti-materialist. In my own small study of Islam, I found this. Both have wrestled with this problem of how to contain and restrain the quest of human desire, the materialist quest of human beings, how to sublimate. Both found an answer in the same thing: devotion. If a human becomes devotional, his energies are sublimated into devotion and complete surrender. Islam demands a complete surrender to God. There are scholars of Islam here, and I ask you to excuse me if my comments reflect my ignorance. They may reflect my ignorance, but at the same time they reflect my aspiration for Islam. My Islamic friends, this is what I wish it to be like. This is my interpretation.

So both religions have found the same answer to materialism. When materialism grows, the pandering to the desires, the pandering to the ego, the pandering to the self increases, and then one becomes a demon. The book *Hind Swaraj* defines *swaraj* as the ideal nonviolent culture of democracy. Mahatma Gandhi points out—and this is what I had to bring to our Muslim friends—that this modern state, this modern civilisation that is universal today—and I won't say this modern civilisation is only Western, it is equally Indian—he says that it is satanic, according to the teachings of Prophet Mohammad, and it is Kali Yuga, the Dark Age, according to Hinduism. We have the same vision of the forces of evil that create degradation of the spiritual being, the spiritual self, the human being in his upward flight, his godward flight. We have the same vision. Professor Douglass, I am very interested in your work with madrasas. Islam teaches anti-materialism at a spiritual level. And

when anti-materialism is combined with devotion to faith, it creates strength. It creates disaffection.

This exactly is the disaffection Mahatma Gandhi created among Indians over colonial rule, the civilisation that colonial rule mediated and the new culture that was implanted in India. This exactly is the spiritual and religious disaffection Mahatma Gandhi created, but he created a secular politics of it. So you may create disaffection towards the materialist civilisation, toward materialism, but where is the secular politics of it? And if there is no secular politics of it, then this disaffection will take the shape of anger and violence. I said, 'Look, in our own villages, in your vicinity, in your neighbourhood, almost half of the small and medium-sized farmers are artisans. They are losing their wherewithal day and night and they are being pauperised. They are being thrown onto the pavement. The dignified means of earning a livelihood is being snatched away during this process of globalisation, this process of Westernisation, this process of modernisation.' Then there is this teaching in Islam. You teach people how to rise up against repression. Do you also interpret the way they're losing out to modernism as a spiritual repression? No, you don't. The same is true of Hinduism. But at least, in Islam, a child has a facility to receive religious education; in Hinduism there is really no facility. One learns in the family or in the environment. So if the religious teachers and schools are incapable today of interpreting these various forms of repression of human beings, then they are not doing their job properly.

This is what Mahatma Gandhi did in this book *Hind Swaraj*. Therefore, I call today's religion of religions *Swaraj* and *Dharma*. Dharma is the term for religion in truth and godliness, the way to cultivate the divine attributes of a human being, and the way to neutralise the demonic attributes we have inside. If this is the realm of religious teaching—bringing spirituality to the forefront of human conduct—then what sort of secular education must we have out of that? We have created this dialogue. Then we confront. We have very good public meetings on that, and a number of people flock. Out of these

public meetings, some people become interested. We select people who want to go forward in this way of thinking and doing. Then, we have one- or two-day sessions, consultations and dialogues on the idea of *swaraj*. Again, out of this, we select those who want to go even further into this dialogue. Then, we have a complete four-day session on this seminal book by Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, which was a text of the freedom movement. It is the key to understanding the basic philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

If you want an answer to this demeaning image that is being created in order to destroy you, then take to nonviolence, which is our legacy. Therefore, on the day of 9/11, let there be people who would pledge to nonviolence and become members of a community-based nonviolent intervention force, who would work at the community level, who would work in their neighbourhoods to unite people. In all instances of repression, injustice and strife—whether caste-based, community-based or religion-based—these people would mediate through nonviolent means and bring people together rather than allow the forces of division to polarise people along the fault lines of caste, community, religion, etc. So we must create this force of active nonviolence.

Two years back, we had a first batch of 56 people who were trained in this. They had undergone this dialogue on *Swaraj*. There were 300 or more participants in the first year. My wife and I are a team and we have a very small band of people doing this experiment with us. So we can't reach everywhere, but wherever we have reached, we have found such a tremendous response that it was just unbelievable. My own disappointment about the growth of the Gandhian movement in India—the movement for truth, justice and nonviolence—has vanished ever since we started on this course. We faced the problems and questions. For example, one of the biggest stereotypes many people face is that Islam was born with the sword, that the Prophet Mohammed took to the sword. I was confronted with this by a very senior clergyman who is a very important interpreter of basic texts. He said, 'Look,

how could you bring nonviolence to us? We believe in the power of the sword. Even the Prophet took to the sword.' Then I told him, 'Why don't you take to the sword? Take to the sword and become a prophet. If the prophethood of the Prophet came through the power of the sword, then I would like to take the sword if I will become a prophet by the sword.' They had no answer to this. The prophethood of the Prophet came through 13 years of penance. If you look at the life of the Prophet, he asked his followers to love their detractors. Even in this discussion of *Hind Swaraj*, this came up from many people. Then we said, 'Look, if prophethood came to the Prophet through the sword, just find out.' And then everyone started giving the example of how the Prophet behaved when a lady would always throw dirt on him as he went down the street to his office. And one day, the dirt was not thrown on him and he went into that house to find out if that lady was all right. This was his nonviolence. This is what gave him the prophethood.

My advice to other Hindus and Muslims is that, okay, we may have a hundred differences. My wife and I differ on almost everything. We are just the opposite of each other, people think. But then there is something, one or two things, maybe three things, or maybe only one thing, which keeps us together as one. Why do we play on the small differences and not on the essential unity among religions, among religious ideas, among the spiritual core of all religions and of our identity?

Thank you all. I have taken too much time, and I am sorry, but if you have any questions, I would be happy to stay. This is part of the story of the type of dialogue we are involved in. We are also involved in similar dialogues with Hindus, through writings and so on. We are in the same process of enrolling people into a movement of nonviolence, because nonviolence must come to the fore through moral forces, through the idea of what is essential religiosity and so on. So I say that I am using religion, but I am not using religion. I'm not a religious person at all. I believe in God, but in a normal sense of the term, I wouldn't be called a religious person. Thank you.



FRANCESC ROVIRA

THE INTERRELIGIOUS CENTRE OF BARCELONA AND UNESCOCAT'S OTHER EXPERIENCES WITH CATALAN MUNICIPALITIES

This presentation will give an outline of the work of Unescocat with several Catalan municipalities regarding prevention, mediation and transformation of conflicts having to do with religious diversity. These may be interreligious in nature, although frequently only one of the parties involved is primarily defined by its religious profile. The main focus will be on the work carried out on behalf of the City of Barcelona at the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona, although I will also briefly address the experiences of Badalona, Lleida and Blanes.

A preliminary note is needed concerning the use of the term 'mediation'. There is a narrow sense of the term, which refers only to those processes managed by professionally trained mediators, who scrupulously follow standard mediation protocols. Many professional mediators advocate this restricted use. At the other end, there is the extremely generous use of the term, by which any process involving dialogue skills is considered mediation. I reject this latter option because, in my view, widening the scope so much ends up voiding the term of its own specificity. However, I am not sure we should abide by the strictest sense outlined above. I am inclined to widen the semantic field of the term 'mediation' in order to do justice to a relatively common use, which acknowledges that whenever a certain 'culture of mediation' is applied in dealing with a conflict situation, mediation is already in place. What I mean is that if the way forward from a conflict situation is spelled out mainly by the parties involved rather than by a third party, and if the emphasis is placed as much on the process as on the final outcome, then the spirit of mediation is there. For many, this can be naturally called 'mediation' (or maybe 'imperfect mediation', but mediation nevertheless), even if there is no professional mediator involved or some

unorthodox mediation practices are used in the process.

The Interreligious Centre of Barcelona

The Interreligious Centre of Barcelona is a municipal service devoted specifically to the handling of local affairs having to do with religious organisations or issues. Its name is slightly misleading, as a substantive portion of the portfolio has to do not with relations between different religious groups, but with bilateral issues between a religious community and the municipality or other nonreligious actors. The office falls under the Civil Rights Department, and is run by two full-time and two part-time employees. This staff is provided by Unescocat, which won the tender put out by Barcelona's City Council in May 2005.⁹

One of the *raisons d'être* of the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona is to facilitate the enjoyment of the right to freedom of conscience and religion. The City of Barcelona is one of the initial signatories of the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, whose Article III.3 states:

'Freedom of conscience and of individual and collective religion is guaranteed by the municipal authorities to all citizens. Within the limits of the national legislation, the municipal authorities do everything necessary to ensure such rights.'

It must be stressed that there is a clear understanding that the right to religious freedom is not an absolute right which might take

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The practice of outsourcing certain municipal services is not uncommon in Barcelona's City Council.

precedence over other human rights or over the human rights of others. But given this need to strike a balance between rights, and staying within the framework of the laws and guiding principles in force in Barcelona (such as the refusal to provide public funding for worship), both more affirmative and more restrictive policies and guidelines are possible. Both outlooks, the more affirmative and the more restrictive, might be legal and legitimate, because the idea of what makes the perfect balance between rights is, to a significant extent, subjective. But one of the roles of the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona is to facilitate decisions which involve a greater degree of religious freedom, as well as a greater degree of positive coexistence between citizens holding differing fundamental beliefs (whether religious or secular).

This clearly implies that there are obstacles and difficulties having to do with the exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and religion and with a good coexistence of beliefs. Small conflicts do indeed emerge. Sometimes they take place with the municipality itself, in the context of the ordinary dealings between religious organisations and the local administration.¹⁰ As in any other area or with any other kind of constituency, this might be to a certain extent inevitable, but in any case the need is there for mediation within the municipality. Sometimes there are significant misunderstandings that require reestablishing communication between a religious community and a particular municipal office. Sometimes there are issues on which the municipality can act in a discretionary manner, but where it is desirable to come to an agreed decision rather than an imposed one. Also, it must be admitted, some civil servants may have an unjustified tendency to restrict religious freedom. In all these instances, the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona steps in to

favour solutions which can be acceptable to both parties.

Other conflicts take place between a religious community and its neighbourhood. This may occur for a number of reasons: noise levels during worship, limited availability of parking space in the area, crowding (which may be perceived as intimidating or simply annoying), or plain rejection on racist or similar grounds. Mediation processes are initiated by the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona on all such occasions. Also, mediation may be needed between the owner of a building being used as a place of worship and the community that rents it. Given the lack of public funding for places of worship and extremely high rent prices in Barcelona, this might be a much-needed service (of course, due respect is given to the owner's income expectations, which are obviously shaped by the market). Mediation is also carried out between a religious community and nonreligious civil society organisations (such as neighbours' associations, which are very strong in Barcelona and generally very secular in their outlook) in order to overcome prejudice and find common ground on which to build constructive partnerships of some kind. Sometimes mediation is between different religious communities, either because there is some kind of tension between them, or because there might be a common interest to be discovered (such as when one community agrees to share the premises of its place of worship with a community in need of a meeting place, usually by splitting costs).

Maybe the City Council could do without all these efforts. Why does it spend human resources on this? First, because it has a duty to ensure that religious freedom is respected and to solve in the best possible manner those conflicts it has on the table, but also because Barcelona's local authorities see it as a good mid-term and long-term strategy to foster trust, good coexistence and social cohesion. This facilitation of religious freedom focuses on transforming existing conflicts, but it also focuses on preventing potential conflicts from becoming real. The main thing is that religious freedom is respected and that the City Council responds

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These may cover areas such as the establishment of places of worship; occasional access to public facilities (e.g. auditoriums, meeting rooms); outdoor activities in public places such as parks or squares; proselytising in the street; morgues and cemeteries; grants for non-worship activities; or certain tax exemptions.

adequately to conflicts (and, inasmuch as possible, that it foresees them and acts beforehand), but sometimes it is just as important that people *feel* this is the case. Fostering a sense of inclusion and public recognition of the citizens' most intimate convictions, particularly with regard to minority religions, is a preventive tool. Failing to do so may result in a perception of the local authorities and of society at large as being hostile to one's religious group, a perception which may in turn foster a reverse animosity against both the City Council and wider society.

Still, a little self-examination is needed here. Recognition of one's beliefs has its limits (what we refer to as the need to balance my right to religious freedom with other rights), and this is not always understood or welcome. Paradoxically, by trying to facilitate things and carrying out an exercise of mutual recognition with the aim of fostering greater social cohesion, one might be stimulating more or greater demands which, if they cannot be satisfied, may generate frustration and rejection. Religious organisations welcome the fact that the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona helps in the kind of situations outlined above, and that greeting messages are sent on the occasion of the most significant holidays for each religious tradition (a trivial but highly appreciated gesture of recognition). But it is equally true that this raises the communities' expectations with regard to the City Council, and in some cases they might refuse to accept the limits placed on religious freedom. These ambivalent dynamics can only be handled adequately if a sustained relationship of trust is developed with each community.

Before moving on to other Catalan cities, I would like to stress another aspect of the work of the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona—one with a more clearly interreligious dimension. Article III.4 of the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City states that 'the cities encourage mutual tolerance between believers and non-believers, as well as between the various religions'. It is important to acknowledge and respect particular identities, but there is a risk of overstating them

and favouring communitarianisation. To avoid this, the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona organises activities such as talks or open-door programmes for places of worship, aimed at informing and raising awareness about the existence of diverse religions and beliefs in the city. Direct contact between communities, 'fraternisation' or cooperation activities, and interreligious dialogue are also supported, although in these cases leadership is preferably given to civil society, and only exceptionally (as in certain neighbourhoods) does the City Council take the lead.

Badalona, Lleida and Blanes

Besides Barcelona, other Catalan municipalities are working through Unescocat in the field of religious diversity, social cohesion and mediation. Unescocat has a contract with the municipality of Badalona (population 215,000, next to Barcelona). Based on a number of in-depth visits and interviews, Unescocat is preparing a report detailing areas of the city with interreligious or intercultural conflict (or potential for conflict). In several cases, preventive interventions or mediation are being planned. Unescocat is also planning community open houses, public panel discussions, dialogue workshops for youth, and an annual interreligious and intercultural gathering at the city level. Consideration is being given to the possibility of establishing a Council for Citizen Dialogue between Beliefs and Convictions, a sort of citywide interreligious council.

Along the same lines, Unescocat, through the UNESCO Association for Interreligious Dialogue and the Catalan Network of Interreligious Dialogue Organisations and Groups, advises and takes part in Lleida's Municipal Assembly of Religions (Lleida is about 160 km from Barcelona and has a population of 125,000). This Assembly, convened by the City Council, brings together representatives of the various religions in Lleida. The Assembly has delivered a clear public message of conciliation and commitment to human rights in the face of several incidents that generated tension and even hostility towards the Muslim community. In this regard, it has probably helped prevent the situation from

deteriorating. UNESCO and UN-HABITAT, through their joint working group on 'Urban Policies and the Right to the City', are taking serious interest in the experience of interreligious councils like this one or the one planned for Badalona.

Finally, in the town of Blanes (population 38,000, about 80 km from Barcelona), Unescocat is assisting the local authorities with religious diversity. In the initial stage, the focus is on drawing a 'religious map' of the town, which will take into account aspects like the relationships between the various religious communities and their expectations concerning the municipality or the local community at large. A public debate on religious diversity and interreligious dialogue, with the participation of both local and outside speakers, and an exhibition introducing the basics of several religions, are also part of the first steps towards addressing the new realities of Blanes. Religious diversity affects both large and small municipalities.



JEAN-MARC CHARRON

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN QUÉBEC: ON THE DUTY OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Today I will speak of religious diversity in Québec and the manner in which it is handled, in particular the policy of reasonable accommodation, the implementation of which involves certain difficulties similar to those encountered by other societies. This context calls for unprecedented practices in dialogue and mediation.

Québec's socio-religious landscape: history and current situation¹¹

Religious diversity is nothing new to Québec. It has been present since the onset of colonisation in the 17th century, just as it has marked the region's history from the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons to the most recent waves of immigration. Moreover, it has demonstrated variable profiles and no less variable modes of management.

The first French people to tread the soil of what was to become New France encountered a great number of indigenous nations, each with their particular religious traditions comprised of mythologies and rituals illustrating the responsibility of humanity to the universe and in which the shaman played the role of a gifted intermediary between humanity and the spiritual world. The colonial perspective did not predispose people, with a few exceptions, to take this cultural and religious difference into account: Europeans, convinced they were bringing civilisation to the 'savages', sought above all to

convert the natives and impose Catholicism rather than understand the specificity and wealth of these traditions. Religious diversity was thus settled through the eradication of pagan beliefs and the imposition of the 'true' religion. There is nothing original about this practice, which was general to colonial endeavours until their downfall in the mid-20th century.

This indigenous presence is still relevant today; it manifests itself through the many initiatives to revive ancestral traditions and is part of a vast movement of identity assertion which translates not only into various forms of territorial claims by native peoples but also by the legitimate desire for their cultures, languages and spiritual traditions to be recognised. This is the case in Canada as it is among our North American neighbours and among South Americans as well. The indigenous movements of identity assertion comprise part of the current landscape of religious diversity with which we must coexist, although its voice tends to become lost in the ensemble of other identity claims, in particular those of incoming immigrants.

Catholicism quickly became the official religion of the new colony. The British conquest (1759), though it introduced the Anglican version of Protestantism, did not change the situation, indeed, quite to the contrary. Political and above all religious leaders skilfully negotiated with the British authorities to maintain Catholic institutions in the former territory of New France. This contributed to marking the Québécois identity as French and Catholic for a long time, even to the present. It also marked the Canadian dynamic that still divides us today: the French Catholics (essentially living in Québec) on the one hand, and the Anglo-Protestants (the rest of Canada) on the other. This

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This section is partially based on research carried out in preparation for the Religious Affairs Committee report *Rites et symboles religieux à l'école. Défis éducatifs de la diversité / Religious Rites and Symbols in Schools. The Educational Challenges of Diversity*, Brief to the Minister, Ministry of Education, Government of Québec, 2003.

rift is deeply anchored in the social imaginary. Even today, despite the demographic changes of the past few decades, many Quebecers can hardly imagine that there is a significant Anglo-Catholic community (essentially living in Montréal) and that there are also Francophone Protestants (especially in new communities of an Evangelical tendency). In order to gain some understanding of the dynamics underlying the matter of religious diversity here, one must never lose sight of the fact that the religious issue is intricately related to the linguistic issue, and that these two ingredients—already explosive in and of themselves—remain associated with fundamental identity issues. Québécois nationalism long combined the defence of the French language and the Catholic religion. And though today the religious identity of most Quebecers is lost in the mist of secularisation, this component has never strayed too far from the social imaginary. The current debate on the duty of reasonable accommodation is probably no exception.

It is within this context of national assertion that the Catholic Church consolidated itself in the second half of the 19th century and extended its influence to all spheres of social life. This caused the historian Nive Voisine to make the following statement:

By a curious paradox, this church emerged as a national church and political power in the second half of the 19th century, precisely at a time when, in the Western world, states were taking their distance from churches and laypeople were ousting clerics from any profane posts they were exercising¹²

The Church then owned numerous educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities. The establishment from 1856 to 1869 of the Public Instruction Council—composed of a Protestant committee and a Catholic committee with bishops as ex-officio members—gave the

Catholic Church full control of the Francophone educational system. The network of hospitals and social welfare institutions was also directed by the Catholic Church, which maintained it through the support of religious communities that moved to or were established in Québec as of the first half of the 19th century. The omnipresence of Catholicism endured until the early 1960s, that is, until what we call the ‘Quiet Revolution’, the founding myth of Québécois modernity. The control of the Catholic Church over primary and secondary education lasted until June 2000, at which point the Québec Government proceeded to ‘deconfessionalise’ (or secularise, yet this term was never used!) the school system. This process of secularisation lasted three years, although it was the object of public debate for over thirty years. It was accompanied by the reflections of a taskforce on the place of religion at school and a parliamentary commission that produced an unprecedented number of memoirs and had 11 days of hearings, finally resulting in a law adopted in June 2000. Within the framework of this process, Catholics and Protestants alike retained the privilege of a confessional religious education until this privilege was definitively abolished in June 2005. This reveals to what point, even in the late 1990s—on the threshold of the third millennium—the issue of religion as a component of national identity played and continues to play an important role in Québec. Even today, it still tinges debate on how to manage religious diversity.

But let’s return briefly to the components of Québec’s religious profile. Protestantism, even if it was minimally present during the French colonial period, truly took root with the British conquest. For a certain period, it was the religion of the Anglophone conqueror and thus perceived as the religion to be feared or fought.

After several decades—essentially after World War II—Québec’s socio-religious landscape gradually began to change. First came the arrival of a Jewish community from Europe which was to primarily integrate into the Anglophone community. Then, in the late 1960s, came a community of Maghreb immigrants who would primarily identify with the

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Nive Voisine, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois. Le XXe siècle, 1898-1940*, Volume 1, Montréal, Boréal Express, 1984, p. 41

Francophone community. Protestant communities of Evangelical tradition then settled here, to be joined by 'old-stock' Quebecers, who saw in these communities an opportunity to rediscover the religious experience. Immigration from Southwest Asia beginning in the 1970s led to the emergence of a significant Buddhist community, located in particular in Greater Montreal, as is the case with traditions from India (Hinduism and Sikhism) and from Arab countries (Islam and Eastern Christianity).

Though the great majority of Quebecers still define themselves as Catholic, today's Québec (above all in major urban areas), like all other Western societies, resembles a religious checkerboard where people of diverse traditions rub elbows with one another on a daily basis. This coexistence usually occurs in relative peace or at least in reciprocal tolerance, with people keeping to themselves. Moreover, this diversification has occurred in a society that underwent extremely quick secularisation: within the space of only 30 years, Québec went from being a society dominated by the Catholic Church to being one characterised by religious indifference among 'old-stock' Quebecers. Religiosity has become a taboo subject that no one mentions unless it is derisively or to reiterate one's anger against an institution perceived as dominating or castrating.

Since the late 1990s, certain events have revived religious issues, putting into play the elements of a dynamic familiar to a number of European societies: identity claims by individuals and religious groups of immigrant origin, defensive reactions by the majority accompanied by appeals to the Québécois roots and identity (often understood as Catholic and Francophone), appeals by some to principles of secularity that, in Québec, are not established by any legislation, appeals by others to the Charter of Rights and Liberties of the Canadian Constitution, not to mention feminist demands that also fall under this debate. This is a brief summary of the ingredients of religious diversity in our society today. How should we manage it? The notion of reasonable accommodation forms part of the legal practice of interpretation of the Canadian and

Québec Charters of Rights and Freedoms. Though it ensures the right to equality and respect for difference by protecting individuals against possible discrimination, including indirect discrimination, it does pose certain problems. What are they?

The problems of reasonable accommodation

In 2002, within the context of the secularisation of the school system, the parents of a young Sikh from the Montréal region went to court to oblige the school board and the school their child attended to authorise him to wear his kirpan at school (the kirpan is a traditional knife that Sikhs must wear once they are of age). This demand conflicted with school regulations, which, understandably, prohibit all weapons on school premises. The parents evoked the fundamental freedoms recognised by the Canadian and Québec Charters with regard to religion. In its first ruling on the case, the Superior Court of Québec authorised the young Sikh to wear his kirpan at school but under very strict conditions. This ruling was based on the notion of reasonable accommodation forming part of Canadian and Québécois legal practice with regard to the fundamental rights established in the charters. The public prosecutor of Québec and the school board appealed against the ruling on grounds of security. In the spring of 2006, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the Québec Supreme Court's earlier ruling and, on the grounds of reasonable accommodation, obliged the school board in question to authorise the kirpan to be worn under strict conditions that respect the right to security¹³

In April 2003, the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations filed a complaint with the Québec Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission—the organism in charge of applying and ensuring compliance with the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms—on behalf of 113 students of Muslim origin against ETS, an engineering school. The content of the complaint: a demand for a place

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Multani vs. Marguerite-Bourgeois School Board, (2006) 1 R.C.S. 256, 2006 CSC 6.

to pray and recognition of the association of Muslim students. In the spring of 2006, also on the grounds of the principle of reasonable accommodation, the Commission obliged ETS to make a space available to the students allowing them 'to pray on a regular basis, under conditions that respect their right to safeguard their dignity'.¹⁴

In both of these cases regarding the appellant's access to the exercise of a fundamental right—in this case, religious freedom—the courts issued rulings favourable to the appellants on the basis of reasonable accommodation. Let's consider this notion.

In Canadian law, the duty of reasonable accommodation—and it is a duty—arises from the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It has an equivalent in Québec relative to the application of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.¹⁵ Its function is to help enforce equal rights and the principle of non-discrimination with regard to both direct and indirect discrimination. The principle is as follows: if a law or regulation that is not discriminatory in and of itself has the effect of hampering an individual from exercising a fundamental right (which is called indirect discrimination), the institution in question (whether public or private) is obliged to provide reasonable *accommodation*—that is, a specific solution that would correct the discriminatory effect associated with the application of said law or regulation. The duty of reasonable accommodation thus consists, in the words of the jurist José Woehrling, of 'a duty, for those originating a discrimination, of using all reasonable means to relieve the victims of the

indirect discrimination'.¹⁶ This duty is not absolute. It should be applied without imposing undue hardship upon the institution in question, where hardship is understood to mean excessive expenses or impossible adjustments to schedule or location. This duty concerns the exercise not only of religious freedom but of all fundamental rights. A number of Québec and Canadian court rulings in the field of the right to work have appealed to this duty in cases concerning adapting the workplace to the handicapped or adjusting work hours or particular tasks for pregnant women. Finally, let us emphasise that the duty of reasonable accommodation obliges both parties in a particular court case to negotiate in good faith in order to find a solution that suits all.

The general economy of the law and of the duty to provide reasonable accommodation are based on the principles of equality of all and on those of social and cultural integration in the spirit of Canadian policy's multicultural perspective.

Over the past few months, the duty of reasonable accommodation has been taken to task by several groups and opinion leaders in Québec. The complaints involved not the duty insofar as a general principle but—and this is particularly interesting to observers of the religious situation—its application with regard to the exercise of freedom of religion, for instance, wearing distinctive religious symbols or adapting schedules, locations, or menus to specific diets, etc. Québec's Minister of Education therefore had good reason to establish a committee of experts last October to examine the matter of application of reasonable accommodation in the school environment.

At a time when Québec believed it had finished with religious issues—that the secularisation process and the claims by the proponents of secularity had finally won the battle against the last vestiges of confessionality (understood as religious

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Québec Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission, Ruling COM-510-5.2.1.

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This section is based on research by José Woehrling, *L'obligation d'accommodement raisonnable et l'adaptation de la société à la diversité religieuse*, *Revue de droit de McGill/McGill Law Journal*, 43 (1998) 325; and *La place de la religion à l'école publique*, a study commissioned by the Committee on Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, Government of Québec, Autumn 2002.

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José Woehrling, *L'obligation d'accommodement raisonnable...*, op. cit. p. 332.

schools)—religion suddenly resurfaced through an unexpected channel. Bad news: religiosity is not dead. Moreover, it is becoming openly consolidated, as it is protected by a legal framework that is not about to give ground, the Canadian Charter being an integral part of the Constitution.

This debate raises a number of major issues that we must consider if we wish to avoid importing conflicts to our province which we have thus far been spared. I will briefly touch upon them here.

The issue of fundamental rights: that of religious freedom, of course, but also that of gender equality. In Québec, this issue is highly sensitive and does not only have a legal dimension. Today, it is an integral part of our social values and practices. The debate on whether the veil should be worn by Muslim women as well as certain practices of gender discrimination (use of swimming pools, prenatal courses, demands relative to certain medical practices, etc.) regularly bring this to the fore.

The issue of the role of religion in the public sphere: This debate is not specific to Québec but takes on particular significance here considering that, not long ago, the Catholic Church dominated the public sphere while interfering in the private family sphere, not to mention in people's consciences. To a certain extent, Québec has not settled its accounts with religion, which does not always facilitate the exercise of critical judgement in this field.

Recent debate on reasonable accommodation has, above all, taken recent immigrant communities to task. They have become the target of general discontent, to say the least. Within the context of a society that often feels its identity is being threatened, that must regularly defend its specificity in an Anglophone ocean, the temptation of exclusion is never very far and xenophobe tendencies can always crop up. To ignore this in managing conflicts related to religious diversity would be naive.

This debate also brings to light a number of problems relative to the religious issue in Québec

and its influence on our manner of approaching diversity. Once again, I will only briefly enumerate them here. The first problem concerns our dearth of intelligence regarding the religious situation, which, speaking of religion, Élie Barnavi calls 'the blind spot' of the Western world in his recent work, *Les religions meurtrières*¹⁷. The result of the rapid secularisation of the Québec society, this amnesia and religious illiteracy, even among our most illustrious scholars, often renders us powerless to understand what is involved in the religious experience, all the more so if it is from a different tradition. We suffer from a dearth of intelligence, above all in matters concerning the relation between religion and society, religion and politics and religion and the public sphere. It is urgent to consider this issue in Québec and to develop and disseminate a certain expertise in the field.

The second problem, most likely an outcome of the first, concerns what I would call the 'juridification' of religious issues or the tendency to go to court to settle litigation relative to religious expression in the public sphere. Lacking the skills to understand and negotiate this explosive terrain, people prefer to turn to judges to settle cases and impose solutions based solely on law. The work of jurists is essential. The law defines the limits of the social sphere in which we move. But it does not exhaust all possibilities. When a court settles a dispute—and within our current legal framework, reasonable accommodation will always favour the demands for recognition of religious specificity—the actors in an environment must continue to live together in their difference. On-site arbitration remains difficult and filled with pitfalls. Recent debate reveals the importance of offering the different communities involved the means of managing differences before they degenerate into conflict.

This brings us to the third problem I wish to mention: that of religious mediation. I would not call it interreligious mediation because it is not always

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Élie Barnavi, *Les religions meurtrières*, Paris, Flammarion, 2006.

a matter of coexistence among different religious groups. The challenge in Québec, as seems to be the case in other societies, lies rather in integrating religiosity into the public sphere and the fostering the community's capacity to come to terms with the various religious identities that seek to exist openly in the public sphere. How can we reconcile institutional objectives, principles of neutrality in religious issues, the legal framework and religious expression in the area of management practices, for instance? A great deal remains to be done on this score.

Educational issues

I will end this overly brief presentation on the situation in Québec with a likewise rapid discussion of changes occurring in the educational field. Earlier I mentioned the deconfessionalisation of our school system. Within the framework of these changes, confessional religious education (i.e. Catholic and Protestant) has been replaced by a compulsory programme on ethics and religious culture for all youth in primary and secondary school. This programme, which will become effective as of September 2008, not only emphasises the transfer of knowledge in the field of religion—which is essential in the context of religious deculturation occurring in parallel to the globalisation of beliefs—but also the comprehension of the religious experience and personal stances with regard to one's own belief system (whether religious or not). In addition, this new programme emphasises learning how to dialogue, an essential skill in the new cultural and religious environment.

In a brief submitted to the Ministry of Education, in view of the drafting of a bill of law on these programmes (which was passed into law in June 2005), the Committee on Religious Affairs that I presided at the time defined the orientations that these programmes should take as follows:

Knowledge and recognition of the other:
Specific knowledge of other beliefs but also learning to practice recognition going well beyond simple tolerance;

One's personal stance within the universe of beliefs:

Understood as the capacity to situate oneself subjectively vis-à-vis belief systems;

The capacity to reflect with regard to one's own convictions:

Developing a critical sense;

A civic sense in social assertion of identity:

Awareness of the social reality (of others) in the assertion of one's own beliefs.

One of the current challenges of cultural and religious diversity for the ensemble of our societies is our capacity to peacefully coexist in a plural space. The new ethics and religious culture programmes in Québec are intended as a response to this challenge, manifested as a contribution to civic education, which should be based on greater knowledge of the democratic values of our societies and of the fundamental rights guaranteed by our charters.

The exercise of interreligious mediation—and, insofar as we are concerned in Québec, the intelligent implementation of reasonable accommodation—should be based on improved intelligence in the religious landscape. In this regard, the search for a religious education adapted to new socio-religious contexts should be an imperative in any society.

Thank you for your attention



FAZAL RAHIM

GOOD PRACTICES IN INTERRELIGIOUS PREVENTION AND MEDIATION OF CONFLICTS IN URBAN AREAS

The Metropolitan Borough of Oldham has a population of 230,000, with 10% of the population from the black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The economy of the Borough was traditionally based on the cotton industry, and for a long time the town was a leader in the textile industry and innovation. Oldham is home to around 25,000 Muslims, mainly originating from South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan). This figure is expected to double to 50,000 by 2020, with very little change in the overall population.

The end of World War II led to the independence of many nations, some of which later began to compete with the United Kingdom in textiles. This affected towns like Oldham. Ironically, it was for this very industry that immigration was encouraged from the former colonies.

The first immigrant communities to settle in 20th-century Oldham were the Eastern European immigrants from Poland, Ukraine and Yugoslavia after World War II. In the 1950s and 60s, immigration was encouraged into Britain from the former colonies. Many immigrant workers from Pakistan and the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) settled in Oldham, working long hours and doing jobs that the indigenous community did not want to do, in order to earn money so they could send it to their families in their respective countries. With such a diverse population from many different parts of the world, speaking many languages and practising different faiths and beliefs, Oldham's industry declined. Many mills closed, leading to job losses for thousands of people.

It was around this time that myths started appearing about Muslims. I will give two examples of these. First, when the local authority decided to

upgrade the streetlights in the town centre, the old lamp posts had a symbol of an owl. Immediately, letters started appearing in the local press blaming the Muslim community, as it was against Muslim religion. The second example is the mugging of a pensioner by two Asian youths which was declared a race attack. This myth had no basis in reality, but contributed to the causes of the May 2001 riots. Around this time, there were attacks on members of the Asian community on days when the local football team was playing.

These and many other incidents, including attacks on white youths by the Asian youths, had a very negative impact on relationships between the town's white and Asian communities. The far-right British National Party was ever-present throughout this painful period for our town, stoking the fire of hate and peddling its propaganda of division.

Mr. David Ritchie was appointed by the government to prepare a report on the causes of the riots. In consultations with the Oldham community, he suggested creating a formal platform by which faith leaders could meet regularly. The Glodwick and Clarksfield Inter-Community Forum, an organisation doing similar work on a small scale, provided a good model to work from.

The Oldham Interfaith Forum draws its membership from the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu Jewish and Muslim communities. Members are nominated by Churches Together in Oldham, the Oldham Mosques Council, the Indian Association of Oldham and the town's Buddhist Centre.

The Forum is represented in the strategic decision-making arena via the Executive and Steering Groups of the Oldham Partnership, the Community

3. Good Practices in Interreligious Prevention and Mediation of Conflicts in Urban Areas

Cohesion Advisory Group and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Partnership.

The Forum has faced many challenges and issues since 2003, including the race attacks and the 7/7 bombings in London. In aftermath of the London bombings, the Forum approached the local authority and proposed a public event in a local park where ordinary people could stand together in solidarity with the people of London. This proved to be a very successful event. Hundreds of people attended, led by the faith communities of Oldham. Tributes to those affected were paid in music, song and prayer. Another example is an attack on a young white man by Asian youths. The Oldham Mosques Council responded immediately by issuing a press release condemning the attack and distancing itself from those responsible. This move contributed to community cohesion and took the air out of the sails of those who seek to divide our communities. The press is an important element in the interfaith arena, and the Forum has fostered a fruitful relationship with the media.

The Forum organises at least four events every year. The biggest is the Festival of Lights held in December to celebrate the festivals of Deepawali (Hinduism), Hanukkah (Judaism) Christmas (Christianity) and Eid-Al-Fitr (Islam). This event gives Oldham residents an opportunity to share each other's festivals by sharing information and involving the faith communities through performances and speeches. Five hundred people attended the 2006 Festival of Lights, which was the maximum capacity. Other events are 'Any Questions on Faith?' and events for Ramadan and the harvest.

Part of the Forum's work is to organise visits to places of worship for schools, colleges the police and local residents. Churches, temples, mosques and synagogues host these visits and are very open in answering questions. It is important for schools to expose their students to these centres of religion and belief. These visits help them understand how and where their fellow students, friends and neighbours practice their religion.

The outcomes of the project thus far are the Oldham Mosques Council, the Oldham Women's Interfaith Network and the Oldham Young People's Interfaith Forum.

Conclusion

This is only a sample of Oldham's interfaith response to the riots of May 2001. From a period of real segregation, the barriers are beginning to fall. Much can still go wrong, but we have begun the work that will at least give us a chance to prevent conflict in the future.



TRAVIS REJMAN

SIX CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION IN CITIES AROUND THE WORLD

Thank you for the opportunity to join this important discussion about building social cohesion in the midst of rapidly growing diversity. Given that each of our cities around the world is increasingly home to people from a wide variety of backgrounds, beliefs and cultures, this is an urgent and crucial discussion that will hopefully lead to an ongoing platform for mutual learning and the sharing of resources.

I believe that the topic of this gathering is both urgent and relevant. Much has already been said about the nature of cities as microcosms of global diversity, where migration and mobility have rapidly made religious and cultural diversity a fact of life in each of our cities. My colleagues here have spoken eloquently about the unique and indispensable role of religious and spiritual communities as crucial actors in building social cohesion through their many assets, including infrastructure, grassroots connections, social services and the moral and ethical framework they can bring to a discussion of relating to 'the other'. Of course, as has been noted many times, the influence of religious and spiritual communities towards social cohesion has been positive and negative, but it undeniably remains a key factor. In addition to valuing this discussion of social cohesion with an emphasis on religious communities, I particularly welcome the focus on cities. Rapid urbanisation has transformed many aspects of our societies. In 1800, only three percent of the world's population lived in cities. Today, for the first time in history, that figure is over fifty percent. In only twenty-five more years, that figure is expected to reach sixty percent. Clearly, religion and urbanisation are two key aspects of understanding and building social cohesion in the world today.

As the context for the six recommendations towards building social cohesion I will offer for your critique and discussion, I'd like to share a brief story about one tragic incident in Chicago that I believe represents the best and the worst responses to the diversity that is a fact of life in each of our cities. In reflecting on this specific story and, in general, on our work with over sixty cities around the world that participate in the Partner Cities Network, I will share these six considerations and then share some information about the work of the Goldin Institute.

As I'm sure you all know, Orthodox Jews don't drive to religious services, as they do not perform any acts of work on the Sabbath. So they walk.

On a Friday night in July 1999 in Rogers Park, a diverse North Side neighbourhood of Chicago, Orthodox rabbis, women, men and children were walking to services when a young man named Benjamin Smith pulled up in his car and opened fire, shooting five adults and one child. He drove on to shoot and kill one African-American man named Ricky Birdsong—a beloved coach of the Northwestern University basketball team—as he was walking with his children. He drove further north and killed two persons of Asian descent. He then drove south to Indiana where he shot a Korean student before taking his own life.

This murderer was a member of a hate group called the World Church of the Creator, whose mission was to 'solve' the 'problem' of diversity by getting rid of those who weren't like them.

Four days after the shooting, there was a moving vigil attended by over 800 residents of the Rogers Park community. I am proud to say that this vigil

was organised by 18 local churches, mosques, synagogues and temples that we had been working with through the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions¹⁸ for the previous four years.

On the platform that evening, Orthodox Jewish leaders were joined by their sisters and brothers who were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Unitarians. At one poignant moment, a Muslim leader named Wahaj Ahmed declared to the group, 'We are all sisters and brothers with our Jewish neighbours. *They* were not gunned down last Friday night. *We all* were.'

The next Friday night, as Orthodox women, men and their families were walking to their synagogues, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs walked in solidarity with them.

This story highlights the best, and the worst, responses to the diversity that surrounds us. People like Benjamin Smith see diversity as a problem to be solved through violence. We see evidence of this approach to diversity every day when we read of conflicts, ethnic cleansing and terrorism.

There are some who teach that we should 'tolerate' each other. We have heard from many participants here about how this approach is better than conflict, but misses a very real and promising opportunity to have positive and enriching relationships with our neighbours.

Others call for assimilation of those who are different from the culture of the majority. This is the traditional 'melting pot' approach. In essence,

this well-meaning approach calls for the cleansing of identities by boiling down our differences to the common denominators set by the majority. In addition to not being very successful, this approach can thwart future efforts towards developing positive relationships.

In the response of the 18 communities who stood in solidarity with their Jewish neighbours, we saw a new approach. They said that diversity was not a problem to be solved, but a source of enrichment.

Through four years of dialogue and engagement, this group came to a very broad understanding of who was included when they said 'we'. I can tell you that this broadened sense of 'we' didn't just happen, and it certainly didn't happen overnight. So, how did it happen?

With some hindsight, we can see a few keys to success for building social cohesion within and among religious communities that I would like to share for your consideration, critique and refinement.

1. First, we started with 'intrareligious' dialogue. It's been my experience that this kind of internal dialogue is both crucial and often lacking in interreligious or intercultural programmes. Each of the eighteen religious and spiritual communities in Rogers Park hosted internal community dialogues to establish pride and comfort in their own identities. As communities, they explored who they were and how they understood 'the other'. They shared and explored the teachings, stories and texts from their traditions that helped to guide them in how to relate to their diverse set of neighbours.
2. Second, the interreligious dialogue and exchanges involved the whole community. Getting 'the people in the pews and on the prayer rugs' in addition to the leaders and the 'interreligious types' is crucial to building a broad and shared sense of social cohesion. It was often more difficult for communities sharing a common heritage (e.g. Protestant and

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The Goldin Institute began in association with the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR) in 2002 to bring together engaged leaders on the frontlines of initiatives for peace, justice and sustainability around the world to form a Partner Cities Network. In September 2005, the Goldin Institute was incorporated as an independent not-for-profit agency based in Chicago, USA. The author is a former director and current volunteer consultant at the CPWR.

Catholic Christians) to have an open discussion than for communities from diverse historical backgrounds (e.g. Muslims and Buddhists).

3. Third, focusing on a place, or 'place-based organising', served this community very well. By envisioning the kind of neighbourhood or city we want to live in together, it created the space for real sharing at a scale where participants felt empowered to achieve something meaningful. Grounded in places where we live, work and pray, and in the lived experience of the people in the room, the issues had a direct 'human face' with first-hand consequences.
4. Fourth, we learnt to balance community building with social action. One of the participants from Rogers Park came to an interesting conclusion a couple years into the project. He said, 'Who we are together is just as important as what we do together.'

The tension between dialogue and action seems to plague interreligious initiatives around the world. Too often, people 'burn out' on dialogue. They wonder if all this is going to amount to is talk with people they already tend to agree with. On the other hand, traditional activism ignores the development of a sense of social or community cohesion, and people can 'burn out' when they feel that social actions are not embedded in, and an expression of, their ethical and moral moorings.

Particularly when unskilled issue activists work with diverse religious and spiritual communities, many participants can feel 'used' as foot soldiers by organisers who are more interested in turnout than in people. Too often, a focus on the number of people obscures a focus on the individuals, especially the ethical or moral dimensions that motivates them to work for change. This is especially true in lower-trust situations where tension and conflict exist between communities. In these situations, organisers will need to provide ample time and a safe forum for diverse participants to get to know each other and build

a sense of trust before they will be able to work meaningfully together.

This tension is similar to the balance between trust and agreement. We all have friends with whom we have real disagreements. Most of us also have experience working with people who we do not trust but with whom we agree on particular issues of common concern. When it comes to building social cohesion, as with whom we choose as friends, I believe that for most people around the world, trust is going to be more important than agreement.

5. Fifth, building social cohesion in our diverse cities will also challenge us to bridge the local and the global. This too is a dynamic—two poles that are seen as separate but need to be kept in creative tension. If all our efforts stay at the city level, we can miss opportunities to learn from other groups and to address shared concerns at a global or systemic level. At the same time, if our efforts stay focused on the global level, we run the risk of becoming disconnected from the lived experience on the ground while issues there go unresolved.
6. Finally, we need to build multi-sector partnerships. While this conference is focused on the interreligious and intercultural dimension of building social cohesion—clearly a key area that deserves to be a focus—I believe that all sectors of society must be engaged if social cohesion is going to be a reality in our cities. Not only do we need dialogue and cooperation between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others, we need these religious and spiritual communities to join hands with government, business, education, science, the media, NGOs and other civic groups if we are going to build a just and cohesive society. We have heard from several participants over the course of these deliberations about the significant impact that policies and programmes led by government and educational sectors have had on relations between groups. Building positive and creative partnerships between these sectors clearly holds

a wealth of untapped potential for building social cohesion and requires more attention.

The Goldin Institute looks forward to collaborating with the participants of this conference and with the organisers at Unescocat to share the insights, good practices and tools uncovered at this conference with our colleagues around the world. The Goldin Institute is dedicated to creating a global forum for engaged individuals and organisations working towards a just and sustainable future. Our mission is to build and support a *Partner Cities Network* that will empower grassroots leaders, organisations and communities from all sectors of society to develop and share the knowledge, tools, skills, networks and inspiration needed to act for the common good within and between their cities. The Institute actively supports leadership development and provides opportunities for collaboration with over 60 participating *Partner Cities* in a rapidly growing network.

The development of the *Partner Cities Network* is one of the unique aspects of our approach to addressing issues that face global and local communities, such as the need to build social cohesion. The *Partner Cities Network* addresses these issues through collaborative efforts between religious and spiritual groups, activists, civic and nongovernmental organisations. Through the Network, these grassroots communities share insights and undertake joint social engagement across cities.

Our work in developing a *Partner Cities Network*, building regional and global links and providing consultative support is guided by the following core principles:

- **Building multi-sector partnerships:** We are committed to facilitating relationships that engage a variety of sectors of civil society, including government, media, education, religion, activists and business leaders. Through these relationships, our participants can work together in partnerships to more effectively create and sustain social change.
- **Engaging metropolitan areas:** The loci of

the Institute and *Partner Cities Network* are metropolitan centres. These centres are microcosms of change and strife, opportunities and challenges. They are also home to a wide array of religious, spiritual and cultural diversity. In the midst of development and expansion, cities find themselves facing many of the same concerns: poverty, HIV/AIDS, community disintegration, inter-group tensions, insufficient infrastructure, corruption and a myriad of other critical issues. By focusing on building relationships within *Partner Cities*, we help individual organisations develop the cooperative capacity to address concrete challenges that are grounded in the lived experience and work of participants. Further, by grounding our work in metropolitan centres where people live and work, meditate and pray, the Goldin Institute and *Partners Cities Network* put a human face on issues and foster effective change at a more feasible scale with greater concrete accomplishments and outcomes.

- **Bridging the local and the global:** While committed to developing and working with the *Partner Cities Network*, we recognise common challenges faced in many cities across the world, such as immigration and social integration, reintegrating child soldiers into communities and creating access to clean drinking water. We create forums for organisations to share best practices and creative approaches—as well as problems particular to specific areas and stumbling blocks—across regions, countries and cities. Such sharing throughout our Network can both address issues in each of our partner cities and inform and inspire global efforts to foment systemic and policy-driven change.
- **Providing concrete tools for social change:** Creative initiatives often fail due to lack of institutional capacities, organisational development, connections and resources. We are committed to providing an array of tools that can be directly applied within the daily realities of our Network participants. These tools focus on sharing creative solutions and best practices, new approaches and methodologies and effective project facilitation and management.

We are currently pursuing a series of long-term projects to provide networking, management, educational and facilitative tools to our participants through the development of an Online Institute. We will develop the Online Institute over the next several years and provide access to a diverse set of materials and tools to Institute participants and other visitors to the site, as well as provide a venue for ongoing Institute projects. The Online Institute will become a space to creatively share tools, methods and ideas across the Goldin Institute Network.

On behalf of the Goldin Institute, I'd again like to thank the organisers for bringing this important forum together. The Goldin Institute stands ready to lend our support to the ongoing communications and partnerships that we hope will result from this gathering. We look forward to sharing the good practices, tools and insight gained from you with our network and to exploring how the Goldin Online Institute might provide a useful communications and management tool for the ongoing discussion towards building a sense of social cohesion in cities around the world.

Thank you.



YEHUDA STOLOV

INTERRELIGIOUS PREVENTION AND MEDIATION OF CONFLICTS IN URBAN AREAS: THE INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER ASSOCIATION

Abstract

The quest for peace is usually perceived as the pursuit of ceasing a situation of war. Other aspects, such as reconciliation or overcoming prejudices, are considered natural outcomes. Consequently, efforts are made mainly in the political field and are limited to those accepting particular political views.

As an alternative, the Interfaith Encounter Association believes that the nonpolitical aspects of the way to peace require special efforts and are not merely a result of political achievements. These efforts are needed after a peace agreement is reached, during the efforts to complete it and even before the political process starts. Moreover, they are essential to the success of any such process.

These efforts should include all those who are aware of the reality of different people living together and of the need to do so peacefully, regardless of political views.

Moreover, in this approach, religion is not the source of the problems and wars. Rather, it can and should play a major role in the solution, as it is an important tool in the construction of defences of peace in people's minds.

This approach is based on the real practical experience of the Interfaith Encounter Association in the Holy Land at its most challenging time in the early 21st century, successfully using interactive interfaith dialogue to include all parts of the respective societies in the construction of peace.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on many years of practical experience with this approach, in active work

towards building human peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East through interactive interfaith dialogue, mainly in the framework of the Interfaith Encounter Association (www.interfaith-encounter.org). The ideas presented herein were not developed in a mere abstract way, as theoretical concepts, but as an ideological infrastructure for action, constantly tested and improved in the activities of the IEA. These ideas both supplied the basis for IEA activities and were influenced by them, evolving as experience was gathered and with every new development. Consequently, this paper focuses on the actual field testing of ideas and supporting them with concrete successes, rather than on theoretical crystallisation and contextualisation. Another consequence is that the description of the actual manifestation of the ideas in the IEA's activities is an integral part of their portrayal in the paper, as are the next stages of the IEA's development and the lessons learnt for other contexts. It is important to emphasise that what worked in the Holy Land from 2000 to 2004 will work in most other places at nearly all times. Therefore, the interfaith encounter model should be read as a universal one, and the IEA particulars should be read as a case study.

This paper is divided into three main parts. The first part deals with the question 'What is peace? What is really our goal when we strive to achieve peace?' The second part deals with the ways to work for it—how best to work in order to most effectively come closer to the goal. The third part describes the special contribution of the interfaith encounter approach. The third part also offers a brief overview of the case study of how the IEA builds peace in the hearts and minds of people—methods that are used to both develop and test the approach. The end of the paper discusses possible ways in which individuals and organisations from outside the

region can actively work towards peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East, at the same time helping to build peace in their own places. Finally, the paper presents another aspect of this case study: a model of how the interconnectedness of the 'global village' enables people in one place to actively help build peace in another place.

2. What is peace?

From a narrow political perspective, this question seems to have a trivial answer: peace is the opposite of war—if you end a war, you get peace. But from a wider human perspective, it is equally clear that this answer is not sufficient, and it immediately raises a series of other questions: Is that really all you need to have peace? Is peace merely a cease-fire? Is this noble aspiration, called for by thinkers and idealists and promised by prophets, really fulfilled when the guns stop shooting?

When these questions are asked, it is clear that the only answer is no. It is obvious that without careful attention to and effective treatment of the underlying causes of the conflict and the reasons for the violence, even a cease-fire is superficial and passing. A clear distinction should be made between 'peace' and 'peace agreement'. Peace cannot be reduced to the issues covered by peace agreements, such as distribution of power, borders, control over water resources, police cooperation, etc. Peace—real peace, human peace—is much more than a document signed by a few people. The insufficiency of these issues for the full realisation of peace can clearly be seen on two levels. On the immediate level, in order for a cease-fire to be stable and sustainable, one clearly has to get acceptance from both sides; otherwise, the side(s) that do not accept the existence of the other will see the 'peace agreement' phase as only a pause, an opportunity to better prepare, and another war will eventually break out. On a deeper level, peace certainly requires a process of reconciliation. The people involved have to learn and overcome past hostilities and wounds, abandon prejudices and fears, get to know the other not as 'the enemy' but as 'a person'—not as 'an opposing rival' but as 'a

fellow human'—develop mutual understanding and trust, allow friendships to arise, and so on. The UNESCO Constitution summarises this idea nicely: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.' The process is not completed and peace is not wholly accomplished until harmony is achieved. The work for peace is not finished before the wolf lives peacefully with the sheep.

It is important to stress that 'harmony' certainly does not mean a compromise of the self-identity of the partners. In order to achieve peace, no one has to give up any part of his/her identity or qualities in order for everyone to be more or less the same. Of course, everyone has to give up those elements of their self-interpretation that result in the negation of the other. More precisely, they must give up this negative aspect of those elements, as explained below. It is a mistake to think that you can really strengthen yourself by weakening the other. Even if you do succeed in weakening the other, all you achieve is weakening the other, not reinforcing yourself. The only way to really reinforce yourself is to support the different elements of your self-identity and understand that you are a being created by God and, as such, you have a unique role in creation. No one can take the place that God made for you. This has to be understood, accepted and internalised and the negation of the other has to be sublimated into mere definitions of the self, as this is what it ultimately is. Nevertheless, this is true, in the very same way, for both the self and the other. When we were made different it was meant to enrich us and not to threaten us. No one alone can grasp all the beauty and wisdom of creation and provide all the nurturing that creation needs. Yet it is everyone's task, and it can be achieved only by the sum of all the contributions made by different viewpoints and ethical emphases. Therefore, our true self-realisation and self-completion requires positive interaction with others, knowledge of them and learning from them. Only by adding up the inputs of many others and integrating them into our own solid self-identity in order to support and enrich it can we come closer to fulfilment. This is why the negation of the other is wrong: your own

authenticity requires the existence and prosperity of the other, as without the special contribution of the other you have only your single, partial self. Of course, the same argument that forbids me to negate others forbids me to negate myself and them to negate me—my role and my contribution are as important as anyone else's.

When harmony is achieved, everyone is encouraged by all others to fulfil their unique tasks in the world in their unique way. By doing so, and only by doing so, they contribute to the whole. The effort for peace is not aimed at reducing the genuineness or self-realisation of the parties involved; rather, it actually aims to enhance them.

One may rightly say that harmonious peace does not water down conflict but rather encourages it, as each identity necessarily differs from other identities and its attempt to fully present itself necessarily casts a shadow on other identities. But harmonious peace ensures that this conflict is constructive, not destructive, as the various identities are perceived as complementary, not hostile, and these shadows are perceived not as threats but only as emphases of self-definitions. This view has to be the beacon of the whole process.

This idea is manifested nicely in the way the Hebrew words for peace—SHALOM (שָׁלוֹם)—and for whole—SHALEM (שָׁלֵם)—come from the same root (שָׁלַם). The adverb HASHLAMA (הַשְׁלָמָה) refers to both making peace and completing. Another meaning of the word HASHLAMA is acceptance.



Of course, harmony is a utopian goal that takes a very long time to achieve. Not because it is hard to work towards it—in fact, it is quite easy when one really tries. Anyone who attended the IEA-organised Israeli-Palestinian interfaith conferences at the height of the Intifada in late 2002—when terrorist attacks were occurring daily in Israeli cities and when the Israel Defence Force was acting in the streets of Palestinian cities—can testify to this. Even then, the IEA was regularly bringing together Israelis and Palestinians who had never met before and who, for more than two years, were constantly fed media accounts of the terrible atrocities the other side was planning for them. Anyone who saw how quickly these Israelis and Palestinians connected and how they bid farewell with tears and hugs after less than three days together knows how easy it is to build harmonious relations when really trying and using effective models.

The process is long—not due to the qualitative difficulty, but because of the quantitative challenge. The basic building block is not groups of millions, but relationships between individuals.

Still, working towards this utopia makes the cease-fire more stable and sustainable. After enough harmonious mutual relations are built, the interconnectedness of the two groups is so strong that it keeps differences and misunderstandings from deteriorating into violence. And 'enough' does not mean 'involving nearly all members of the respective communities'. Way before even half of the people are involved, significant togetherness becomes apparent. Even when someone who has not yet developed a harmonious attitude commits a provocation, the mutual trust gives room to check before automatically retaliating. Most often, the group realises that it is not the 'advance force' of the other group, about to be followed by all others, but rather an isolated exception.

These observations are generally true, but they are much more evident in the Holy Land. While some conflicts are between physically distant groups that can feasibly have a cease-fire first and then work towards harmonious peace, in conflicts like the one

in the Holy Land, this is not the case. The Israelis and Palestinians live in very close proximity between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, just sixty miles from one another. Moreover, the two people's historical narratives, both of recent and ancient history, are so different that the realistic challenge is not to develop the agreement between them but to help them learn to live harmoniously despite their significant disagreements. In the Holy Land, maybe it is not surprising that utopian visions are more realistic than diplomatic plans.

3. How to achieve peace?

Though the essence of peace as described above is known and generally accepted, it is regularly believed to be the final result. The way to achieve it is usually perceived as a one-dimensional, sequential process, happening to all the people involved, on each side, as one unit. The common view maintains that the two sides first need to achieve a cease-fire and then start a very long, slow process of reconciliation and acquaintance that gradually reduces the injuries of the past. Harmony, which in this view is only between the two societies as a whole, is certainly an aspiration but not a realistic one—it is left for utopia and is expected to be achieved only at the end of time. It is not a driving force for the realistic process.

This way of thinking leads to a political way of action. A cease-fire is the first step. It is a necessary condition and the key to the whole process. Since cease-fires are usually agreed upon between political leaders, the process must be initiated by influencing the respective leaders to achieve a permanent cease-fire or, in other words, a solid peace agreement. In the current Israeli context, for example, this approach leads to the perpetual political debate: is the best way to achieve peace for Israel to be strong and make its enemies give up on their ambition to destroy it ('right'), or is it better to be generous with them and thus make them give up this ambition ('left')? Both sides firmly believe that the other side is not a partner for the true promotion of peace. Both sides are within Israeli society, and their dynamics and way to harmony are essentially

similar. This is not surprising, since the dynamics of conflicts, as well as the transformation of dynamics to build harmony, are very similar in most conflicts. Going back to the example of the internal Israeli debate, the key steps in both approaches must be taken by political leaders. Other nonpolitical actions are considered worthless before the peace agreement is completed, worth something as promotions of the peace agreement, or—at best—good as preparations for after its completion.

The point of view presented in this paper differs from the aforementioned attitude in four main areas. First, the peace process is seen as multi-dimensional. If taken to the extreme, every person and his/her relation to any other person could be said to be a dimension of it. The process is the sum of all these individual processes, which progress at different paces for each individual and each relationship—not at some kind of average pace.

Second, the key to the process is not the cease-fire between the armies but the human development of the peoples. This conviction is supported by a careful reading of the descriptions of the discussions and processes that led to the Oslo Accords in 1993. These very clearly manifest that without the development of understanding, trust and even friendship between members of the Israeli and Palestinian teams, even the interim (cease-fire) agreement could not have been reached. This is just one example, but the principle holds true in many other cases. Without having any sense of the legitimacy of the other party's aspirations and certainly without having minimal trust, one does not sign agreements. And if one does try to sign an agreement with the other side before this minimal level of mutual trust is accomplished, it will not be upheld for long. Again, the Oslo Accords exemplify this: the sequence that was built into them and the sad way they collapsed were due to the lack of mutual trust between the two peoples. This paper argues that, rather than being the last annex of the Oslo Accords, the people-to-people process should have been the prime effort. Had this been the case, it is very likely that eleven years later we would have been witnessing a whole different reality

between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In other words, the human process of achieving peace is not fully linked with the political process of achieving a peace agreement—it is not conditioned by it, nor is it an automatic consequence of it. Acquaintance, understanding, acceptance, reconciliation, trust and friendship can be achieved between many individuals and should be strived for—before, during and after a political agreement is achieved. They are not natural outcomes of the agreement; rather, a special effort is required to achieve them. This effort is completely different from the effort to achieve a political agreement, as it is human rather than judicial in nature. It therefore might be more successful than the political effort, and may in fact result in a political agreement. In any case, the sustainability of the latter strongly depends on it.

Third, peace is not only the responsibility of political leaders. In the case of the Holy Land, it may not even be primarily their responsibility. Citizens have both the ability and the responsibility to shape their society, and they should be encouraged to do so. Civil society needs to take on more leadership to contribute its share, which is very different and independent from that of the political leaders. If it fails to do so, agreements are in serious danger of collapsing, even when leaders are able to reach them.



Fourth, and no less important, this effort can and should include all individuals in the respective societies who understand that different people are destined to live in the same small piece of land and that it is better if they learn to do so peacefully, regardless of their political views. This should include even those who oppose any currently proposed political processes. Real peace between peoples can be achieved only if all groups of each society participate in it.

This paper also challenges a related belief that is common among people on the 'left' who strive for peace: that religion is a major source conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. Most of the people who hold this belief are secular and most religious people, at least most of those who are heard in Middle Eastern societies, hold completely different political views, usually opposing the agreement models proposed by the 'left'. It is not that religious 'leftists' do not exist—they certainly do, but they are not the majority. Furthermore, they are often considered, even by people who share their political views, to be 'half-secularised' or 'not so religious', due to the belief that an authentic religious person cannot hold 'leftist' political views. Authentic religious people can indeed hold a variety of political opinions. Moreover, people who are interested in religious discussions, regardless of their political views, have a very high potential for bridge building. Religious people of different faiths share beliefs, attitudes and, most importantly, religious language. Therefore, thinking believers have a basic interest in sharing their religious views with other believers, as well as in hearing the views of others. In other words, thinking religious people are interested in religious conversations, even with people from other faiths. Using this basic curiosity, we can bring people of different faiths to the discussion table, encourage them to uncover their common religious views and develop a close relationship. Moreover, when the discussion is kept to the religious level, the differences between their religious views are understood not as threats or sources of dispute, but as natural results of the simple fact that their faiths are different. Knowledge and acknowledgment of real differences does not cause threats or conflicts;

rather, it abolishes them by the rejection of the false perceptions of differences, which are the real sources of prejudice and conflict. Dialogue participants can educate themselves to accept 'the other' and develop harmonious relations, both despite their 'otherness' and *through* the deep encounter with it. Through interfaith encounters, people train themselves to develop harmonious relations without giving up their narratives of the past and aspirations for the future. Consequently, reaching an agreement is no longer a necessary condition.

The engine that moves the process ahead is interactive interfaith dialogue. This method is the basis of the interfaith encounter approach. It encourages participants to reveal what they have in common and to respect their differences. Hence, dialogue between religious people on the religious level, even between people who cannot find any common basis for a political discussion, can and must be used as a major means of building peace.

When we refer to people as 'religious' in the context of interfaith dialogue, we refer to the aspect that is relevant to that dialogue: they are part of a religious context and have an interest in religious issues, or are at least willing to use their religion as a platform for an encounter. Each person's degree of religious observance is between him/her and God and is not relevant to the dialogue, nor are the levels of identification or criticism one holds towards the teachings of the religion of his/her context.

4. The uniqueness of the interfaith encounter approach

The interfaith encounter approach to the great peace-building effort is unique in three ways. The first is that, contrary to the common view that religion is the problem, the interfaith encounter approach holds that interfaith understanding is one of the most efficient ways to bring people together and that deep and positive dialogue through interactive encounter is the best way to gain such understanding. It holds that people who study each other's personal understanding of religion

overcome prejudices and fears, develop trust and friendship, learn to accept each other and come closer to harmony. For the interfaith encounter approach, religion is a bridge between different people rather than a breach between them. As in many other areas, people in the Middle East—Arabs, Israelis, Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze and others, both religious and nonreligious—are closely linked with their religious identity. Therefore, this process is essential to the overall peace process.

Second, the interfaith encounter approach works towards peace in a highly nonpolitical way. It does not have an official stand or consensus, for example, on the exact nature of the permanent Israeli-Palestinian agreement, the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement, the solution for Israeli-Lebanese relations or any other political issue. The political views of the people who take part in interfaith encounter activities are a private matter that has no significance during participation in interfaith encounter programmes and activities. This attitude allows people from all parts of the political spectrum—including those considered 'radicals', 'extremists' or 'fanatics' in their societies—to actively participate in the peace process on the human level.

Finally, the interfaith encounter approach has a very strong grassroots emphasis. Most of its effort aims to engage the masses in the process, and very little effort is invested in political, or even religious, leaders. The idea is to encourage citizens to form a civil society movement for social change. When this movement is wide enough, the leaders will follow. This effort includes all citizens, including those who are not considered candidates for dialogue in many other approaches.

The power of the interfaith encounter approach is self-evident to anyone who has experienced how it is practiced in IEA activities. Its efficacy has also been affirmed by scientific studies. The IEA has cooperated with the Project for Arab-Jewish Dialogue, which is under the auspices of the Programme in Conflict Resolution in the Political Studies Department at Bar-Ilan University. The coordinator of this

project, Dr. Ben Mollov, together with some of his assistants, examined changes in attitudes towards 'the other' during interfaith retreats and compared the findings with the results gathered in a control group. They found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the more people defined themselves as 'religious', the more negative their initial attitude towards 'the other'. However, these people made a dramatic shift to a more positive attitude during the retreat. These findings were presented in international scientific conferences.

5. How does the IEA actually work?

As stated above, the interfaith encounter approach presented in this paper was developed through interaction with the actual activities of the IEA, which are used here as a case study on the approach. The IEA leads the design and methodology of these programmes and uses the programmes to test and refine the approach in order to make it more effective in future activities. Therefore, it is important to illustrate real IEA practices, both as background and so that the model may be easily replicated in other contexts and the needed adaptations may be more clearly seen. The IEA looks at a conflict situation using the interfaith encounter approach and decides what measures are needed to build peace in the hearts and minds of people, with reference to the different contexts within the situation, and takes practical actions to make real, if initially small, progress in peace-building.

IEA programmes include meetings, study sessions, weekend retreats and longer conferences, as well as study visits and projects that target special needs. These programmes are organised, conceptually and practically, in three geographical circles in the region.

5.1. First circle: Israel

The first circle is the citizens of Israel. This is the basis of the IEA's activity and effort towards peace. For most Jewish Israelis, religious and secular, the notion of 'Israeli' equals 'Jewish'. Of course, when asked, they all know that there is a non-negligible

non-Jewish minority of Arabs in Israel and many will be able to quote its percentage. Nevertheless, their immediate association of the concept 'Israeli' does not include the non-Jews. Even as they become aware of the Israeli non-Jews, they refer to them all as a single monolithic unit, without real knowledge of the differences among them in terms of religion, attitude, way of life, level of education etc., not to mention personal differences. This ignorance often results in ignorance, lack of sensitivity, prejudice and even discrimination from the Jewish side and in anger and frustration from the Arab side. By tackling this challenge through interactive dialogue aimed at bringing mutual understanding and awareness, progress can be made in many areas, such as acceptance of and positive interchange with 'the other', the promotion of social justice, and so on. Furthermore, since the actual problems are derivatives of ignorance, they can be successfully overcome through the development of harmonious inter-communal relations based on deep mutual understanding, acceptance and respect.

Dialogue and its fruits are at the core of any Jewish-Arab coexistence in the Middle East. It is the first step in the much-needed process of the Jews understanding and accepting the fact that they are living in the Middle East and that they have to face its inhabitants and interact positively with them, and the Arabs understanding and accepting the fact that the Jews of Israel are not European colonists but an integral part of the future of the Middle East. The first step towards the harmonious integration of the Jewish minority of Israeli society in the Arab majority of the Middle East is most likely to be the harmonious integration of the Arab minority with the Jewish majority inside Israel, which is the only place where massive interaction between the two societies can take place. As mentioned above, interaction at the religious level and the interfaith understanding arising from such interaction is essential to this process. Due to the close proximity and the lack of mobility, in this circle it is possible to actually work on the harmonious inter-communal relations of neighbouring towns, villages and neighbourhoods.

The IEA does this by forming ongoing interfaith encounter groups that bring together citizens from neighbouring communities, who in most cases have hardly had any interaction before the group starts its activity. Each group is led by an interfaith coordination team that reflects the diversity of religious contexts in the area, with one member for each religious context. The interfaith coordination team is a semi-autonomous unit, with full freedom and responsibility to organise the ongoing encounters and their content. These groups gradually develop a strong sense of a joint community and actually build a mini-community in which relations are harmonious, without suppression of differences, as desired for the larger communities and their inter-communal relations. Thus, these groups act as models for the larger communities. By their very being, they declare that what exists is possible. They are growing islands of desired relations that will continue to gradually expand to include more and more parts of society.

This first circle includes a constantly growing individual membership of some five thousand Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze and Bahá'í affiliates. It also includes cooperation with other organisations and institutions.

5.2 Second circle: the Israeli-Palestinian circle

The second circle includes all the people of the Holy Land, namely Israelis and Palestinians, as these two peoples are destined to live together on the same small piece of land. Therefore, the second step towards harmony in the Middle East is to build harmony between these two communities, who have suffered so much and yet are so close to one another, who have so many fears and prejudices to overcome and have so much mutual curiosity and so many shared interests. Here, again, interfaith dialogue has a major role in developing conversation between the two communities, in exposing the *real* similarities and differences, and in learning to live together peacefully and harmoniously. This second circle includes close cooperation with seven Palestinian organisations from across the Palestinian National Authority areas that share

the IEA's vision, as well as the quest for constant expansion. With time, this circle is expected to go beyond basic interaction through retreats and conferences and organise special women's and young adults' conferences; programmes that will include a week of joint study of language, religion and culture; and family exchange visits. Even during the peak of the Intifada, starting in the second half of 2002, the IEA managed to maintain regular retreats with one of its Palestinian partners. As the hopes of improving the situation grow, so does the hope to include more partners in active programmes and form ongoing Israeli-Palestinian groups for harmony development through interfaith encounters, similar to those which IEA maintains among Israeli citizens.



5.3 Third circle: the Middle East circle

The third circle includes the entire Middle East. It includes the IEA's participation in the establishment of the Middle East Abrahamic Forum (MEAF) together with Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Iranian and Turkish organisations, as well as further individuals from Qatar and Tunisia, and ongoing work to increase the number of organisations involved, the number of participants in the annual conference and the variety of activities. For several years, MEAF has worked under the auspices of the Middle East and North Africa Region of the United Religions Initiative (URI), an international interfaith organisation.

At the founding conference of the Middle East Abrahamic Forum, one of our Egyptian colleagues formulated three guiding principles for the organisation. They were adopted as the guiding principles for the IEA's programmes in all of its activity circles. These principles summarise the unique characteristics of the interfaith encounter approach:

- People participate in dialogue as people of faith expressing their religious views and not as representatives of national entities or political viewpoints. Therefore, every issue discussed, whether theoretical or practical, should be addressed from a religious perspective.
- Dialogue involves two or more points of view and requires that the participants listen to each other in addition to expressing their own views.
- Any religious viewpoint can be expressed, but attention must be given to the form of expression. Just as you do not want to be embarrassed or offended, do not embarrass or offend others.

6. The global circle: anyone who cares can join

To be successful, a strategy such as the grassroots interactive interfaith encounter approach must mobilise a large portion of the population. Change will become a reality only when a large movement for social change is created and only when a substantial part of each society has encountered and accepted 'the other'. The aim would be achieved only when this can be said of each society as a whole. A range of educational and promotional activities must be implemented and a range of projects, suited for people of various backgrounds, ages, genders etc., must be developed and carried out. To promote these various components, many activists must come together, each focusing on one or several activities.

One need not live in the Middle East in order to actively participate in the IEA process. This is also true for the implementation of the interfaith encounter approach in any other context. It is misleading to think that, when a dispute arises between two sides, it is their business and the rest of the world

can remain neutral. Even if one is not directly affected, one's choice to remain indifferent—or even worse, to take a side—fuels the clash. In the context of the conflict in the Holy Land, the effect is much more apparent, as clashes between Israelis and Palestinians often induce tensions between Jews and Muslims, and sometimes even between Christians and Muslims, in many other parts of the world. Influence can flow in the other direction, as well. As in Newton's third law of motion, when A influences B, B also influences A. This is true in many cases, and this model of 'distance peace-building' can be implemented in many other contexts. In the case of the IEA's activities in the Holy Land, which are described below, growing understanding of this fact is leading to greater development of the fourth geographical circle of the IEA's activity: the global circle. In this circle, the IEA works to build support for its work towards harmonious coexistence in the Holy Land and in the Middle East among people and communities around the world who care about the advancement of this peace and who are willing to become involved in a constructive way. At the same time, the IEA works to support the harmonious coexistence of these very supporters, through their very involvement in the process and through their use of the IEA's interactive interfaith encounter models. The following are several ways in which people in the fourth circle can join the IEA's work:

6.1. Reading and sharing the reports of IEA programmes

One of the ways in which the IEA includes the larger global community in the process of peace-building through interfaith encounters in the Holy Land is by sending a report on each of its activities to its list of some seventeen thousand electronic subscribers. The reports are written by the team of people who organised and led the programmes and often include photos taken during the activities. The reports are also posted on the IEA website for later reference.

The reports supply valuable information about positive developments in inter-communal relations in the Holy Land and the Middle East, which are

rarely reported in the media. By reading the reports and sharing them with others, people sympathise with the work of the IEA and allow their hope for a better future to grow.

6.2. Forming or joining an active 'Friends of the IEA' group in your area

While reading the reports is a relatively passive way to take part in the work of the IEA, there are more active alternatives. The easiest way to actively support the IEA is to write a check and send it to the IEA to financially support its work. This is definitely needed, since the promotion of a wide social-change process obviously requires funding. However, there is also a much more exciting way to participate.

All over the world, the IEA works to build and sustain ongoing active 'Friends of the IEA' groups, with the additional goal of developing mini-communities of people that work together to build and maintain harmonious relations through deep encounters, with full awareness of both their commonalities and differences. By being part of the IEA network and maintaining parallel dialogue, these groups of people who care about the Middle East (with an Abrahamic focus) are part of the effort to build harmonious inter-communal relations in the Holy Land. They actively help to improve the well-being of the Holy Land's inhabitants and, at the same time, actively build harmonious inter-communal relations and improve well-being in their own communities.

6.3. Enlarging the network

One more way in which the IEA can benefit from the people outside the region is by enlarging its network of contacts with individuals and groups that could become engaged in IEA activities: Israelis, Palestinians, Middle Easterners and global contacts.



7. Conclusion

The interfaith encounter approach builds peace in people's hearts and minds in a unique and extremely important and powerful way: the sincere study of each other's religious perspectives and the understanding of *real* similarities and differences. This way has the potential to deeply and efficiently influence the peace process, which calls for wide grassroots participation and is far from being complete. There is still much work to be done. A lot effort is required and everyone is invited to join. The models developed for the IEA's programmes serve as a case study and an example for the real application of this approach and can easily be replicated and adapted to other contexts.



ANDRÉ PORTO

URBAN CONFLICT PREVENTION IN BRAZIL

In Brazil, there are no relevant interreligious conflicts or religiously motivated violence. A more tolerant attitude inherited from the Portuguese (in comparison with that of the Spanish colonisers), plus tough legislation that criminalises religious discrimination, defamation and injury, has been able to calm radical religious leaders. There are some interreligious tensions, of course, especially between Pentecostal churches and Afro-Brazilian groups. However, the common daily fight is against poverty and urban violence. Brazil is a country with shaming world records. It leads the world in number of deaths by small arms and in deaths of youngsters by small arms. Its police kill more people than any other country on earth. Out of every 100 murders, only 2 are solved. If a person is young and black and lives in a slum, his or her chances of suffering police violence increase by 500%.

For the last three years, the Religion and Peace project has been acting at the local, state and national levels in partnership with Christian churches and networks and other religious institutions for small arms control, police reform and the construction of a culture of peace in Brazil. In 2005, for example, under the supervision of Viva Rio, small arms collection posts were organised at 240 churches in 216 cities in 23 states. A total of 5,000 weapons were destroyed. The coordination of this religious mobilisation qualified Viva Rio, already an important public safety institution, to coordinate nationwide religious networks, NGOs, social movements and police institutions. An example of the cooperation between social and religious activists is the dynamic Disarm Brazil Network - Security, Justice and Peace, with 17 state committees.

These activities have created a neutral space for specific actions for peace and democracy in which institutions that would otherwise never get close to each other have been able to cooperate with confidence using the mechanisms of participative democracy. The cooperation that started with the historical Evangelical churches and the Catholic Church has expanded to include Pentecostal churches and other religions as well as secular NGOs and human rights movements. The annual Safe Community Campaign, with its capacity-building workshops led by Religion and Peace, has enabled religious groups and NGOs nationwide to deal with complicated but crucial issues in order to build peace effectively and develop possible national campaigns and actions that would impact all of society.

In 2006, the main activity of Religion and Peace was the Safe Community Campaign, which focused mainly on police reform. From July to September, the campaign visited Londrina, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, Caruaru, Natal, Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, São Paulo and Campinas. In each city, the campaign organised workshops on police reform and the implementation of the Disarmament Statute, held hearings with public safety secretaries and state police commanders about intelligence and communitarian PR, visited projects of religious organisations and NGOs, and held meetings with the state committees. These experiences are described in a Portuguese-language dossier available on the Safe Community website (<http://www.comunidadessegura.org/?q=pt/node/30030>). In 2007, the campaign will tackle the issue of youth in armed violence and continue the debate on gun control and police reform.

How it all began

For the last several years, Viva Rio has participated in the small arms control debate and carried out activities to mobilise civil society and advocate for improved government policies. New national guns laws, known collectively as the Disarmament Statute, passed in December 2003, but were only implemented from July 2004. The National Disarmament Campaign, created to promote voluntary weapons collection, was launched as part of this new law.

Since the implementation of the Disarmament Statute, Viva Rio has participated in the national campaign committee, led by the Justice Ministry, and has actively participated in gun collection efforts in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The organisation has also provided technical assistance and training for other civil society organisations interested in collecting small arms. The majority of these efforts have focused on churches.

The decision to promote churches as gun collection points within the campaign was based on several positive factors: spatial proximity, to increase the reach of the campaign, given that churches are located close to the workplaces and residences of most of the population; the accessibility of neutral, well-known ecclesiastical spaces, which inspire trust, especially in comparison to collection points at police stations; and the possibility of dialogue and listening, in case people wish to get something off their chest, pray or say some spiritual words for peace (an underlying culture of fear and violence is present in the lives of many people who wanted to hand in guns).

In October 2004, the first religious collection points were opened in Christian churches in the state of Rio de Janeiro. They were monitored by Viva Rio and supported by the civil police. An added value of these points was that the gun was smashed with a hammer in front of the person who turned it in—a policy that was already in place at the first Viva Rio collection point. The results were positive, so 45 more collection posts were opened at Evangelical

and Catholic churches throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro.

When the disarmament campaign was extended until June 23, 2005, the religious collection points gained a significant boost with the addition of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) and the National Council of Churches (CONIC). CONIC emphasised the 2005 Fraternity Campaign, an ecumenical campaign with the theme of Solidarity and Peace ('Happy are those who promote peace'). World Vision and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI-Brazil) also decided to participate in the effort to take the disarmament campaign to the national level, demonstrating the commitment of Christians to effective peace-building.

The Religion and Peace team at Viva Rio forged new partnerships between institutions and Christian networks in all Brazilian states that carried out disarmament activities. Viva Rio mobilised and built capacity among churches, organisations, and Christian networks and media for the National Weapons Collection Campaign, which surpassed expectations in terms of the number of collection points opened at churches and was extended twice. A nationwide campaign based on universal values of peace culture was made possible by the coordination of Viva Rio, with its strong foundation in small arms control issues, together with the churches' moral force, social communication and ability to multiply. These efforts took thousands of weapons out of circulation and raised awareness on the dangers of small arms misuse. The outcome of this interdenominational Christian initiative for disarmament was favoured by the secular nature of Viva Rio and its national recognition as a reference in action and research, as well as its partnership with the Religious Studies Institute (ISER) on public security issues. The Churches for Disarmament project created the opportunity for churches to work towards peace, to collaborate for the collective good, and to organise disarmament.

Viva Rio opened the weapons collection points and developed conceptual and practical disarmament-related material specifically for Christian churches.

3. Good Practices in Interreligious Prevention and Mediation of Conflicts in Urban Areas

This information was distributed free of charge and was copied by the Christian networks. The informational flyer, PowerPoint presentation and DVD with clips from the campaign were well received by the public and considered appropriate for Christians. Several denominations developed their own materials based on those provided by Viva Rio.

Capacity-building workshops were held in the capital cities of 23 Brazilian states over a period of five weeks, in partnership with the local and regional headquarters of the partner institutions. This brought the Religion and Peace team of Viva Rio together with local and regional leaders, which gave the Disarmament Campaign its truly national character and strengthened the participation and commitment of all those involved. The team was given an excellent reception, and the local partners successfully promoted the workshops and the importance of disarmament.

From May 21 to July 31, 2005, weapons collection posts were opened at 240 churches in 216 cities. Nearly 5,000 guns were collected and smashed. The public considered the churches safe, appropriate places to get rid of guns. These collection points differed from those at police stations in that the guns were smashed upon collection. Society and the media recognised the churches' active role and positive contribution to disarmament. Christian leaders expressed their gratitude and satisfaction at having participated in the Churches for Disarmament project.

There was unusual collaboration between the police and the churches. Pastors, priests and religious leaders had direct contact with the federal and military police in firm agreements, facilitated wide dissemination of the campaign's messages, and established contacts and organised committees to involve churches of various denominations and other civil society organisations. The religions engaged directly in dialogue with each other and with policymakers, thus extending their mission of facilitating peace.

The main goals of the campaign were to inspire religions and spiritual groups to act efficiently and effectively for peace and public safety in an organised and systematic way; to facilitate religious activism in peace-building and social justice activities; to make it possible for individuals, religious or not, to exercise their citizenship, spirituality and commitment to the common good; to clarify the relationship between rights and peace; and to demonstrate that comprehension (and intervention) in building a more just and peaceful society is not only the work of the 'distant and omnipotent' state, but should be taken up by everyone. During this popular journey towards disarmament and after the formal closure of the campaign in October, we received many messages from partners throughout Brazil, who told us they appreciated the experience of taking direct action for peace and perceived their potential influence on policy-making.

The Religion and Peace project was sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and by the Swedish Church.



DOUGLAS M. JOHNSTON

FAITH-BASED DIPLOMACY: BRIDGING THE RELIGIOUS DIVIDE IN URBAN AREAS

Good afternoon. I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the dynamics of faith-based diplomacy and to suggest how this form of diplomacy can contribute to peacemaking in urban areas. First of all, what is it? Simply put, it means incorporating religious concerns into the practice of conflict resolution. Even more simply put, it means making religion part of the solution in some of the intractable, identity-based conflicts that exceed the grasp of traditional diplomacy.

Why is it important? Just about anywhere one turns these days, one finds a religious dimension to conflict in the urban areas of Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Sudan, Indonesia, Chechnya, Kosovo—the list goes on. Whether religion is a root cause of the conflict—as it probably comes closest to being in the Middle East, where there are competing religious claims for the same piece of territory—or merely a badge of identity and mobilising vehicle for nationalist or ethnic passions—as has typically been the case in the Balkans—it is nevertheless central to much of the strife that is taking place.

It is also the case that most of these conflicts have an Islamic interface, driven largely by the collision of globalisation with traditional values, often embedded in religion. But there is another dynamic at play as well. If you think back to the beginning of the last millennium when Christianity and Islam were locked in mortal combat over their mutual claims to the Holy Lands and then fast-forward to the present, you get the uneasy feeling that not a whole lot has changed. One wonders why these two world religions, which share so much in common theologically—and they do—either talk past one another at best, or, alternatively, resort to conflict to settle their differences. I submit that at

least part of the reason has to do with the fact that they speak different languages. Muslims speak the language of integration—of religion and politics. We in the West, meanwhile, speak the language of separation—of church and state. Even the same words assume different meanings. We say ‘secular’; they hear ‘godless’, when what was intended was ‘freedom to worship as you please’. They hear ‘godless’ in large part because of the cultural image we project.

It was in anticipation of these kinds of challenges that the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy was established in August 1999 to perform four functions: (1) bridge the political and religious spheres in support of peacemaking, (2) recruit and deploy interreligious action teams to trouble spots where conflict threatens or has already broken out, (3) train religious clergy and laity in the tasks of peacemaking, and (4) provide feedback to theologians and clergy on interpretations of their teachings that may be contributing to strife and misunderstanding. I should mention that these action teams not only include people with the right secular skills to deal with the problem(s) at hand, but their composition reflects the same religious composition as those with whom they will be working on the ground—so that those folks know there’s someone on the team who understands their values and religious sensitivities.

Since our establishment, we have been involved in a number of important projects. I will describe two of these to give you a feel for the nature of our involvements. First, our work in Pakistan: ICRD’s goals in this project have been twofold: (1) to expand the madrasa (Muslim religious school) curriculums to include the physical and social

sciences, with a special emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights (especially women's rights), and (2) to transform the pedagogy in a way that will produce critical thinking skills among the students. The latter is particularly important. Because students memorise the Qur'an in Arabic and their own language is Urdu, they are often clueless as to what it means. This makes them particularly vulnerable to local militants who come along and misappropriate scripture in order to recruit them to their cause. With no ability to challenge or question, these students become very easy prey.

Thus far, the success of our approach has exceeded expectations and stands in stark contrast to the failure of past attempts by the government of Pakistan to influence these schools. Because the madrasas are independently funded, they have resisted government reforms for fear that they will ultimately lead to the secularisation of their curriculums. The Centre's success, on the other hand, has been a function of (1) conducting the project in such a way that the madrasas feel it is their own reform effort and not something imposed from the outside (by giving them significant ownership in the process) and (2) inspiring them with their own heritage, pointing out how many of the pioneering breakthroughs in the arts and sciences, including religious tolerance, took place under Islam a thousand years ago. Once madrasa leaders internalise this, they begin to walk a little taller and start thinking that perhaps they can, in fact, do better.

A month or so ago, at the height of the conflict in Lebanon, I visited several of the harder-line madrasas with which we had no prior involvement. One was a Wahhabi madrasa outside of Lahore that had been linked in the popular media to the London bombers. Another was a Deobandi madrasa in Karachi that had spawned the two most violent anti-Shiite terrorist groups and was thought to be the chief supplier of fighters for Kashmir and Chechnya. As one might expect, there was a lot of rage in the air over US foreign policy.

I was able to get past that rage by pointing out that our Centre was not a government organisation, nor had it ever received any government funding. And while it was quite clear that the US government had made some mistakes of late, it was important for them to recall the instances in which the United States had intervened on behalf of Muslims—in Bosnia, Kosovo and Somalia. Lost in most accounts of Somalia is any mention of the more than 100,000 Somali lives that were saved as a result of the humanitarian aspects of that intervention.

I further noted that while the United States has clearly been operating with a double standard in the Middle East, owing to its strategic relationship with Israel, so too have a number of Arab states been operating with double standards as they complain mightily of Israeli mistreatment and then turn a deaf ear to Palestinian pleas for humanitarian assistance. In short, there are double standards everywhere one turns, driven by perceived national self-interest.

I then quoted from memory several important passages from the Qur'an that enabled us to begin discussing various values that we hold in common. By this point, the rage had all but totally dissipated, and we were able to engage in a useful give-and-take discussion. What is the bottom line of all this? Mutual engagement based on demonstrated respect for the other's values provides far greater leverage to influence a situation than do policies based on isolation and demonisation. Indeed, I was amazed that the madrasa leaders even heard, much less accepted, the points made with regard to US foreign policy.

The second project I want to discuss is the work we have been doing in Sudan. Seven years ago, the Centre began working in the north of that country, with the specific goal of persuading the Islamic regime to take steps toward peace that they might not otherwise take in their long-running civil war with the Christian/African traditionalist south. This effort eventually led to the establishment in 2003 of an Interreligious Council that has been bringing top Christian and Muslim religious leaders

together on a monthly basis to surface and resolve their problems. In addition, a Committee to Protect Religious Freedom was also formed (under the auspices of this Council), which has been bringing accountability to this highly sensitive area. At the same time, we worked behind the scenes in Washington to get the Bush administration engaged in forcing a peace agreement. That engagement eventually paid off, and after 21 years of conflict, leaving more than two million dead and four million displaced, the struggle finally came to an end.

The Council's accomplishments over the several years of its existence have been quite impressive. In just the first few months, it generated more in the way of concrete measures to benefit non-Muslims than the churches had been able to achieve over the previous ten years working on their own. The remarkable aspect of all this is that it has taken place within the context of an Islamic dictatorship. Not only did the Khartoum regime agree to the formation of an independent council that has as part of its mandate holding the government accountable on its religious policies, but it also agreed to take the Council's recommendations seriously. Darfur notwithstanding (which is an internal Muslim conflict), the government has thus far honoured its commitment—to the tune of more than \$500,000 in real estate and funding to provide land for the building of new churches and restitution for the past seizure of church properties.

The 1972 peace agreement that concluded the country's first civil war (immediately following independence in the 1950s) eventually broke down because nothing was done to cement new understandings at the grassroots level. It is hoped that the Council and the Committee can help ensure a lasting peace this time around.

These are but two examples of our Centre's activities, which also include projects in Kashmir, Iran, Syria and the United States (with the American Muslim community). As one might suspect, our approach is never the same, since every situation is unique—driven as much by personalities as circumstances.

Suffice it to say, though, the stakes are enormous and the need for this kind of engagement is urgent.

One example would be a sound working relationship with our own American Muslim community. If the US government and the American Muslim community could start working together for the common good, the United States would be able to (1) bridge its relations with Muslim countries overseas more effectively, (2) avoid missteps in foreign policy and public diplomacy through a better understanding of the Muslim perspective, and (3) encourage the further intellectual and spiritual development of Islam through support for an American Muslim leadership role in this area. With regard to the latter, American Muslims enjoy greater freedom of thought than any other Muslim community in the world, and they bridge modernity with the contemporary practice of Islam on a daily basis.

Despite the room for improvement in the relationship between the US government and Muslim community, there is much Europe can learn from the integration of Muslims into American public life. Europe's much larger Muslim population of 15-20 million (4-5% of the population) is mostly a result of the post-World War II guest worker programmes. Immigrants moved into isolated enclaves under poor economic conditions. In contrast, their US counterparts came to a country built on immigration and tended to be more educated and well-off. Two thirds of Muslim households earn more than \$50,000 per year, whereas the median household income in the US is around \$42,000. In addition, more than one third of Muslim Americans hold advanced degrees, compared to 9% of the general population. And instead of living in slums on the outskirts of major cities (one finds major Muslim communities in slums on the edges of London and Paris), American Muslims tend to live in central cities or in the suburbs with other professionals in the same income bracket.

While the above factors may not be the only reasons for the difference between the levels of Islamic extremism in Europe and the United States (others

4. The Role of Public Authorities: Cultural Pluralism

could be the US Muslim community's engagement in the political process or domestic counter-terrorism measures), they do seem to at least in part explain this phenomenon and provide broader insights into the peace dividends that could be gained from taking steps to increase the economic and social inclusion of Muslim immigrants in their host countries.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you.



FRANCESC GUILLÉN LASIERRA

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY

Nowadays, our societies are plural and diverse. This is a fact, whether we like it or not. We can see it on the street, watching TV or talking to our colleagues at the office. It is crystal clear that there are men and women, young and old, tall and short, white-skinned and black-skinned, people who eat meat and people who would rather eat vegetables than anything else. Some are Catholic, others are Protestant or Muslim. There are even some people who are atheists, people who enjoy soccer and people who don't like it at all.

Although you may consider that I am comparing very different issues, I am firmly convinced that all of these aspects belong to diversity, at least in terms of people's right to be respected in their preferences and in the exercise and practice of their rights. However, we will come back to this point later.

Now, let us address another question: Is this situation of plurality new for us? Is it something that didn't exist in our societies twenty, fifty or one hundred years ago? Back then, we didn't find so many articles and books talking about diversity, plurality and all those issues. Was that due to the fact that all societies were absolutely homogeneous? No, that is wrong. In our societies, there have always been different beliefs, religions and lifestyles. Why, then, do we talk about it every day, when before we overlooked it? Did we used to be insensitive or foolish? The answer to both questions, of course, is 'no'. The current dimensions of diversity are different and much more intense. That's why we have to tackle the situation and care about it. However, is there still a question? Why are today's societies more plural and diverse than they used to be? There are two main reasons:

People are freer now than they were before and they dare to show and defend their differences. This should actually be the normal situation, because people tend to think differently. Societies that are too homogeneous, in terms of beliefs and lifestyles, are often nondemocratic societies subjected to authoritarian political systems or social pressure.

The increased mobility of the world's population has implied a higher level of diversity in our societies. The ability to travel around the world has brought people from very different geographical, ethnic and religious areas together in the same territory, thus expanding traditional diversity.

1. Political and constitutional considerations

The historical achievement of democracy is the acknowledgement that people have the right to be diverse. Historically, it was very common to persecute, marginalise and hold contempt towards people that belonged to different groups, had different ways of life or, generally speaking, disagreed with the dominant ideology. A main goal in the fight for democracy was to accept and promote pluralism and diversity, in order to let everybody live as they prefer. Under a democratic system, diversity is not only normal but also something that should be respected and protected. This is one of the fundamental pillars of democracy. This is why Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution and international texts such as Article 14 of the European Convention on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty include a high level of protection of plurality and against discrimination on a variety of grounds. These constitutional acknowledgments have several meanings and consequences:

The need to remove any grounds for discrimination that still exist.

A positive approach. We should promote and protect something that the system (society) values as enriching and positive. This means having an active attitude, not just a passive and reactive one.

The acceptance of confrontation and conflict as something inherent to plural societies. Since everybody can legitimately have their own preferences and goals, there will be different interests and perspectives that can, at some point, be contradictory. Conflicts need not be negative; rather, they can be the normal expression of diverse positions. What should be done, then? Ignore it? Leave the people to solve it on their own? Obviously not. The system should channel it and try to combine all interests. When that is not possible, it should provide a solution.

2. Daily consequences of the acknowledgment of plurality

The inclusion of a right at the constitutional or legal level normally affects more than just the legal system. It also has an impact on day-to-day life. The law-society relationship is a two-way street. That is, society (what happens in normal life) should influence law, but law also influences what happens in society. Let's take a look at the consequences of acknowledging diversity and forbidding discrimination:

People feel freer to openly show their differences and their discrepancies concerning the dominant ways of thinking and living (although both are becoming less dominant). However, there is still social pressure to make behaviour more homogeneous, mainly in the 'consumer society'. Of course this pressure still exists, but most of us find it normal to meet somebody who is different (for instance, in terms of eating, drinking or beliefs) and who openly declares principles or values that are different from those of the majority. This implies that more citizens are finding a place in our society and together we can share experiences or

viewpoints that we previously would have rejected. We pay a price for this: deep down, we feel less safe, because most of our basic truths are gone forever (but not all of them, because, as we will see later, a plural society still has values).

We are having more conflicts due to different interests or points of view, but this is becoming so common that we no longer consider it something negative. Our societies view conflicts as a normal part of a plural society, not as something negative that is due to incorrect behaviours or attitudes on the part of anyone involved in the conflict. Of course, there are conflicts caused by citizens who don't respect the law or others' rights, but we find a lot of situations where there is no offender (or more than one offender)—just the result of a conflict. This is the case when elderly people complain because they can't enjoy a public park because children playing football are disturbing the peace. The authorities will deal with the problem not only from the legal point of view (perhaps playing football in the park is prohibited), but also taking into account the fact that there is a conflict about the use of public spaces. They will look for public spaces where the children can play football without annoying the elderly. In addition to getting someone to pay a fine, when necessary, they should consider the background of the problem and look for a solution.

The government is working progressively with negotiation-related tools and resources. That is, the government used to restrain itself in enforcing the law when there was a conflict in public spaces. Nowadays, public officials usually talk to the groups in conflict to sort out a solution that is acceptable to everybody. Of course, this doesn't mean that the government doesn't respect, protect and enforce the law. Rather, it means that public officials would rather focus on the cause of the conflict so as to prevent it from happening in the future.

Different rights—both civil and political—can come often into conflict in everyday situations. Consequently, we accept that rights are not unlimited. When somebody exercises a right, he/

she needs to respect the rights of other people so that they may practice their rights at the same time. This means that rights can be legitimately restricted when they clash with somebody else's rights. Our constitutional courts are constantly balancing rights in their findings, because it is quite normal for rights to come into conflict when exercised by citizens. The magistrates have to give priority to some of the rights in conflict, depending on the circumstances.

The acceptance of different values, beliefs and preferences has changed the landscape. Some of these beliefs and values are contradictory—that is, they try to hamper the activities of other groups. Some people favour having religion taught in the schools, whereas others would prefer a neutral, nonreligious education. Immigration has led to one current conflict. Some people favour weakening the requirements in order to officially register all immigrants already in Spain, while others demand that the requirements be toughened. What would happen if advocates of both positions applied for a permit to demonstrate at the same time in the same place? Or if one group tried to prevent the other's demonstration? Such critical situations have developed in the Basque Country in recent years. Different groups of people took to the street at the same time, trying to prevent the other groups from demonstrating. It is not easy to deal with such situations, although in some cases the law is clearly on the side of one of the groups and, of course, public officials must enforce it.

3. What should the government (and all public authorities) do or promote?

So far, we have seen the conceptual changes that diversity has brought into the conceptions, values and principles that rule our societies. Let's see how these changes should affect the public authorities in their daily activities. Of course, we can't cover all the areas in which the government works, but we can give some examples to illustrate the line they should follow:

Diversity should be respected and promoted. First of all, the government should adapt its selection and administration procedures to protect and promote diversity. What does this mean? For instance, it should try to select new civil servants taking into account only the capacities and knowledge needed to carry out public functions, removing all requirements clearly linked to a predominant lifestyle or culture. The knowledge of different cultures could even be included as a requirement. Nowadays, some government agencies use what they call 'cultural tests' in their selection procedures. These tests could also include knowledge of the new communities that live with us. As another example, the entry requirements of some public bodies are quite male-oriented, when in fact both masculine and feminine qualities are needed. More neutral tests could increase the number of women entering the civil service.

There are many more examples. Some government agencies take into account certain cultural traditions or family roles to decide when civil servants can take their holidays or other official leave. They should take into account new cultural traditions as much as possible.

We could say the same about public offices that have facilities where civil servants can eat. They should offer acceptable dishes for those who don't eat pork, meat or other products. This may require hiring a catering service, and small offices can't offer everything. However, they should try to satisfy as many people as possible.

Government agencies should renew their public statements, announcements and documents to integrate plurality and avoid linking a nationality to a single cultural group. For instance, I remember a very high-ranking politician who, after a very serious terrorist attack carried out by extremist Muslims, made a public statement saying: 'We, the British, know that most Muslims are very peaceful people that reject any violence against people.' It is clear, at least for me (I am not British) that many British citizens are Muslims. So, although he was probably trying to prevent people from

generalising about Muslims, he implied something quite negative, because his statement excluded a major part of the country's population as members of the British society. This has nothing to do with being 'politically correct'—that is a different issue, which I will not address in this paper. I mean that official statements or documents should never exclude a group, a point of view or a way of life from the honourable group of citizens. Of course, the various points of view, ways of life or beliefs should meet certain requirements, but I will address that point in the following paragraph. What I want to stress here is that public authorities should not qualify people's preferences or beliefs and should act in coherence with this principle. When there is a conflict or a controversy between two groups and the government has to intervene, public officials should not take sides. They are not there to say who is right and who is wrong. It is a different story, as noted above, if the activities of one side are protected by a law or a court finding. In that case, the government must enforce the legal arrangement, but it must avoid taking a position in favour of one of the groups. This is not only theory—it should also be practice.

4. Conflict management is a crucial role of the government

Section 2 of this paper has shown that the government is using more negotiation instruments and techniques to carry out its public role. The true change would be to accept that, in addition to law enforcement, this should be its role. This can be extremely difficult in some cases. Public services should develop procedures and criteria to objectively solve most possible conflicts in a way that protects constitutional and legal values and principles. This will take time, because there will be mistakes and people will take particular cases to the courts. The government should accept this as a way of reaching clearer conflict-resolution parameters, which can be quite difficult. I would like to mention what I consider a paramount finding by the Spanish constitutional court that solved a conflict between several constitutional rights in a very balanced way: finding 195/2003 of October 27. The case was

as follows: A group that supports the Western Sahara's independence from Morocco applied for a permit to organise some activities in a square near the church of Candelaria, a village on the island of Tenerife. They wanted to set up a haima (Saharan tent) to hand out leaflets and use a loudspeaker to make people hear their messages. They wanted the concentration/demonstration to take place from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm on a Sunday. They sent a document to the appropriate public office (in Spain, demonstrations do not require permission, but demonstrators must announce what they are going to do so that public order conflicts may be avoided). The public office responded that they could not set up the tent because it would create traffic problems and that they could not use the loudspeakers during the noon Mass because they had chosen to demonstrate on a Sunday and the nearby church always held Mass on Sundays. The organisers disagreed with the government's decision and took the matter to the courts. The cases ended up in the Spanish constitutional court, the nation's highest court, which decided the following:

a) The organisers should have been allowed to set up the tent, because the authorities are not allowed to determine how people should use their right to free assembly and demonstration. The court said that the haima may have caused some minor traffic problems, but free assembly and demonstration on the street always cause problems because demonstrators always occupy a space that other people use to walk or drive. So there is always a small conflict of this sort. The authorities should limit this right only when the inconvenience caused to the people walking or driving through the area are excessive or unreasonable. According to the court, that was not the case.

b) Concerning the prohibition on the use of loudspeakers during the religious celebration, the court decided that this limitation on the demonstrators' right to make their messages heard was reasonable, because another right came into conflict with it: the right to have and to practice a religion, the freedom of worship. The people in church for Sunday Mass had the right to enjoy the

celebration in acceptable silence, because Mass is a religious celebration that requires a bit of peace and quiet. Besides, that church always held Mass at noon on Sundays, so it wasn't aiming to hamper the public demonstration. Rather, it was a normal act of Catholic worship. Furthermore, the concentration/demonstration was to last the whole day. The exercise of the free assembly and demonstration in public spaces was not inhibited even if the loudspeakers could not be used during the religious celebration, because they could be used the rest of the day (that is, during most of the time that they had decided to devote to promoting the cause of Western Saharan independence). Citing the right to a healthy environment, the court also found that, during the time the organisers were allowed to use the loudspeakers, the volume should be within the levels established by the municipal by-laws. The city's limitations on outdoor noise were meant to prevent noise pollution, which the court found to be acceptable grounds for limiting the right to use loudspeakers outdoors. Again, the court accepted that one right can limit another right.

This case shows how the exercise of legitimate rights can cause conflicts of interest and that the government should try to make different rights compatible as much as possible. When this is not possible, one right should be given preference, but the government should always specify the grounds on which it gives preference to one activity (right) over another.

5. Protecting and promoting diversity doesn't mean creating a sort of wonderland

Diversity can also be limited when there are legitimate grounds for doing so. There will be more situations like the one described above. Public officials will have to limit the exercise of everybody's diversity when to do otherwise would hamper the efficiency or efficacy of public services or when, as in that the court's finding, different rights come into conflict. This requires openness, flexibility and endurance. Public debates will occasionally be raised about sensitive issues, because certain aspects of public life will need to be decided. When

there is no a clear solution to a conflict involving diversity, the government should be open to engaging in a public debate. For instance, can a civil servant wear symbols or clothes that can clearly be identified as belonging to a particular faith or way of life? Will the citizens feel they can trust such a civil servant? For instance, if I belong to the Muslim community and I have been assaulted by a group of radical Zionists, will I be comfortable reporting the incident to the police if I have to deal with an officer wearing a piece of clothing that shows that he/she is Jewish? We can also think of the opposite case: a Jewish person who has been attacked by radical Muslims and must deal with an officer wearing a Muslim symbol. To leave aside traditional religious confrontations, we can also imagine an elderly man who has been attacked by a group of youngsters with multiple tattoos and piercings. Would he feel comfortable dealing with a civil servant who has very visible tattoos and piercings?

Perhaps there are no absolute 'yes' or 'no' answers. Perhaps we could establish a certain degree of tolerance for some cases, but then the debate would be to what extent, and with what limits?

We could say the same concerning the organisation of public services. Should civil servants who are Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox Christian or Chinese have days off for their main celebrations? Yes, they should. However, that doesn't mean that all of them should have the day off on all of those days, because public services should be guaranteed at all times. On Chinese New Year and Orthodox and Catholic Christmas, the trains and buses must run, hospitals must remain open, etc.—perhaps not at full capacity, but at an acceptable minimum capacity. Diversity adds more complexity to the management of public services, yes, but to an unmanageable degree: traditions and celebrations normally do not coincide, and this could be of some help in organising public services.

However, the most complicated situations will be those in which one group of people interferes with the rights of another, or when one group wants to prevent another from doing something. We are

again talking about the collision of rights, which can sometimes be very violent. In such cases, the government will have to be very strict to prevent any rights violations and reject any violent means of solving conflicts, as such transgressions must not be protected as diversity.

Conclusion

The role of the government in managing diversity is very complex. In theory, it is not extremely difficult to say that diversity, plurality and democracy should be the paramount principles of government activities. However, it is uncertain what this means in particular cases. We—all of us—have a long way to go in clarifying this, which will require openness, tolerance and flexibility. The government should have a leading role and assume some risks as we move forward. It should accept that it can make mistakes that can be overturned by the courts. They should also accept that there is no recipe for all cases, but rather a methodology and criteria that should be respected. Finally, managing diversity does not mean that the government should operate completely without ideology, but rather that their actions should focus on protecting rights and promoting diversity—that is, creating a more democratic system. Sometimes this requires preventing (and, when necessary, repressing) activities that undermine human rights and democracy, the foundation of social cohesion and values. A diverse society implies not only rights but also duties. The main duty of the citizens is loyalty to the basic principles and values of our constitution.



BRIGITTE COLÍN

UNESCO AND UN-HABITAT INITIATIVES

Within the framework of what has been said by Dr. Francesc Guillén about the problem of cities and the relevant urban policies for maintaining spatial integration and social cohesion and allowing all city dwellers to enjoy their rights in urban settings, kindly allow me to present two joint initiatives launched by UNESCO with the cooperation of UN-HABITAT.

These two projects are in line with the new strategic approaches to world development presented by the Secretary-General of the UN Assembly in September 2005: member states should move from needs-based development strategies towards a human-rights-based approach to development.

It may be useful to give an overview of urban issues at the UN level. In 2007, for the first time in human history, demographers have estimated that more people will be living in cities than in rural areas. UN-HABITAT's *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/07* provides evidence on several emerging trends that will have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Declaration and relevant paragraphs of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. One specific trend is that, despite the emergence of mega-cities of 10 million people or more, the majority of urban migrants will be moving to small cities of less than one million inhabitants. Already, more than half of the world's urban population lives in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. These intermediate cities are predicted to grow at a faster rate than any other type of city. A major finding points to normal population growth rather than rural-to-urban migration as the factor behind the increase of populations in many inner-city areas. However, the relative absence of infrastructure, such as roads, water supply and communication facilities, and the

inability to attract investments and stimulate the local economy, lead to a lower quality of life for residents of many small and intermediate-sized cities.

The main United Nations agencies whose activities focus on cities and urban issues are UN-HABITAT, UNDP, UNICEF, UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) and UNESCO. The second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II, Istanbul, 1996) was the outcome of a series of UN conferences organised during the 1990s. It led to the elaboration of a voluntarism declaration looking to the future with emphasis on cities' and local authorities' policies. Studies on cities carried out by UNESCO follow the spirit of the declaration by taking into account the organisation's mandate, the 1972 Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2003 Universal Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Diversity, the 2003 UNESCO Human Rights Strategy and the 2005 Vienna Memorandum on Managing the Historic Urban Landscape.

The first initiative launched in 2004 during the World Urban Forum II in Barcelona relates to inner-city redevelopment and the social and human approach to urban revitalisation in historical districts to prevent forced evictions.

Urban cultural heritage recounts the history of a city, its people, its religions and its social and cultural transformations. This can be seen in the spatial and economic structures of cities and their buildings and monuments. It can also be seen in the people who live and work there. Today, historic centres have become symbols of cities. In addition to their intrinsic cultural value, they fulfil an important function in modern urban development: they foster

identity, create the city's image and are important location factors for the local and regional economy.

Public administrations and inhabitants are facing a double challenge: on one hand, the urban fabric should be preserved and the culture in which the city has evolved over hundreds if not thousands of years must be kept alive. However, conservation of buildings and monuments alone will not save these old cities. The result would be 'museumisation', which weighs heavily on public budgets and freezes development opportunities. In the cases at hand, further eradication would simply be postponed. A comprehensive rehabilitation approach encompasses conservation and development. It must take into account the need to improve conditions of everyday life for local inhabitants as well as economic viability. Conservation means material improvement as well as making the area as a whole attractive for residents, while development seeks to stabilise economic diversity, vitality, urban functions and sources of income for local inhabitants. The juxtaposition of the two objectives should improve public perception and re-establish a positive image, which is a prime factor for drawing people to an area, encouraging businesses to invest and attracting visitors.

Since the Istanbul round table of June 13, 1996, the **Social and Human Sciences Sector at UNESCO** has been exploring the challenges and issues at stake in urban revitalisation projects in historical districts. This work has been carried out thanks to the MOST Programme research, particularly on Latin America, and through the results of research-action projects launched in the Mediterranean region with the Small Historical Coastal Cities project, the Euro-Mediterranean network RehabiMed; in Central Europe, the Research Network on Social Sustainability of Revitalisation in Post-Communist Countries, finalised in 2006; and in China, the Old Beijing social project and the Franco-Chinese cooperation project for heritage protection and city development. This effort has benefited from the UN-HABITAT approach since 2004 with, on the one hand, the joint preparation of a manual on good practices for social sustainability in historical

districts and, on the other hand, World Heritage urban protection and the experience of the World Heritage Centre in the protection of historical urban landscapes, as specified in the 2005 Vienna Memorandum.

In view of the major trends regarding the phenomenon of global urbanisation for medium-sized cities and the results of work carried out at UNESCO between 1997 and 2007, UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector, in cooperation with UN-HABITAT and its training centres, has proposed transmitting the lessons learnt from that work to the local authorities of small and medium-sized cities in the form of a manual or tool kit, in particular in Seville, to address the pressing needs of decision-makers at the local level, while aiming to strengthen training capacities for city professionals, architects and urban planners likely to work on revitalisation projects in medium-sized cities in developing countries. The methodologies and references of this manual have been approved by experts on the UNESCO Steering Committee for the Socially Sustainable Revitalisation of Historical Districts project of the Social and Human Sciences Sector. Globalisation, exclusion (multiculturalism and ethnic affirmation), governance, ecology, science and technology are all processes that lead to social transformations in cities, and they always pose new challenges to both citizens and decision-makers. This manual, in its current form, provides criteria and guidelines, texts and references, contact people and institutions, in order to help in the selection of revitalisation projects in historical districts, and also to outline the general principles of global methodology to be adapted to each case, with a view to implementing and assessing short- and long-term urban revitalisation projects in historical districts.

The second joint UNESCO/UN-HABITAT project on a rights-based approach to urban management and development was launched in March 2005.

Since 1948, the rights affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been recognised by states and put into effect at the state, community

and individual levels. Despite the profound socioeconomic, political and territorial changes that have taken place in the past 60 years, the promotion and protection of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social—continue to be relevant challenges. Many maintain that certain rights of the Universal Declaration should be further elaborated. This includes the right to development, the right to safe drinking water, the right to a clean environment and the ‘Right to the City’.

The ‘Right to the City’ concept encompasses the right of all city dwellers to fully enjoy urban life with all its services and advantages, and to directly partake in the management of cities. It relates directly to social inclusiveness in, and sustainable development of, human settlements. There are a number of ongoing initiatives across the world, at various levels, that could contribute to reducing exclusion and increasing social cohesion and inclusiveness in cities. These include innovative urban policies and programmes, as well as efforts to promote legal reform towards increasing democratic urban governance and expanding citizens’ rights. Some of these initiatives are listed below:

- At the local level, the Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities (2006): (www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/chartedesdoits).
- At the national level, the City Statute of Brazil (2001): (www.cidades.gov.br).
- At the regional level, the European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City (2000), the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (Innsbruck, 2006), and the Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance (2005): (www.clgf.org.uk).
- At the international level, the International Charter of Educating Cities (2004): (www.edcities.org).

UNESCO and ‘Urban Policies and the Right to the City’

The ‘Right to the City’ is not a new concept at UNESCO. The term was coined in October 1995 at

a UNESCO round table entitled ‘Towards the City of Solidarity and Citizenship’. Participants in the round table stressed the need to create solidarity-minded and multicultural cities, to commit to the humanisation of the urban environment and to make urban dwellers aware of their rights. Since then, the Social and Human Sciences Sector at UNESCO has been actively engaged in stimulating international comparative research on the formulation and implementation of new urban policies, taking into account the 2003 UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

UN-HABITAT and ‘Urban Policies and the Right to the City’

In 1999, UN-HABITAT launched the Global Campaign on Urban Governance to support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of ‘sustainable human settlement development in an urbanising world’. The theme of the campaign is the ‘Inclusive City’, which promotes growth and equity by empowering all inhabitants, regardless of their economic means, gender, race, ethnicity or religion, to participate fully in opportunities that cities have to offer. The ‘Right to the City’ could well become an appropriate topic for advocacy by the Global Campaign for Urban Governance.

The launch of a joint international research project

While national and international initiatives are substantial in number, a consolidated international approach to inclusive urban legislation and governance has yet to be conceptualised. As a first step towards filling this gap, UNESCO and UN-HABITAT have recently joined hands to launch an international comparative research initiative on ‘Urban Policies and the Right to the City’.

This project was launched at an international public debate on March 18, 2005, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris and was followed by two UNESCO/UN-HABITAT working group meetings,

held with the support of several international NGOs. The first working group meeting was held in September 2005 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The second took place in March 2006 in Barcelona. At the third session of the World Urban Forum (Vancouver, June 19-23, 2006), UN-HABITAT and UNESCO organised a networking event under the theme 'Urban Policies and Right to the City: Towards Good Governance and Local Democracy'. The aim of the session was to discuss the notion of the 'Right to the City' and share the views of city stakeholders—local government (e.g. the Mayor of Montreal and the Deputy Mayor of Lyon), civil society (e.g. Unescocat), grassroots groups (e.g. the Huairou Commission), etc.—on what is included in the concept of the 'Right to the City'. The session also focused on existing urban policies at the regional and municipal levels, as well as practices and approaches that promote the 'Right to the City'.

A UN-HABITAT/UNESCO working group has been created with experts from various regions and fields of knowledge. This working group includes academics; researchers; city professionals from the local, national, regional and international levels; civil servants from cities such as Montreal, Lyon, Barcelona, etc.; and international NGOs such as the International Association of Educating Cities/IAEC (www.edcities.org), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum/CLGF (www.clgf.org.uk), the Huairou Commission (www.huairou.org), the International Social Science Council/ISSC (www.unesco.org/ngo/issc), the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia/Unescocat (www.unescocat.org); and observers such as United Cities and Local Governments/UCLG (www.cities-localgovernments.org), Metropolis (www.metropolis.org) and the European Community Initiative Programme URBACT (www.urbact.org).

Major issues identified since March 2005

- There are two different interpretations of the 'Right to the City' concept: a legal one, in which all areas are affected, e.g. the City Statute of Brazil; and a more value-based interpretation, in which

the 'Right to the City' concept is not exhaustive but rather is understood in the spirit of a global rights-based approach to urbanity applicable to various specific themes, e.g. the International Charter of Educating Cities, adopted by more than 450 cities in 37 countries.

- The 'Right to the City' concept is a hybrid of various themes and institutional levels. It only becomes a reality when thematic considerations are taken into account within specific policies at a certain institutional level. At the local level, the Montreal Charter on Rights and Responsibilities embraces several themes included in the 'Right to the City' concept.
- The various themes identified thus far are: Gender, migrants, children, youth and the elderly, law and urban planning, urban governance and democracy (cities as the breeding places of democracy and participatory democracy), civic cosmopolitanism (urban cultural diversity and interreligious dialogue in cities), decent and dignified existence within cities, urban law promoting inclusion, social cohesion and competitiveness, rights and responsibilities of both municipalities and urban dwellers, and solidarity between urban dwellers.

What UNESCO and UN-HABITAT have achieved so far

- The creation of a UNESCO Chair on Urban Policies and Citizenship by the Lyon Consortium of Research Institutes, including universities in cities such as Lyon, Montpellier, Mexico, Montreal, Tunis, Beirut, Santiago de Chile, etc., in order to analyse existing normative tools and initiatives, to launch annual training workshops for mayors and to provide a platform of knowledge transfer for researchers and decision-makers on 'Urban Policies and Citizenship' (www.chaire-unesco.entpe.fr).
- The organisation of international public debates on 'Urban Policies and the Right to the City' and the publication of its proceedings (March/September 2005). Download the file with the proceedings at: www.unesco.org/shs/urban/rttc. The 2006 international debates will

be published by the aforementioned UNESCO Chair in Lyon in late 2007.

- Consultation process and the participation of major international city NGOs, such as IAEC and CLGF, in the bi-annual working group meetings.
- A UNESCO Chair is being created in ***'Urban Policies and Migrants: Social and Spatial Integration in Urban Settings'*** by Venice University. An international seminar will be organised on September 28-29, 2007, at Venice University. A regional observatory on inclusive urban policies and social practices will be launched at the Montreal International Research Centre in early 2008.

UN-HABITAT and UNESCO are keen to see local governments actively promote the holistic notion of the 'Right to the City' at the international level and adopt a major role in supporting inclusive urban governance. UN-HABITAT and UNESCO therefore jointly hosted the first debate on 'Urban Policies and the Right to the City' in March 2005.

Both UNESCO and UN-HABITAT will take regional inventories of good practices, urban law, innovative action and social practices to enhance inclusiveness in cities in order to enable municipalities and mayors to create their own charters and their own urban policies on enhancing social cohesion for the coming urban generations. Both organisations support the creation of an international 'Inclusive Cities' award, to be organised during the 2008 World Urban Forum.

Thank you for your attention.



JOSÉ MARÍA CONTRERAS MAZARÍO

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: CULTURAL PLURALISM

In this paper, I will analyse the role of the public authorities in relation to cultural diversity. I will approach this topic from the perspective of the law as an instrument for resolving cultural conflicts in general and religious conflicts in particular. This situates us within the framework of what has been called 'legal mediation', and specifically the relevant laws passed by the Spanish government. I will discuss herein both the laws that apply in the event of a religious conflict and the conflict-resolution mechanisms applied to such conflicts. The discussion of applicable laws will begin with an analysis of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the religious model adopted for matters of religion, and then turn to the Organic Law on Religious Freedom and the agreements reached between the Spanish government and the various religious faiths. The discussion of conflict-resolution mechanisms as an element of mediation will focus on two instruments: the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom and the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation.

The ratification of the Spanish Constitution set in motion the complex process of reorganising the country's legal system in keeping with Spain's establishment as a social and democratic state subject to the rule of law (Article 1.1). The new context created by the Constitution of 1978 was characterised by consensus, with Spain overcoming its historical failure to properly deal with the 'religious question'. Relations between the state and religion were guided by a particular set of principles determined by the recognition and protection of the freedom of ideology, religion and worship (Article 16.1), the guarantee that Spaniards are equal before the law and may not be discriminated against on account of religion (Article 14) and the assurance that '*no religion shall have a state character*' (Article 16.3). The following

are therefore the specific guiding constitutional principles in matters of religion: a) freedom of conscience, b) equality in matters of faith, c) the secular nature of the state, and d) cooperation with religious faiths and communities.

Nevertheless, today it is not so relevant to discuss the configuration of the phenomenon of religion within a country's political system (although we can still speak in general terms of the relationship between the state and the various religious groups). This topic has undergone a major transformation, due to the position adopted by the state on the protection of fundamental rights, especially with regard to the freedom of thought and conscience. Therefore, rather than discussing the relationship between religion and the Spanish Constitution of 1978, it is more instructive to examine the configuration of the freedom of conscience and freedom of religion within the framework of the Constitution. In particular, the ratification of the Constitution of 1978 brought about a profound change in the conception of the state with respect to the previous model¹⁹, which was based on the principle of doctrinal Catholic faith²⁰.

Based on Articles 1.1, 9.2, 10.1, 14 and 16 of the Spanish Constitution, we can specify the following guiding

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Cf. Jiménez Campos, J.: 'Crisis política y transición al pluralismo en España (1975-1978)', in *La Constitución española de 1978*, 2nd edn., Cívitas, Madrid, 1981, pp. 45-94; Prieto Sanchís, L.: 'Las relaciones iglesia-estado a la luz de la nueva Constitución: problemas fundamentales', in *La Constitución española...*, op. cit., pp. 319-374.

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For more on the model under Franco, see Suárez Perterra, G.: *Libertad religiosa y confesionalidad en el ordenamiento jurídico español*, Esset, Vitoria, 1978.

principles in matters of religion: religious freedom, religious equality, the secular nature of the state, and cooperation with religious faiths²¹.

In the constitutional arena and with regard to religious matters in the Spanish political system, freedom of conscience has taken on a double role: first, as a basic guiding principle of the Spanish legal system, which determines the particular relationship between the state and freedom of conscience²²; and second, as a fundamental right²³.

As a basic guiding principle of the Spanish legal system, freedom of conscience and religion is '*a principle of social and political organisation which contains an idea of the definition of the Spanish state*'²⁴. This means that the state accepts freedom of conscience and religion as a basic guiding principle of the political system with regard to religious matters²⁵, which has two effects, one positive and one negative. The negative aspect of freedom of conscience and religion is that the public authorities adopt a particular attitude towards religion: specifically, they lack legal competence in such matters. They may not impose themselves on individuals by means of coercion or substitution, nor may they accompany or concur with individuals as participants in an act of faith or in the practice of religious faith, beliefs, or ideological or religious

convictions²⁶. The most immediate consequence of this is the absolute lack of legal competence on the part of the public authorities to make statements about religious identity, even on the sociological level, as to do so would be to concur with Spanish citizens in the adoption of their ideas, beliefs, or ideological or religious convictions in a way that is incompatible with the principle of freedom of conscience²⁷. The same applies to acts of faith of other types, including those of negative content (atheism, agnosticism or indifference), as for the state to make statements in this regard would be to coerce, substitute or concur with citizens as participants in an act of faith, and doing so would necessarily imply assuming the legal competence to act and reaching a decision—in this case, a negative one²⁸. As a consequence, the adoption of freedom of conscience as a defining principle of the Spanish state means that the state is prohibited from engaging in coercion, substitution, concurrence or accompaniment of its citizens as an active party in ideological or religious acts or attitudes. Thus, under our current political system, the state is defined merely as a state, whose sole function is to guarantee the fundamental right to freedom of conscience and religion.

The second effect of freedom of conscience and religion, also negative, stems from the fact that the public authorities cannot in any way oblige anyone to make a statement regarding his/her faith, religion, beliefs, or ideological or religious

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For more on the passages of the Spanish Constitution that refer to religion, see Llamazares, D. and Suárez Pertierra, G.: 'El fenómeno religioso en la nueva Constitución de 1978', in *Revista de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Complutense*, 61 (1979), pp. 7-34.

22

Cf. Viladrich, P.J.: 'Los principios informadores del Derecho eclesiástico del Estado', in *Derecho eclesiástico del Estado español*, 2nd edn., EUNSA, Pamplona, 1983, pp. 209-214.

23

Cf. Contreras Mazario, J.M.: 'Algunas consideraciones sobre la libertad de conciencia en el sistema constitucional español' (I) and (II), in *Derechos y libertades*, 3 (1994) and 4 (1995), pp. 131-156 and 119-149, respectively.

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Viladrich, P.J.: 'Los principios informadores...', op. cit., p. 193.

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Cf. Llamazares, D.: *El derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, Civitas, Madrid, 1997, pp. 227-234.

26

Cf. Hervada, J.: 'Pensamientos sobre sociedad plural y dimensión religiosa', in *Ius Canonicum*, xix, 38 (1979), p. 74; Reina, V. and Reina, A.: *Lecciones de derecho eclesiástico español*, P.P.U., Barcelona, 1983, pp. 312-314; Viladrich, P.J.: 'Ateísmo y libertad religiosa en la Constitución española de 1978', in *Ius Canonicum*, xxii, 43 (1982), pp. 54-55 (also in *Revista de derecho público*, 90 (1983), pp. 65-121).

27

Cf. Llamazares, D. and Suárez Pertierra, G.: 'El fenómeno religioso...', op. cit., pp. 24 ff.; Suárez Pertierra, G.: 'Libertad religiosa y orden público', in *Revista de derecho público*, 66 (1977), pp. 201-216.

28

Cf. Hervada, J.: 'Pensamientos sobre sociedad plural...', op. cit., pp. 75 ff.; Viladrich, P.J.: 'Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...', op. cit., pp. 55 ff.

convictions²⁹. While this is the general rule, I must point out, however, that this guarantee is not completely incompatible with the possibility that, in certain circumstances (such as religious education and religious assistance), the public authorities may ask about a person's professed ideas, beliefs, convictions or religion. Nevertheless, this is only justified as a means of facilitating the exercise of a fundamental right, in this case freedom of conscience³⁰, and must never establish or produce discrimination, whether by virtue of the statement made or by the absence of the same³¹.

Nevertheless, not all behaviour on the part of the public authorities must be entirely abstentionist with regard to freedom of conscience. Let us therefore also examine the positive aspects of this freedom. The Constitution of 1978 entrusts the public authorities with two positive functions: first, the removal of obstacles, and second, the promotion of freedom (in this case, the freedom of conscience)³². This function translates into

the regulation of society's ability to exercise the fundamental right to freedom of conscience in order to guarantee the necessary objective social conditions so that said fundamental right may not only be recognised and protected, but also promoted³³. As a result, the principle of freedom of conscience not only limits the action of the Spanish state; it also calls for the state to maximise the extension of this freedom. Thus, the following axiom applies to our constitutional system with regard to religious matters: 'maximum possible freedom, minimum necessary restrictions'. This direct action on the part of the 'welfare state' consists not only in compelling action, but also in action on the part of the state itself, which manifests itself—for the purposes of the present topic—in two areas of activity: the free development of conscience³⁴ and the free development of human personality³⁵.

If the principle of freedom of conscience allows us to determine—as I have shown here—a series of criteria that limit the action of the Spanish state in questions of religion in general, it is in the recognition of this fundamental right that we may find a basis for the teaching of religion, since it forms part of the essential content of the conscience. The freedom of conscience as a fundamental right³⁶

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Article 16.2 of the Spanish Constitution: 'No one may be compelled to make statements regarding his/her ideology, religion or beliefs.'

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Judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Communities of October 27, 1976, Prais v Council of the European Communities (*Recueil de jurisprudence...*, op. cit., 1976, pp. 1589 ff). For commentary on this decision, see Contreras Mazario, J.M.: *La libertad y la igualdad religiosas en las relaciones de trabajo*, Spanish Ministry of Justice, Documentación jurídica, 71, Madrid, 1991, pp. 109-110; Martínez-Torrón, J.: 'Las objeciones de conciencia en el derecho internacional', in *Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica*, 1989/2, pp. 171 ff.

31

Cf. List, J.: 'La garantía constitucional y la aplicación práctica del derecho individual de libertad religiosa, así como de la libertad de las Iglesias al amparo de la Ley Fundamental en la República Federal de Alemania', in *Constitución y relaciones iglesia-estado en la actualidad*, Salamanca, 1978, pp. 38-51; Roca, M.J.: *La declaración de la propia confesión o creencias en el Derecho español*, Santiago de Compostela, 1992.

32

Article 9.2 of the Spanish Constitution: 'It is the responsibility of the public authorities to promote conditions ensuring that freedom and equality of individuals and of the groups to which they belong are real and effective, to remove the obstacles preventing or hindering their full enjoyment, and to facilitate the participation of all citizens in political, economic,

cultural and social life.'

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Cf. Beneyto, J.M.: 'Comentario al artículo 16', in *Constitución española de 1978. Comentarios a las leyes políticas*, II, EDESA, Madrid, 1984, pp. 346 ff.

34

Cf. Martín Sánchez, I.: *El derecho a la formación de la conciencia y su tutela penal*, Madrid, 2000; Puente Alcubilla, V.: *La libre formación de la conciencia del menor*, doctoral thesis, typewritten, Madrid, 1999.

35

Cf. Bellini, P.: 'Libertà dell'uomo e fattore religioso nei sistemi ideologici contemporanei', in *Teoria e prassi della libertà religiosa*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1975, pp. 133 ff.; Cardia, C.: 'Società moderna e diritti di libertà', in *ibid*, pp. 82 ff.

36

For commentary on this fundamental right, see Basterra, D.: *La libertad religiosa en España y su tutela jurídica*, Cívitas, Madrid, 1989; Catalano, G.: *Il diritto di libertà religiosa*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1958; Contreras Mazario, J.M.: 'Algunas consideraciones...', op. cit., pp. 142-146; D'Avack, P.A.: 'Libertà di coscienza, di culto e di propaganda', in *Enciclopedia del diritto*, xxiv, pp. 592-595; Finnochiaro, F.: 'Articolo 19', in

contains 'a demand for justice that is intrinsic to the dignity of the character of all human beings', and in this regard it expresses an idea or definition of what it means to be a person³⁷.

The freedom of conscience and religion³⁸ is defined in the Spanish Constitution as a fundamental right³⁹ that implies the recognition of an aspect of the autonomy of individuals and the groups to which they belong, and therefore as a right against the state and against third parties⁴⁰, thus recognising

Branca, O. (dir.): *Rapporti civili (artt. 13-20 della Costituzione)*, Rome-Bologna, 1977, pp. 238-301; Magni, C.: *Interpretazione del diritto italiano sulle credenze di religione*, CEDAM, Padua, 1959; Rava, A.: *Contributo allo studio dei diritti individuali e collettivi di libertà religiosa*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1959.

37

Viladrich, P.J.: 'Los principios informadores...', op. cit., pp. 251-252. Cf. Vera Urbano, F. P.: *La libertad religiosa como derecho de la persona. Estudio filosófico-jurídico*, Madrid, 1971.

38

Scholars disagree on precisely what right forms the basis of Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution. For a discussion of the plurality of terms used and the elements that justify the option used herein, see Contreras Mazarío, J.M.: 'Algunas consideraciones sobre la libertad de conciencia...', op. cit., 3 (1994), pp. 134-140; Jordán, M.L.: 'El derecho de libertad religiosa en la doctrina española', in *Ius Canonicum*, xxxiii (1993), pp. 47-60.

39

STC, Suplemento del Tribunal Constitucional (Supplement of the Constitutional Court) 24/1982, of May 13, legal basis 1. For a discussion of earlier Spanish Constitutional Court decisions on freedom of conscience and religion, see Álvarez Cortina, A.C.: *El derecho eclesiástico español en la jurisprudencia postconstitucional*, Madrid, 1991; Martín Sánchez, I.: 'El derecho de la libertad religiosa en la jurisprudencia del Tribunal Constitucional español', in *Ius Canonicum*, xxxiii (1993), pp. 61-93; Martínez-Torrón, J. (ed.): *La libertad religiosa y de conciencia ante la justicia constitucional*, Comares, Granada, 1998; Rodríguez Chancón, R.: *El factor religioso ante el Tribunal Constitucional*, Madrid, 1992; and Souto Paz, J.A.: 'Libertad ideológica y religiosa en la jurisprudencia constitucional', in *Las relaciones entre la iglesia y el estado. Estudios en memoria del Profesor Pedro Lombardía*, Madrid, 1989, pp. 511-532.

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Cf. Ciaurriz, M.J.: 'Libertad religiosa y concepción de los derechos fundamentales en el ordenamiento español', in *Ius Canonicum*, xxiv (1984), pp. 883-902; Iban Pérez, I.C.: 'La libertad religiosa como derecho fundamental', in *Anuario de Derechos Humanos*, iii (1984-1985), pp. 163-174; Prieto Sanchís, L.: 'El derecho fundamental de libertad religiosa', in *Curso de derecho eclesiástico*, Madrid, 1991, pp. 299-341; Suárez Pertierra, G.: 'Derechos y libertades fundamentales. Comentario introductorio al Capítulo II del Título I de la Constitución', in Alzaga, O. (dir.): *Constitución española de*

the power of all individuals to act in this regard with absolute freedom from coercion on the part of the public authorities or any other person or social group⁴¹.

In addition to the aforementioned negative concept, let me define a positive concept of freedom of conscience and religion, established in Article 9.2 of the Spanish Constitution, which transforms this freedom into a right to credit, by virtue of which the holders of this right may demand a particular sort of behaviour or assistance on the part of the public authorities⁴². From this second conceptual perspective, it may seem that the provision of religious education in public schools would be not only fully justified but also an obligation on the part of the public authorities, given that the freedom of conscience is conceived not only as the mere ability to exteriorise ideas, beliefs, or ideological or religious convictions, but rather the ability to develop one's conscience⁴³. From this perspective, the activity of the public authorities would consist in a double manifestation of the guarantee that would not be limited to the protection of individuals and faiths against coercion. Rather, it would extend to the creation of necessary social conditions that favour the full effectiveness of the fundamental right in question and the full development of human values, for both individuals and groups.

Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution guarantees equality before the law—understood as equality both 'in the law' and 'of the law'⁴⁴—while at the

1978. *Comentarios a la leyes políticas*, ii, EDESA, Madrid, 1984, pp. 263-274.

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Cf. Contreras Mazarío, J.M.: 'Algunas consideraciones sobre la libertad de conciencia...', op. cit., 3 (1994), pp. 140-146.

42

For an argument against this positive concept, see Peces-Barba, G.: 'Algunas reflexiones sobre la libertad ideológica y religiosa', in *Libertad y derecho fundamental de libertad religiosa*, EDESA, Madrid, 1989, pp. 53-71.

43

Cf. Puente Alcubilla, V.: *La libre formación de la conciencia...*, op. cit., pp. 92-95.

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same time setting forth the negative principle of nondiscrimination⁴⁵. Equality is therefore established as both a fundamental right⁴⁶ and an element that supplements and deepens the rights to freedom⁴⁷. As a result, it has been argued that the principle of equality becomes the attribution of freedom—specifically, freedom of conscience: ‘the attribution of the legal capacity to act of all individuals, given that they hold the aforementioned fundamental right’⁴⁸. From this perspective, then, equality is established as a generic principle, which is correlated to another generic principle, the prohibition of all forms of discrimination⁴⁹ for reasons, such as ideology or religion, that would imply, if the discrimination were to be accepted, the violation of the individual’s status as a person, as the common, radical and equal holder of the fundamental rights agreed to and enjoyed by all members of society⁵⁰.

Cf. STC 103/1983, of November 22 [B.J.C. (*Boletín de Jurisprudencia Constitucional*) 32 (1983), pp. 1529 ff.], legal basis 5.

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Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution (emphasis mine): ‘Spaniards are equal before the law and may not in any way be discriminated against on account of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance.’

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Cf. Suárez Perterra, G.: ‘Artículo 14. Igualdad ante la ley’, in *Constitución española de 1978. Comentarios a las leyes políticas*, op. cit., pp. 277 ff.

47

Cf. Peces-Barba, G.: *Los valores superiores*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1984, pp. 45 ff.

48

Llamazares, D.: ‘Actitud de la España democrática ante la iglesia’, in *Iglesia católica y regímenes autoritarios y democráticos (Experiencias española e italiana)*, EDESA, Madrid, 1987, p. 148; idem: *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, op. cit., pp. 246-254.

49

Cf. Peces-Barba, G.: *La Constitución española de 1978: un estudio de derecho y política*, Fernando Torres Editor, Valencia, 1981, pp. 38-39; Suárez Perterra, G.: ‘Artículo 14. Igualdad ante la ley’, in *Constitución española de 1978. Comentarios a las leyes políticas*, op. cit., pp. 284 ff.; and Viladrich, P.J.: ‘Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...’, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

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Cf. Esposito, F.: ‘Eguaglianza e giustizia nell’art. 3 della Costituzione’, in *La Costituzione italiana*, CEDAM, Padua,

The Spanish Constitutional Court has ruled that ‘By enshrining a principle called “equality before the law”, Article 14 of the Constitution places a limit on the authority of lawmakers and grants a right (...)’⁵¹. The former consists in the principle that laws may not create, among citizens, situations of inequality or discrimination [equality in the law⁵²], and the latter consists in the power to set in motion any appropriate legal mechanisms to restore lost equality. It has also been said that equality before the law means that when two circumstances are the same, the legal consequences derived from them must also be the same [equality of the law⁵³]. Furthermore, two circumstances are considered equal when the introduction, in one of them, of an element or factor that allows it to be distinguished from the other cannot be attributed to a rational element—that is, it is arbitrary—because said element is not essential to the protection of property and rights guaranteed by the law. Thus, two situations are considered equal in the eyes of the law if the element that distinguishes them from one another lacks sufficient relevance and rational basis⁵⁴.

From this, we can deduce that the guarantee of the principle of religious equality implies 1) the absence of different legal treatment of citizens on account of ideology, belief or faith, and 2) the equal enjoyment of the fundamental right to freedom

1954, pp. 30 ff.; Jiménez Campo, J.: ‘La igualdad jurídica como límite frente al legislador’, in *Revista de estudios de derecho constitucional*, 9 (1979), pp. 79 ff.; Paladini, L.: *Il principio costituzionale d’eguaglianza*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1965, pp. 153 ff.; and Rossano, C.: *L’eguaglianza giuridica nell’ordinamento costituzionale*, Naples, 1966, pp. 142-143.

51

Cf. STC 76/1983, of August 5, legal basis 2.A.

52

Cf. Jiménez Campo, J.: ‘La igualdad jurídica...’, op. cit., p. 79.

53

Cf. Jiménez Campo, J.: ‘La igualdad jurídica...’, op. cit., pp. 80 ff.

54

STC 103/1983, of November 22, legal basis 5.

of conscience⁵⁵. Nevertheless, this treatment must not be understood as uniformity⁵⁶ but rather as qualitative proportionality⁵⁷, which implies equal legal treatment not by disregarding differentiating elements of legal relevance but as a function of the circumstances of each specific case in question⁵⁸. Therefore, it is possible to treat individuals differently, and, in a social and democratic state subject to the rule of law, this may in fact be required by virtue of the supreme values enshrined by the Constitution, such as justice and equality (cf. Article 1.1 of the Spanish Constitution).

Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution also lists a series of typical discriminatory circumstances⁵⁹, including different legal treatment on account of religion, and prohibits any unequal legal treatment that is unjustified on the basis that it is unreasonable⁶⁰. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that *'the existence of such justification must be determined in relation to the ends and effects of the measure under consideration, with a reasonable*

*relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the ends sought'*⁶¹. As a consequence, we may only say that the principle of legal equality has been violated when, given equality of circumstance between two affected subjects, each is given different treatment due to arbitrary or unjustified conduct on account of beliefs or ideological or religious convictions⁶². Thus, we can define religious discrimination as any prohibition of an action on account of religion that implies the infringement or termination of the possession and exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and of any other fundamental right⁶³. However, the prohibition of discrimination must not be identified with the prescription of all differentiating elements that may affect subjects⁶⁴, because, as Suárez Perterra points out, *'The constitutional legal system*

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Cf. STC 24/1982, of May 13, legal basis 1.

56

Cf. STC of July 2, 1981 [B.J.C. 4 (1981), pp. 249 ff.], legal basis 3.

57

Cf. Battaglia, F.: *Libertà religiosa ed eguaglianza nelle Dichiarazione francesi dei diritti dal 1789 al 1795*, Bologna, 1946; Esposito, C.: 'Eguaglianza e giustizia nell'art. 3 della Costituzione', en *La Costituzione italiana saggi*, CEDAM, Padua, 1954; Finnochiario, F.: *Uguaglianza giuridica e fattore religiose*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1958; Paladin, L.: *Il principio costituzionale d'eguaglianza*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1965; idem: 'Eguaglianza (diritto costituzionale)', in *Enciclopedia del diritto*, xiv; Romagnoli, U.: 'Il principio d'eguaglianza sostanziale', in *Commentario alla Costituzione. Principi fondamentali*, Bologna, 1975, pp. 178 ff.

58

Cf. STC of July 10, 1981, legal basis 4.

For a doctrinal discussion, see Jiménez Campo, J.: 'La igualdad jurídica...', op. cit., pp. 79 ff.; Suárez Perterra, G.: 'Artículo 14', op. cit., pp. 277-293.

59

Cf. STC 103/1983, of November 22, legal basis 5.

60

Cf. STC of November 10, 1981 [B.J.C., 7 (1981), pp. 513 ff., legal basis 5, and dissenting opinion written by Justice Luis Díez-Picazo, op. cit., pp. 515-516.

61

Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights of June 27, 1968, and October 27, 1975, in *Tribunal Europeo de Derechos Humanos. Veinticinco años de jurisprudencia (1959-1983)*, Spanish Congress of Deputies, Madrid, 1984, pp. 67 ff. and 271 ff., respectively.

62

Cf. STC of July 10, 1981, and STC of March 30, 1981.

63

Particularly enlightening is the definition given in Article 2.2 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief: *'For the purposes of the present Declaration, the expression "intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief" means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.'*

Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination has similar wording.

From a doctrinal point of view, Recasens Siches defined discrimination as *'any harmful distinction based on the pretext of facts that are not attributable to the individual and which should be irrelevant from a socio-legal standpoint, or based on the pretext of an individual's belonging to a group or category'* (cit. *Tratado general de filosofía del derecho*, Porrúa, Mexico City, 1975, p. 591). Cf. Viladrich, P.J.: 'Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...', op. cit., p. 72.

64

Cf. Jiménez Campo, J.: 'La igualdad jurídica...', op. cit., pp. 80 ff.; Suárez Perterra, G.: 'Artículo 14', op. cit., pp. 286 ff.; Viana Tomé, A.: 'La igualdad constitucional en el régimen jurídico español sobre confesiones religiosas', in *Anuario de derecho eclesiástico del estado*, iii (1987), pp. 375-403.

*prohibits discrimination, but not the differentiation between situations that are objectively different. Differentiation differs from discrimination in that the former is based on subjective reasons that are not present in the latter.*⁶⁵

Hence, the protection of the principle of religious equality does not necessarily imply that all Spaniards must profess or hold the same beliefs or religious or ideological convictions, nor does it imply that all citizens must be treated in the same manner with regard to their ideas, beliefs or convictions⁶⁶. Rather, the establishment of this principle means that the possession of the right to freedom of conscience—in terms of equality of capacity and treatment before (in and of) the law—forms part of the common and radical legal heritage of all Spanish citizens⁶⁷. In this sense, religious equality before the law means, in the words of Viladrich, ‘being equal holders of the same right to religious freedom’⁶⁸, to which Llamazares would add the right to freedom of conscience⁶⁹. In conclusion, the legal equality established in Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution can be characterised as a ‘formal’ and ‘relative’ equality based on the principle of ‘proportionality’, which manifests itself in the negative correlate of ‘nondiscrimination’, as opposed to ‘material’ or ‘absolute’ equality⁷⁰.

Let me point out that the scope of the principle of equality extends beyond the content discussed thus far. To demonstrate this, allow me to relate Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution (discussed above in relation to freedom) to Article 9.2 of the same. This article supplements and deepens the principle of legal equality by extending the formal aspect of this concept to a substantial one⁷¹, which has two effects: first, the protection or defence of the principle of equality⁷² and second, the exercise of any necessary actions to effectively impose equality⁷³. This double effect implies two different actions on the part of the public authorities: one negative and one positive. The positive action is the intervention of the public authorities in order to promote the conditions necessary so that the equality and freedom of individuals and the groups to which they belong may be real and effective⁷⁴. The negative action is exercised through the process of removing any obstacles that prevent or hinder full equality and/or freedom⁷⁵. Each of these two functions is an integral part of the same positive guarantee of protection of equality and liberty, and both must be exercised by the public authorities. This has given rise to activities by the state aimed at overcoming the inequalities and disadvantages

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Suárez Pertierra, G.: ‘Artículo 14’, op. cit., p. 286.

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Cf. Ruffini, F.: *Corso di diritto ecclesiastico italiano. La libertà come diritto pubblico subjetivo*, Turin, 1924, pp. 424 ff.

67

Cf. Llamazares, D.: *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, op. cit., pp. 246-254; Viladrich, P.J.: ‘Principios informadores...’, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

68

Viladrich, P.J.: ‘Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...’, op. cit., pp. 72 ff.

69

Llamazares, D.: *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, op. cit., pp. 250-254.

70

For a discussion of the differences between these terms, see Finnochiaro, F.: *Uguaglianza giuridica...*, op. cit., pp. 41 ff.

71

Cf. Battaglia, F.: *Libertà ed eguaglianza...*, op. cit., pp. 29-44.

72

Cf. Mortati, C.: ‘Il lavoro nella Costituzione’, in *Diritto del lavoro*, 1954, p. 153; Romagnoli, V.: ‘Il principio d’eguaglianza...’, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

73

Cf. Basso: ‘Per uno sviluppo democratico dell’ordinamento costituzionale italiano’, in *Studi per il ventesimo anniversario dell’Assemblea Costituente*, iv, pp. 11 ff.; Bellini, P.: ‘Libertà dell’uomo e fattore religioso...’, op. cit., pp. 133 ff.; Bobbio, N.: *Politica e cultura*, pp. 172 ff.; Cardia, C.: ‘Società moderna e diritto di libertà’, op. cit., pp. 81 ff.; Romagnoli, V.: ‘Il principio d’eguaglianza...’, op. cit., pp. 116 ff.

74

Cf. Cardia, C.: ‘Società moderna...’, op. cit., pp. 80-81; Suárez Pertierra, G.: ‘Artículo 14’, op. cit., pp. 293-294.

75

Cf. Finnochiaro, F.: *Uguaglianza giuridica...*, op. cit., pp. 47-48; Sánchez Agesta, L.: *Sistema político de la Constitución española de 1978*, Nacional, Madrid, 1980, pp. 83 ff.; Suárez Pertierra, G.: ‘Artículo 14’, op. cit., pp. 294 ff.; Viladrich, P.J.: ‘Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...’, op. cit., pp. 68 ff.

of specific groups in society. Positive discrimination measures have been adopted that, by virtue of the application of the article in question, cannot be understood as forbidden by the legal system on the grounds that they are in conflict with the principle of equality.

The third guiding principle of the Spanish legal system in matters of religion is secularity⁷⁶, which means that ideas, beliefs and ideological or religious convictions in and of themselves may not form part of the nature of the Spanish state⁷⁷. Furthermore, as a secular entity, the state must oblige the public authorities to carry out two functions⁷⁸: one positive and one negative. In their positive function, the public authorities must defend the human dignity of the citizens (cf. Article 10.1 of the Spanish Constitution)⁷⁹. The negative function is the absolute lack legal competence of the state, as a radically nontotalitarian entity, in questions

of acts of faith, from both a positive and negative point of view⁸⁰.

Thus, the principle of secularity implies that the Spanish state may neither become the protector of any specific dogmas, beliefs or religious convictions, nor impose any specific religious conceptions on public life, nor take on any single faith, creed, belief or conviction, even if the faith in question were that professed by the majority of Spanish citizens or by a part of society, since the adoption of any of these positions would constitute a violation of both the principle of 'equality in freedom of conscience'⁸¹ and that of secularity. The principle of secularity also prevents any confusion between religious purposes and goals and those of the state, which eliminates the possibility of religious values or interests being adopted to measure the legitimacy or justice of the laws or actions of the public authorities⁸². Nevertheless, under the principle of secularity, the religious factor is seen as a positive value of the common good of Spanish society⁸³—not religion in and of itself⁸⁴, but the attitude of recognising, protecting and promoting the fundamental right to freedom of

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Article 16.3 of the Spanish Constitution: 'No religion shall have a state character.'

77

Cf. Briones, I.: 'La laicidad en la jurisprudencia francesa', in *Ius Canonicum*, xxxiv, 71 (1996), pp. 259-281; Calvo Álvarez, J.: *Orden público y factor religioso en la Constitución española*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 1983, pp. 230-235; Dalla Torre, D.: *Il primato della coscienza. Laicità e libertà nell'esperienza giuridica contemporanea*, Rome, 1992; d'Onorio, J.B. (dir.): *La laïcité u defi de la modernité*, Paris, 1990; Llamazares, D.: *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, op. cit., pp. 260-266; Martí, J.: 'El concepto de laicidad y su evolución en el derecho francés', in *Revista española de derecho canónico*, 50 (1993), pp. 251-278; Molano, E.: 'La laicidad del estado en la Constitución española', in *Anuario de derecho eclesiástico del estado*, ii (1986), pp. 239-256; Reina, V. and Reina A.: *Lecciones de derecho eclesiástico...*, op. cit., pp. 314 ff.; Roca, M.J.: 'La neutralidad del estado: fundamento doctrinal y actual delimitación en la jurisprudencia', in *Revista española de derecho constitucional*, 48 (1996), pp. 251-272; Saraceni, G.: 'Laico: travalgata semántica di un termine', in *Il principio di laicità nello stato democratico*, Messina, 1996, pp. 49 ff.; Viladrich, P.J.: 'Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...', op. cit., pp. 60 ff.

78

Cf. Corral, C.: 'Competencia-incompetencia del estado en materia eclesiástica', in *Etudes de droit et d'histoire. Mélanges Mgr. H. Wagnon*, Leuven, 1976, pp. 97-123.

79

Cf. Viladrich, P.J.: 'Principios informadores...', op. cit., pp. 221-222.

80

For an argument in favour of this, see Manaranche, A.: *Laïcisation, laïcisme, laïcité*, in *Catholicisme: hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, iv (1963), p. 1646. For an argument against this, see Mejan, F.: 'La laicidad del estado en derecho positivo y de hecho', in *La laicidad*, Taurus, Madrid, 1963, p. 134.

81

Terminology used by Llamazares in his book *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, op. cit., pp. 260-266.

82

Cf. STC 24/1982, of May 13, legal basis 1.

83

Cf. Calvo Álvarez, J.: *Orden público...*, op. cit., p. 232; Corral, C.: 'El sistema constitucional y el régimen de acuerdos específicos', in *Los acuerdos entre la iglesia y España*, Madrid, 1980, p. 114; Pérez Llantada, J.: 'La dialéctica iglesia-estado ante el momento constitucional', en *Lecturas a la Constitución española*, ii, Madrid, 1978, p. 141; Roca, M.J.: 'Neutralidad del estado...', op. cit., pp. 251-272; Viladrich, P.J.: 'Ateísmo y libertad religiosa...', op. cit., p. 62.

84

Cf. Hervada, J.: 'Pensamientos sobre sociedad plural...', op. cit., p. 74.

conscience, religion and worship of individuals and religious communities⁸⁵.

The fourth guiding principle is that of cooperative relations between the state and the various religious faiths⁸⁶. In the Spanish legal system, as I understand it, these cooperative relations act as an instrumental technique through which the right to freedom of conscience is made effective⁸⁷—and not only as an option made available to the public authorities, but as a binding and imperative mandate⁸⁸. Although these cooperative relations with the state are not incompatible with the secularity of the state⁸⁹, they may significantly limit the state's neutrality with respect to religion. As a result, these relations with the various religious faiths—specifically with regard to their activities—must not be identified with an act of direct and positive evaluation of religious interests as such⁹⁰, for such an evaluation—in my understanding—would be incompatible with the configuration of the secular state. Based on this analysis, we can

deduce a negative concept of 'cooperation', in that 'cooperating' must never mean a union between the religious faiths and the public authorities for the purposes of achieving specific common ends or goals⁹¹. As a result, the only positive tasks that the Spanish state may carry out, as far as cooperation is concerned, are the protection and promotion of equality in its citizens' possession and exercise of freedom of conscience⁹², and the establishment of regulations governing religious faiths⁹³.

In any analysis of the scope and content of the various specific constitutional principles that inform our legal system with regard to freedom of conscience, we must note that the Spanish Constitution establishes a political system that adopts the formula of secularity under the basic principles of religious freedom and equality. The Spanish system can therefore be classified as neutrality-based and, more specifically, an example of a secular state.

I will now enumerate a series of general principles that characterise and inform this system. First, fundamental rights are granted to individuals, who are considered the active parties to said rights. Individuals are, therefore, the original holders of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thus, while groups and communities also enjoy these rights, they do so as derived, instrumental parties that are, in a sense, dependent, since the rights they exercise as a group are in fact individual rights. This principle has logical consequences in religious matters, since the model is configured under the principle of personalisation. As a result, relations between the Spanish state and the various religious faiths take on a secondary, dependent nature,

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Cf. Llamazares, D.: *Derecho de la libertad...*, i, op. cit., pp. 260-266.

86

Article 16.3 of the Spanish Constitution: '*The public authorities shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and shall consequently maintain appropriate cooperation relations with the Catholic Church and other confessions.*'

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Cf. Contreras Mazario, J.M.: *El régimen jurídico de la asistencia religiosa...*, op. cit., pp. 381-382; Fernández-Coronado, A.: 'Principio de igualdad y técnica de cooperación', in *La ley*, 1983-2, pp. 76-81; Llamazares, D.: 'El principio de cooperación del estado con las confesiones religiosas: fundamento, alcance y límites', in *Revista del Centro de Estudios Constitucionales*, 3 (1988), pp. 199-231.

88

Cf. Echeverría, L. de: 'La nueva Constitución española ante el hecho religioso', in *El hecho religioso en la nueva Constitución española*, Instituto San Raimundo de Peñafort, Salamanca, 1980, p. 66.

89

Cf. Ferrer, J.: 'Laicidad del estado y cooperación con las confesiones', in *Anuario de derecho eclesiástico del estado*, iii (1987), pp. 237-248.

90

Cf. Llamazares, D.: 'El principio de cooperación...', op. cit., pp. 199-231.

91

Cf. Contreras Mazario, J.M.: *El régimen jurídico de la asistencia...*, op. cit., pp. 385-386.

92

Cf. Fernández-Coronado, A.: 'Principio de igualdad...', op. cit., pp. 80-81.

93

Cf. Llamazares, D.: 'El principio de cooperación...', op. cit., pp. 229-231.

and are aimed at making the right to freedom of conscience real and effective. Second, ideological pluralism is the only appropriate framework for full and free human realisation, development and formation⁹⁴. And third, positive consideration is given to the phenomenon of religion—not religious interests as such, but rather the citizens' fundamental right to freedom of conscience⁹⁵, whose most important correlate is the principle of participation.

Thus, the concept of 'justice' referred to in Article 1.1 of the Spanish Constitution is conceived as equality in freedom. That is, the personality and dignity of each human being lies in his/her freedom, which corresponds equally and originally to all people (i.e. the principle of personalisation)⁹⁶. This freedom is only possible if a party has access to—and education in—the possibility to choose between various options (principle of pluralism), and the capacity to make decisions about his/her own life and the society in which he/she lives (principle of participation). All the other guiding principles of the Spanish legal system, such as secularity and cooperation, are therefore subordinated to this goal.

As a result, our system must ensure that this model of positive secularity is directed towards the full exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and religion—a right which, in our constitutional system, is determined by two elements. The first is the principle of personalisation—that is, the individual

as the focal point of the system: fundamental rights are granted to human beings as such, and only in a secondary manner are they granted to faiths or groups. The second is the principle of pluralism: a right can only truly exist if there is plurality, just as freedom can only exist if we have freedom of choice. All this is also combined with the principle of participation. For the purposes of the present discussion, this principle implies putting organisations—intermediate organisations, or in this case, religious organisations—in a position to be able to participate in any decision-making processes that may affect them.

Thus, one element, one expression of this combination of the principle of secularity, separation of church and state, and neutrality between church and state, and of the combination of the principles of cooperation and participation, is the state's establishment of cooperative relations with the various faiths. These relations provide the opportunity for the faiths to participate in the agreement-based legislation that governs them.

At the time of the ratification of the Spanish Constitution, the question of religion was of the utmost importance. The fact that the first organic law to develop a fundamental right was Organic Law 7/1980, of June 5, on Religious Freedom demonstrates the emphasis that Spanish lawmakers placed on this matter at the time.

This element of participation is also manifested in the fact that various faiths have signed cooperation agreements with the Spanish state. In the case of the Catholic Church, Spain signed agreements with the Holy See on January 3, 1979—that is, immediately after following ratification of the Constitution in 1978. These agreements remain in effect today. In 1992, Spain signed three agreements with minority faiths: one with the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities in Spain, another with the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, and another with the Islamic Commission of Spain. These agreements are yet another expression of this element of collaboration and cooperation and an example of how laws can act as an element of

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Cf. Soriano, R.: 'Del pluralismo confesional al pluralismo religioso íntegro: los límites al principio de igualdad religiosa', in *Revista de las Cortes Generales*, 7 (1986), pp. 95-157.

95

Cf. Llamazares, D.: *Derecho de la libertad de conciencia*, i, op. cit., pp. 270-271; Marzoa, A.: 'No confesionalidad e indiferentismo en materia religiosa (dos términos no implicados)', in *Anuario de derecho eclesiástico del estado*, v (1989), pp. 103-107.

96

Cf. Llamazares, D.: *Derecho eclesiástico del estado español*, 2nd edn., Servicio de Publicaciones de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1991, p. 283.

4. The Role of Public Authorities: Cultural Pluralism

mediation in conflict resolution. Spain's agreement with the Muslim community was the first and, until very recently, only such agreement signed by a democratic European state. This demonstrates that laws can be used not only as a means of recognising rights but as an element of mediation.

I will now discuss an issue that has arisen in relation to the law and to the agreements signed in 1992, and which has been discussed in the Spanish Parliament: how the state can exercise its authority to enter into agreements with the various faiths without stripping the Parliament of its legislative power. We all know that the legislative power belongs to the Parliament. The problem is that when the government enters into an agreement with a particular religious faith, it is essentially stripping the legislature of its legislative power. This needs to be done in a way that does not deprive the Parliament of its power.

It was therefore established that the Parliament would have to pass a law to approve any such agreement. Essentially, the agreement would be processed through the legislature. Even with this decision, however, it has been impossible to overcome all difficulties related to the stripping of legislative power. When these agreements were signed, a variety of questions arose: To what extent was the Parliament bound by the formal and material content of the agreements? Could the Parliament modify the content of the agreements? This problem is mostly academic, although it was discussed—and continues to be discussed—in the Spanish Parliament. In any case, these agreements established specific rights for the three aforementioned religious faiths.

Another issue that arises in relation to this matter is the extent to which a system of special rights—as can be deduced from the agreements—is compatible with the principles of secularity and neutrality of the state, or with the fact that all other organisations must recur to the general Organic Law on Religious Freedom. How can the existence of special rights be made compatible with the principle of equality, and with the law of the land?

How can we avoid the creation of multiple legal systems, which would violate the principle of equality? How can we grant special rights to certain groups, but not to others? To what extent are the public authorities responsible for promoting these special rights? And how can they do so without neglecting all the others—those who hold the right to freedom of conscience but do not enjoy a special agreement and, as a result, often see their right go unrecognised, or find that they cannot exercise this right in the same way as those who do enjoy such an agreement? In practice, the authorities have established a 'tiered scheme' that to a large extent favours mediation and conflict resolution, but which in many other cases may inherently foster the emergence of conflicts.

In addition to passing laws on the question of religion, the Spanish government has created two other instruments for the participation of religious organisations. The first is the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom. This committee forms part of the Ministry of Justice. Its purpose, as its name suggests, is to advise the Minister of Justice on policies related to the application of the right to religious freedom in Spain. One participation-related element lies in the fact that the Advisory Committee is made up of equal numbers of representatives of three different areas. Nine of its members represent the various government ministries; another nine members represent various religious faiths that are deeply rooted in Spain; and a further nine members are renowned experts in the field. In particular, I am interested in the way the faiths are represented within this tripartite committee. Of the nine members currently representing the various faiths, four are Catholic, two Evangelical, two Muslim and one Jewish.

Since its creation, the Advisory Committee has provided guidance on new laws related to religious freedom. In this regard, the various faiths have played a major role by expressing their respective viewpoints on the various issues that have arisen. They have shared their views on religious education in the schools, religious assistance in public centres, and the legal status of the faiths, to name just a

few examples. In terms of participation, these committee members can be considered interlocutors that engage in dialogue, speak their minds and, in most cases, reach a consensus on particular issues. Nevertheless, although the Advisory Committee has acted and is capable of acting on a consensus basis, it has also acted on the basis of majority opinion. That is, it has not always been able to reach a consensus. Let me give an example of an issue on which the Advisory Committee has acted in the interests of the majority rather than on the basis of consensus: the recognition of the Jehovah's Witnesses as a deeply rooted religious community in Spain. On this issue, the members of the Advisory Committee reached a decision based on simple majority rather than unanimity.

The other instrument for participation is the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation, of which I am currently the director. The Spanish government created this foundation in October 2004 as a means of putting the agreements of 1992 into effect. Although these agreements have the force of law, their effectiveness is often limited and the public knows little or nothing about them. Furthermore, in many cases, the goals of these agreements have not been achieved due to the practical obstacles that sometimes get in the way. One element that was taken into account in the creation of the Foundation was the fact that, although the 1992 agreements with the Evangelicals, Jews and Muslims had indeed been developed in some areas, they lacked institutional support in others. There is a debate in Spanish society as to whether the state should provide financial support to the faiths; I happen to believe that the public authorities have a responsibility in this regard. In any event, it was decided that the faiths could act as a factor in conflict resolution and, in many cases, as an element of social cohesion, taking into account the social action and activities they carry out. In fact, it is precisely for this social action that the government created the Foundation—as a means of providing financial support to the minority faiths that enjoy a cooperation agreement. As a result, it only provides economic support to the Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim faiths. The state provides

financial support to the Catholic Church by means of tax assignment.

The 21-member Board of Trustees of the Foundation is a key element of participation. Eight of its members are representatives of the faiths: three Evangelicals, three Muslims and two Jews. The Board is therefore clearly a platform for connection and dialogue between the three faiths. Although I can't say that this will necessarily continue to happen in the future, all of the Board's decisions to date on the activities of the Foundation have been reached by unanimous consensus. That is, the Board has always tried to find a consensus among all of its members. In particular, it has maintained very close relations with the federations that represent the three religions.

Finally, I want to mention one problem that has come up in Spanish society, and which I will now leave open to debate: the matter of representation of the various faiths. Who represents these communities? This debate remains open. We can try—as has been tried in Spain—to get all communities within a particular faith to come together in a single federation, headed by a president. But nevertheless, no peaceful solution has yet been found to the problem of representation. I believe that much improvement can be made in this area.



XAVIER SÀEZ I BELLOVI

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES IN CULTURAL PLURALISM

Lleida is an inland city, a major point of confluence of cultures and religions, as well as a cohesive element.

Three years ago, a three-party Catalan Government was formed. Until that time, the Catalan Government had never explicitly mentioned civil rights. The Councillorship for Civil Rights, Cooperation, and Immigration was created; however, immigration was practically left in the hands of the Ministry of Social Welfare and cooperation was associated with citizen participation. The new councillorship was based on the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City, which the Lleida City Council signed in 2001. Initially, the plan was to work on two basic rights: the right to equal opportunity and the right to the city, understood as the right of access to, and use of, public spaces.

The public authorities must be aware that rights need not necessarily be exercised, but services must indeed be provided. Therefore, from the position of agnosticism, it is possible to demand the right to religious freedom without obliging anybody to profess a religion. Legislation is the only limit to these rights.

From this perspective, we must differentiate between spirituality, religiosity and the large religious hierarchies, and respond to a basic question: is religiosity dangerous to civil society?

The fact of being Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim, Jewish or agnostic shouldn't be any different from belonging to a political party, being an environmentalist or having a particular set of priorities. It should be an element that, in the public sphere, forms part of the individual condition. Thus, the first obligation of the public authorities is to

guarantee and combine these individual rights within a plural society.

We must work in the four areas of coexistence: legal (the laws chosen by democratic consensus); attitudinal (the attitudes of the entire population, including both newcomers and natives, Catholics and Muslims, etc.); knowledge-related (because the origin of rejection is essentially the lack of knowledge and the fear this generates); and conflict regulation. Conflict is inherent to the human race. It is neither positive nor negative. Rather, it depends on management. Whenever an agreement is reached, a conflict ends; however, in a Hegelian dialectic, another one is always developing. Finally, we must work to build individual and collective identities.

Hence, the Councillorship for Civil Rights created the Municipal Assembly of Religions, a participatory body committed to involving representatives of the various religions and political parties, as well as technical experts. This body aims to apply the right to cultural and religious freedom and to promote cohesion and coexistence in the city.



PHIL SUMNER

A PARTICULAR INTERCONVICTIONAL MEDIATION METHODOLOGY FOR SOCIAL COHESION

The backdrop for the scene in which both religious and secular communities across Britain try to build cohesion is the current debate on multiculturalism. It seems to be a constantly shifting backdrop with concepts that create contradictory images for different people. It is framed, this year, with statements from two of the principal protagonists of British politics, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Gordon Brown's lecture in January to the Fabian Society addressed the need to find a better balance between diversity and integration and encouraged residents of the United Kingdom to embrace 'Britishness'. I suspect that many outside of Britain would find his definition in this regard to be either somewhat self-absorbed or perhaps even offensive: he links 'Britishness' with the values of 'liberty for all, responsibility by all and fairness to all'. I am sure that there are many other nation-states that would associate such values with their own laws and policies. Is it perhaps that his current vision of the world is far too bi-polar, betraying more about the way he perceives those countries with Muslim majorities in contradistinction to the West? Now, at the end of the year, Tony Blair has defined his stance in the debate. For him, 'British' means 'the right to be different, the duty to integrate'. I hardly think that countries which have experienced the annual influx of British holidaymakers would associate the latter half of this statement with the term 'British'. The duty to integrate is neither the preserve nor the perceived predisposition of the British, who are perhaps more renowned in Europe for their insularity.

I suggested that the concepts in this backdrop create contradictory images for different people. 'Integration' is one such concept. For all too many, it seems to suggest assimilation: 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' Such an approach implies a

preparedness to lose one's personal integrity and, therefore, hardly suits the term 'integration'. It is only by being true to the various necessary and valid identities that speak of who we are and by engaging voluntarily, in a particular geographical area, with those of different identities, and in a way that speaks of genuine respect, that we achieve real integration and thereby create a cohesive community.

A further recurring theme in the backdrop is that of secularism. Whereas faith communities together have been brought more into the various local strategic partnerships and development agencies, their presence around the table does not always go without question. The irrelevance of the faith perspective in British politics was, after all, implied by Alistair Campbell when he was Tony Blair's Director of Strategy and Communications. In 2003, he famously intervened when Tony Blair was asked about his own religious belief. He said, 'We don't do God!' Other more academic interventions into the debate have been provided, one by the Cambridge Professor Amartya Sen in his book *Identity and Violence* (London, Penguin Books Ltd., 2006). He suggests that faith schools in themselves are divisive and reflect a particular vision of Britain as a federation of communities (p. 118) leading to plural monoculturalism (p. 156). The evidence from Section 10 Judgements made for the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), however, would challenge that view. This reveals that Catholic schools in Britain significantly outperform their secular counterparts with intakes from similar socioeconomic backgrounds with regard to showing respect for others (*Quality and Performance: A Survey of Education in Catholic Schools*, Bishops' Conference for England and Wales).

On the other hand, there are British towns with significant proportions of residents from the different Asian communities where Christian faith schools have become almost exclusively white. Independent reviews have suggested that these schools need to be encouraged to do more to tackle segregation (*Oldham Independent Review*, Ritchie 2002 and *Challenging Local Communities to Change Oldham*, Cantle 2006). In other words, there are notable exceptions to national trends where different models of faith schools need to be explored. This problem is not solved by legislating to require quotas, as was proposed earlier this year, but by allowing flexibility and encouraging coordinated local responses that create greater cohesion. Faith communities clearly have a role to engage with their partners locally to find such responses. It is always important to remember, however, that when segregation has become problematic, desegregation is not a panacea but only the possible beginning of a process towards integration. True integration, like community cohesion, is only achieved when necessary and valid identity is accommodated.

There are those who would perhaps argue that faith is a choice rather than a necessary identity and, therefore, differs from identities that arise out of ethnicity. For many, however, affiliation with a faith is inherited. It is part of their history, part of the rock from which they have been hewn. In this sense, even if people, as adults, choose other faiths, they still have to address and understand how their former affiliations continue to affect who they are, how they are perceived and how they behave.

Children with mixed heritage can cause themselves significant psychological problems if they attempt to choose one heritage to the exclusion of the other. When affiliation with a faith is also inherited, repression of that identity in favour of attempting to choose another identity that seems to be more valued in society can be similarly problematic. One might well ask whether or not this is what happened to the London Bomber M. Sidique Khan. It is reported that he was well integrated into British society, choosing to wear Western clothes

and being called 'Sid' by his white friends. When the perceptions of those around him did not meet with the image he tried to portray, did he return to find a version of his original identity, though one that was in conflict with the identity to which he had aspired? If so, then this would provide a salutary message to those who simplistically speak of 'integration' when what they actually mean is closer to 'assimilation'.

It was in reaction to the riots in Northern English towns in May 2001 that the concept of 'community cohesion' in British politics was coined. Since then, different towns and cities have developed strategies to create or strengthen it. The strategy with which I have become most familiar and which I have helped to form has three strands: identity, engagement and equality. It is by addressing the first properly that one also partly addresses the other two.

For example, with regard to education, if there is a failure to nurture necessary identities through the mission statements adopted by schools, through the delivery of every curriculum area and through the provision of role models who share those identities, equal access to achievement is denied and engagement across the identities is damaged or simply fails to happen.

Identity

The Nobel prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, told the story of a young girl growing up in a dysfunctional family in 1930s America. This girl, an African-American, was subjected to physical and sexual abuse and her self-esteem was desperately low. The spoken and unspoken messages from the world around her were that people of her own ethnic identity were not valued. On the contrary, it seemed to her, from the adulation given to film stars, that the person most valued in the America of her day had to have blue eyes and look like Shirley Temple.

The well-known clinical psychologist Carl Rogers wrote about the 'self-concept' and its importance for education. He spoke of how this self-concept is

affected, both consciously and subconsciously, by the myriad of messages that spark off a process of self-comparison and self-evaluation, simply by living in a particular society. A black British clinical psychologist, Jocelyn Maxime, has carried out research to show that children of African descent, whose ethnic identities are not nurtured through their schooling, lose motivation for education.

For people to enter into healthy relationships requires the ability to believe that they are loveable. If a person's self-esteem is low, then s/he either avoids entering into a relationship or s/he tries to control the relationship so that s/he believes that s/he cannot be hurt. The same applies to cultural and religious communities. For there to be good relations between communities, each community has to believe that it is highly estimable. Then, as bridges are built, there have to be good foundations on each side. People from both cultures need to know who they are and be proud of who they are.

The mixing of cultural communities is often complicated further in that it takes place in the domain of one of those communities. People refer to themselves, for example, as being British Bangladeshi or British Muslim. This does not mean necessarily that 'British' is the superior or dominant culture but that people can either choose or, by virtue of being born into it, accept an overarching culture that becomes a common factor for a group of cultures in a particular context. Then, for example, a common language or legal system between these cultures simply helps communication and integration. It is not that the common language or legal system is superior per se, but it is essential for good communication and order in that context.

It is one thing to speak about the theory of nurturing identity and to know of its importance, but it is another matter to embed its practice strategically. One way to enable this process, with which I have been involved, is in the field of education. We gave time to lead practitioners in each curriculum area specifically to develop lesson plans and resources which their colleagues could use to nurture different religious and ethnic

identities. In Oldham, we have annual teacher development days according to curriculum area, at which each secondary school teacher must be present. We have used these days to enthuse practitioners with the theory of nurturing identity and then to give them actual examples of the work developed by the designated lead practitioners. We have also put schools in contact with imams and priests, who have good relationships with each other. For them to deliver assemblies together in schools is, in itself, a statement of respect for each other's faiths that nurtures the identities of both Muslims and Christians. Employing mentors from the different ethnic and religious communities, especially when there are few, if any, teachers from those communities, provides necessary role models. However, enabling mentors who wish to progress to become teachers gives even more value to this approach.

Engagement

a) Participation

Engagement is the second strand of the strategy. There are two elements to this strand: one is about people participating in the decision-making processes and the second is about interaction across the religious and ethnic divides. I have already spoken about more faith communities being around the table in local decision-making bodies, but to enable this there must be interfaith coordination. Noticeably, in the recent Government White Paper (*Strong and Prosperous Communities*, October 2006), 'interfaith work' is cited as one of the eight principles of community cohesion. If this interfaith work is truly to enable engagement in the decision-making processes, it must be representative and co-ordinated. It must also carry authority.

The faith communities, however, are not the only partners in the decision-making processes. It is important that they use their organisation and skills not to oust others from influence but to champion the engagement of those communities, which may be hard to reach.

b) Interaction

There are two main approaches to facilitating interaction between different communities. One is to apply the theory of a 'critical mass' and the second is to apply John Paul Lederach's theory of a 'critical yeast' (*The Moral Imagination*, Oxford University Press, 2005). The former requires the strategic involvement of all the decision-making and service-provision partners in towns or cities in enabling interaction. There are programmes, for example, to link up monocultural schools with others having different ethnic or religious intakes. There are events to bring members of the different faith communities together in discovering more of what we share as well as respecting difference. The hope, with this approach, is that we reach a point where interaction becomes more normal than segregation, a 'critical mass'.

One of the essential tools for good interaction is language. I am not referring here to the sharing of a national language, but rather to an appropriate use of language that enables understanding. Oldham is currently buying into an American-developed programme called Philosophy for Children/Communities. This involves children or groups from communities talking through issues of importance to them, following a particular model for that dialogue. Early reports indicate that it has improved relationships between children and parents, improved relationships between children of different ethnic backgrounds and reduced the number of recorded violent incidents in schools.

The second approach with regard to interaction is that of working with chosen smaller groups of people. Lederach calls this the 'critical yeast' approach; one only needs a little yeast to cause the dough to rise. It involves building networks of relationships rather like a spider might build a web. The spider finds anchor points that will enable the web to cover the whole area and then links all those points to each other and to the centre. To build the web, the spider has to be completely aware of the area in which s/he operates. S/he has to build in a flexible and sustainable way so that the web

can cope with individual attacks on the structure without being completely ruined.

In the northwestern England, Burnley and Oldham are using this approach. Choosing anchor points from different sections of the political spectrum, as well as from different religious backgrounds and from positions of social leadership, both towns brought people representing the 'anchor points' together for a series of meetings. Besides discussing agreed issues, the meetings witnessed the telling of individual stories that were sometimes painful but always engaging. I would like to think that the editor of one of the local newspapers, who was one of the anchor points in Oldham, wrote a front-page spread on a multicultural vision for a prosperous town, as a result of these meetings. If I am right, then this would certainly be an example of what is meant by 'critical yeast'.

In Oldham, we have extended the 'critical yeast' theory to address two of the central government's eight principles for community cohesion, 'involving young people' and 'interfaith work'. We have set up a Young People's Interfaith Forum, with representatives of all the secondary schools in the Borough joining other young people from college or even from the early years of work. We have also applied for funding to take about twenty young people who could be described as 'anchor points' to Srebrenica and Auschwitz, as well as to the seats of political power in England and Europe. We hope that this activity will take place in June of next year.

Equality

Equality is the final strand of our work. So much of this strand has already been addressed through work on 'identity'. One of the themes running through the recent work of the Oldham Partnership is that of 'narrowing the gap'. It is clear, for example, that heart problems and diabetes affect people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin much more than people of other ethnic groups in our town. But there are also gaps in many other areas, suggesting inequality with regard to service provision.

Academic achievement has been consistently lower for people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African descent for several years. While poverty has some effect on this outcome, the belief is that there is also unequal access to the curriculum because of lack of awareness of the particular needs of the different ethnic and religious communities.

Poverty itself is experienced more keenly in the inner urban areas of northern Britain than in the suburbs or villages that surround them. It is in those inner urban areas that Pakistani and Bangladeshi and African Caribbean communities are concentrated. Grand municipal schemes that seem to bring greater prosperity to an area do not always provide equal access to that prosperity. Those who have worked with credit unions or Local Exchange Trading Systems know the importance of stimulating community economies. Schemes that enable the growth of new businesses within particular communities are just as essential as those that enable the town as a whole to become more prosperous.

Conclusion

In conclusion, diversity is a growing reality for our towns and cities. A secularist response that denies the relevance of religion or culture will undermine social cohesion. By understanding and affirming the necessary and valid identities of all those who make up our communities, we enable engagement, address inequalities and so create social cohesion.



JEAN-MARC AVELINE

THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF SOCIAL COHESION

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the organisers of this colloquium for their invitation. The presentations we have had the opportunity to hear have been greatly instructive. My contribution to the debate will begin with certain observations on the issues and ambiguities of what we call (perhaps somewhat too simply), ‘interreligious dialogue’. Thereafter, I will delve into certain reflections on the role of religions in social cohesion.

Issues and ambiguities of interreligious dialogue

I am thoroughly convinced that interreligious dialogue is a crucial issue of our times. All my work is dedicated to heightening the perception of its importance for today’s society and within the Catholic Church itself. Certainly, there was Vatican II and decisive texts such as *Nostra ætate* and *Dignitatis humanæ*. But there is still a great deal to be done. Many fears and prejudices and a lack of education and reflection on the Christian faith further weaken Christians’ commitment to the engagements officially made at Vatican II and nonetheless strongly consolidated thereafter, both under the long pontificate of John Paul II (as in Assisi in 1986 or at the Wailing Wall in 2000) and under that of Benedict XVI, just now beginning (for instance, on his recent trip to Turkey).

These weaknesses, at least in France, also stem from a certain ambiguity in the use of the expression ‘interreligious dialogue’, in the sense that this term can be used to designate both the role that *states* would like religions to play to contribute to social peace and the attitude that the *faithful*, in the name of their faith, see fit to adopt with regard to the faithful of religions other than their own, which

is not at all the same thing. The former definition arises from a socio-political theory of religions, the latter from theological and pastoral thought. Religions, due to the very critical and prophetic dimension of their founding messages, regularly experience the distance between what states would like them to do and that which they deem their mission to be. History has certainly demonstrated the dangers associated with reciprocal attempts to exploit the relation between state and religion!

Another difficulty can be detected in the fact that, today, ecclesiastical engagement in favour of interreligious dialogue is increasingly accompanied, on the official level, by a concern for alerting the institutions of other religious traditions to the need for real *reciprocity* regarding the exercise of religious freedom. Indeed, the spiritual and theological productivity of exchanges among the faithful of different religions could not dispense with institutional responsibility regarding respect for religious freedom in the world. Nonetheless, it would be too simple to transform this legitimate concern into an alibi by asserting that ‘there will be no dialogue here since there is no reciprocity over there!’ In my opinion, it is important not to confuse the *institutional level*, on which it is normal to express a concern for reciprocity, whether with regard to respecting the freedom of religion or the rights of minorities, and the *existential level*, where the essence is not simply demanding reciprocity but rather a gratuitous spirit.

And yet—despite these difficulties and ambiguities, which must be taken into account under pain of lapsing into irenic naivety, which is the worst enemy of true dialogue—encounters with believers of other religions constitute, for the Church and for any religion, an important imperative that is

not only part of their historical responsibility at the onset of the 21st century, but also proves to be equally productive in the spiritual, pastoral and theological senses. For the Christian faith, it raises with renewed intensity the issue of the 'divine sense of what humanly separates us', to reiterate the formulation made in 1984 by Christian de Chergé, Prior of Tibhirine, based on the experience of a monastic life open to encounters with Muslims.⁹⁷

Religions and social cohesion

I will limit myself to making a few observations in the time allotted. First of all, I believe we must remain quite attentive and *not forget the lessons of the past*: religions, above all those considered founded on a historical revelation, are always in danger of succumbing to the temptation of considering themselves 'absolute', and confusing the absoluteness of God with the absoluteness of religion or of the religious institution in question. When a religion yields to this temptation, it allows itself to be drawn into violence and it is then often necessary to call on reason to denounce the *pathologies of religion*. Inversely, when reason employed with too much assurance neglects the existential matters that religions serve to convey, it runs the risk of becoming totalising if not totalitarian and of atrophying into technical, scientific or bureaucratic rationality. It is thus advisable, though not always easy, for religion to rescue us from *pathologies of reason*⁹⁸ as well. When, in society, we have recourse to the religious dimension to consolidate social cohesion, these risks of pathology must be kept in mind and we must remain attentive to the manner in which we appeal to religions. This is my first observation.

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Text reprinted in: Christian de Chergé, *L'invincible espérance*, Paris, Bayard Éditions / Centurion, 1997, pp. 109-166.

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See the debate held in Munich on January 19, 2004, between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas: 'Les fondements prépolitiques de l'État démocratique', *Esprit* (July 2004), pp. 5-28.

Nonetheless, and this is my second observation, it seems to me that we are undergoing *a rather paradoxical period*, at least in France. Certainly, we live in a society which has experienced a 'movement away from religion', as Marcel Gauchet stated, in the sense that secularity has allowed social life to be independent of religious authorities.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, though it was believed that religions would die like vulgar superstitions that would inevitably succumb to the blows of reason, or that they would simply become private opinions with no impact nor pertinence in the public sphere, it turns out that government authorities and often the actors of social, economic and cultural life are now confronted with the issue of religion in an innovative, unprecedented manner and call on religious leaders to contribute to dealing with certain problems, in particular those concerning social cohesion, cultural transmission and the relation to history, memory and that which is truly human, as well as in settling international conflicts. Thus, religions can either agree to enter these processes and make a contribution to this new debate or not.

Since then, and this brings us to my third observation, for this contribution to be possible and productive, I believe *several conditions* must be met. The *first*, slightly paradoxical, is that we not limit ourselves strictly to religions, but also open this debate to non-religious humanists. As may have occurred to many of you, I have often felt closer to the postulates of non-religious humanists than to those of slightly fundamentalist religious individuals, though they be Christian! The *second* condition is that the main specificity of religions be kept in mind, namely, prayer or meditation, an opening up and delving inward. Even the act of dialogue is a religious act, as Raimon Panikkar loves to recall!¹⁰⁰ Religion is a very specific object that

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Cf. Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde. Une histoire politique de la religion*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

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Cf. Raimon PANIKKAR, *Dieu, Yahweh, Allah, Shiva : l'inévitable dialogue*, Gordes, Le Relié, 2003, p. 63.

resembles the aesthetic experience: you cannot *fully* grasp it from the outside.

In consequence, the *third* condition consists of making a clear distinction between ‘interreligious dialogue’ and ‘mediation’. Interreligious dialogue is not the same as mediation with a view to resolving conflicts. Which means, *in the first place*, that the task of mediation will be more productive the more religions are involved. Moreover, and even if there is no conflict, in a real process of faith we must ask ourselves, ‘What changes in the comprehension of my own faith if I take religious plurality and the legitimate truth claims of other religions seriously?’ This means, *in the second place*, that religions cannot be viewed as simple ‘agents of social cohesion’. The strength of a religion lies in its critical and prophetic capacity with regard to the society in which it exists. The critical potential of religions is a non-negligible dynamic appealing to the struggle against injustice, and therefore at times against the prevailing beliefs, which, in turning to religions to guarantee a certain social peace (at times for security or even electioneering reasons, or in cases where they serve one another...), carries the risk of anesthetising them by exploiting them, of making them lose the best, most original contributions they have to make. Therefore, a task of discernment is in order such that the dynamics of dialogue may serve the practice of mediation.

Conclusion

What will become of interreligious dialogue over the course of the 21st century? Some would see it as a beautiful utopia inherited from the previous century, a view still held by a few naive dreamers but inevitably destined to disappear through the hardships of history and its cortege of wars and misunderstandings. Others remark that it is a typically Christian initiative, misunderstood both from the inside because it is suspected of adapting too easily to the surrounding relativism and from the outside because it is perceived as a new proselytism, all the more formidable as it advances under the mask of a candid invitation to dialogue and peace. Therefore, though an attitude

of humility prevails in interreligious exchange, such exchange can provide those who practice it surprising channels for delving into their own faith, because they are called upon to undergo a true process of conversion—not in the sense of embracing another’s faith, but in acknowledging that God is even greater than they believed. If you accept being humbled before the truth of your confession, then it will render you free to discern it at work in many channels other than the one in which you originally accepted it.

It is also a question of humility before the mystery of the human being. Clearly, what religions are saying is that human beings are infinitely greater than they appear. This is why they are (or should be) the leaders in the struggle for human dignity and respect for justice. It is certainly not necessary to be a believer to struggle in favour of civil and cultural rights, but it would be profoundly grievous if religions were not called upon to cooperate in this sphere. This, in my opinion, is where the dynamics of dialogue can be useful in collaborating in the practice of mediation, a practice resulting from an intrinsic methodology that should be abided by.

I would add that mediation, as dialogue, is first and foremost a school (and even an ascetic school) of listening. And sometimes one believes one has technically understood a problem when in reality one has overlooked the deepest human components. Allow me to close my presentation with a short Jewish story. They say that one day a Rabbi who was held in high esteem by his students was approached by some of them after one of his lectures. Filled with admiration, they told him, ‘Rabbi, we love you!’ And the Rabbi said, ‘Do you know what makes me suffer?’ Somewhat taken aback by this question, the students, after rapidly discussing amongst themselves, replied, ‘No!’ Then the Rabbi declared, ‘If you do not know what makes me suffer, how can you say that you love me?’

This, in my opinion, is the profoundly human aspect underlying an authentic task of mediation.



PATRICE BRODEUR

INTERWORLDVIEW DIALOGUE AS A SOURCE OF MEDIATION TOWARDS MORE EQUITABLE SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion based on respect for one another in all of our differences and similarities requires dialogue, not only as a fundamental social value for all components of a community, but also as a virtue at the very core of individual social practices. Dialogue is, in and of itself, mediation between ideas and behaviour, between the experiences of different peoples and our perceptions of reality. If well used on a daily basis in our localised interactions as well as in our global thought, where global effects are combined, dialogue allows subtle, sensitive mediation, a constant negotiation of life, whether in urban or other environments.

But how can we acknowledge that dialogue is a key aspect of mediation? First of all, according to an expression used by Travis Rejman at this conference, there is a 'complementariness between dialogue and activism'. I would go even further: they cannot exist independently of one another, as they are intrinsic to one another. When, earlier today, Professor Johnston spoke of his work in Sudan and an approach he called 'faith-based diplomacy', he also demonstrated that dialogue is intrinsic to the process of wishing and managing to build peace by first laying the foundations of dialogue relations more inclusive of the non-rational dimensions of faith and religious values in the already precarious, complex situation of this vast African country. In fact, by drawing on the well of faith and the particularities of identity of all those involved in the conflict in one way or another, solutions that delve deep because they are more local and more rooted in the values and aspirations of each individual and each group can serve as bridges for coming together and eventually finding real solutions. In other words, it is not by coming from outside with a toolbox full of rational mediation methods that the best mediation work can be accomplished.

One must immerse oneself in local cultures and practices insofar as possible, and dialogue is the best possible vehicle for doing so.

But what sort of dialogue do we mean? Interreligious? Intercultural? Interfaith? Interworldview? Words are never neutral: each has its history, with a long genealogy. Their meaning functions through social structures of representation of reality that have (import and export) consequences on our human behaviour of interdependence on a daily basis. The importance of the choice of words used, or omitted, also reflects a complementariness between the word and silence, between speaking and listening, praying and meditating, acting and not acting. All of these choices exist at the core of all dialogue, no matter what the definition. Nevertheless, there is a term I dare to give preference to because, based on its genealogy in Western languages, the weight of its history remains less soiled by a past of multiple conflicts between religious and secularising political powers. The term in question is 'interworldview' dialogue, a dialogue based on sharing the worldviews that each human being carries within, no matter who it is and, above all, no matter what the degree of self-perception.

Indeed, every human being has a worldview more or less explicit of itself and others. This worldview, whether wholly or partially religious, according to the definition that the interlocutors may have of 'religion' or other concepts (agnosticism, atheism, secularism, etc., in all of its varieties), the concept of 'worldview' allows full inclusion of all human beings. This is not an innocuous statement. Indeed, on the contrary: whereas different philosophies and approaches to non-violent activism deconstruct the different forms of human structures that lead to, allow or provide a vehicle for violence

in its different forms, this concept involves a deconstruction of language, and therefore the words used in our discourse and conversations. Since the words 'religions' and 'cultures' emerged from highly contextualised conflicts between religious and secular political powers in the initially European history of the Enlightenment, these two words are carriers of hermeneutical sensibilities that have survived the past and continue even today to draw lines of mutual exclusion. According to some, interreligious dialogue would not include them because they do not define themselves as being 'religious' in any way. By the same token, I have often come across people for whom their religious identity is so central to them that they feel excluded in a sphere of intercultural dialogue where the implicit definition of 'culture' seems to deny or limit certain dimensions of religious identity, such as the role of transcendence, to name but one.

In sum, both the words 'interreligious' and 'intercultural' can, in their own way, produce an effect of exclusion. And since I take it for granted that any form of exclusion can lead, sooner or later, to violence of one sort or another, I consider it very important to develop a vocabulary that can avoid exclusion insofar as possible or, inversely, foster inclusion. Hence the importance, in my opinion, of choosing a dialogue that I call 'interworldview' as it is based on the encounters that all human beings can experience if they choose to share their respective worldviews.

Social cohesion that wishes to foster justice requires not only management of cultural, religious and ideological pluralism (democracy), but also legal and other forms of pluralism. These challenges of the diversity of identity lie at the heart of pluralism, which remains a philosophy of living plurality in keeping with the right to respect for differences and similarities.

Yet what form of diversity management, what philosophy or pluralist worldview, can be truly sustainable today on a planetary scale at a time of unbridled, inexorable globalisation? Though I have no general response to this enormous challenge, I would

nevertheless like to propose a partial response. An interworldview reading allows a more open inclusion of worldviews rooted in discourses of representations that never escape the dynamics of power. Normative versus exceptional, central versus marginal discourse—all of this falls within a power dynamic which we can never fully subscribe. In fact, all human relations fall within the framework of daily power relations; there is no real neutrality or equality, although certain worldviews can be driven by a profound desire to foster these two values. Through open dialogue full of compassion, nothing can be taken for granted; one can expect, at best, to promote equitable and durable relations. For instance, we are now going from a period of human history where revolutions were viable means for change to a period where the challenge lies more in social transformation that can both reduce conflicts and increase social cohesion while protecting the rights and responsibilities of each individual. This is no small affair.

For me, the greatest challenge remains that of transforming our identity discourses, too often competitive, into cooperative identity discourses, into a terrestrial human ecology that can only guarantee social cohesion through the practice of interworldview dialogue on all scales. By creating spaces and processes of inclusive decision-making, beginning for instance with the use of a term such as 'interworldview dialogue', the conceptual exclusions that foster violence can be reduced. Just as 'participative democracy is complementary to representative democracy' (André Porto), participative democracy (via dialogue) among the different worldviews is complementary to combative democracy (via rationalist debates such as those that many universities reproduce and wish to consolidate on a global scale today). To practice participative democracy rooted in interworldview dialogue, compassionate discourse must be included on the same level as rational discourse, because if cohesion or social unity can one day exist, it will be of the order of the heart and never of the order of thought.

Then a second challenge emerges: How can we create a dialogue of the heart that is neither

simplistic, naive nor party to the status quo? It is true, as Ms. Barankitse pointed out so well in her opening speech, that the place of the heart (love and compassion) is at the very core of interworldview dialogue and therefore mediation. One can recall here, for instance, the growing importance of the study of emotional intelligence to complement rational intelligence, which was for so long the only definition of intelligence that the Western scientific establishment put forth. Howard Gardner's research on multiple intelligences also helps us to grasp the complexity and above all the importance of diversity, not only on a biological or identity-related level but also with regard to intelligence.

It is in light of these 'discoveries' on multiple intelligences and the importance of their complementariness that the latest book by John Paul Lederach, *The Art of Imagination*, takes on its full scope. According to the author, imagination and creativity are central to finding solutions to our current challenges in order to foster more inclusive processes in our decision-making, which should be based on the values of justice founded on the principle of equity. We can exercise this power of imagination and creation in many a sphere of human activity, including that of rational thought. By expanding the concept of intelligence as Gardner does, new avenues for solutions become possible. By the same token, in expanding the notion of dialogue to include interworldview dialogue, new solutions can emerge in our very tense human relations. Indeed, it is now possible to imagine a change from the norm of thought limited to rationality and 'the politics of identities' (primarily: gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ideology and language) to a norm of thought based on the principle of the great diversity of human discourses, expressions, intelligences and relations.

But it is not enough to go from singular to plural normativeness. We must also examine the principles and value structures upon which a discourse of diversity and interworldview inclusion is built in a world of inevitable power relations. For instance, it is not enough to go from using the word 'identity' primarily in the singular to

the plural in order to discuss multiple identities and their various hierarchisations according to different societies, both past and present. We must also consider the implications of the fact that all identity management is always done through collective structures that give precedence to reproduction instead of imagining possible changes that would be potentially beneficial for those beyond the identity group prioritised by the collective structures in question. In the face of conflicts of interest (Guillén), how can we go from competition to cooperation unless we render the interests of the respective parties in competition more transparent in order to better imagine the collective interests of all parties? Finally, there are also the major, long-standing challenges raised, among others, by indigenous traditions throughout the world: our human relation with the natural environment of our planet. Can we continue in a relation of gross exploitation that only serves the short-term interests of certain human identity groups, going against the principles of equity and above all respect for the very environment that allows us to live?

To this end and by way of brief conclusion, I thus suggest that interworldview dialogue be considered an important, even essential source of all mediation seeking more equitable social cohesion. Such dialogue should also go beyond inter-human dialogue to include dialogue among living species, as they all carry their respective worldviews, which are only now beginning to be discerned by science. By the same token, we must also rediscover ancestral traditions that are much closer to the natural world. A paradigm shift is required in order to go from the current identity politics to a politics of values and virtues. Let us imagine forms of dialogue-mediation with variable geometries that integrate the body, the mind, the emotions and the spirit (the soul) in order to promote inclusion moving towards a pluralism increasingly open to diversity, this refreshing principle that allows us to live together with other species on the planet.



MACLEORD BAKER OCHOLA

THE ELEPHANT, THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

Thank you very much, my brothers in Christ and dear participants. I would like to say two things here as we come to the end of our meeting in this assembly. First of all, I want to say something that affects me personally. I became a priest at the time when Amin became the president of Uganda. At that time, Amin was killing people. He was a Muslim, but he was killing everybody, both Christians and Muslims. And we spent most of our time burying the dead and listening to the bereaved families and sitting together with them.

In 1987, I was in Canada for further studies with my wife. We were leaving for home when we received very sad news from Uganda that our firstborn had died under very mysterious circumstances in Gulu. We were very devastated. We postponed our going, but later, after some time, we went to Uganda. And as we could not go back to Gulu, the International Red Cross, with the help of the Anglican Church of Canada, made special arrangements to airlift the children to bring them to Kampala for our reunion. We learnt from the children that our daughter was actually picked up by force by rebel groups, who raped her. And when she came back after that terrible ordeal, she committed suicide. Our daughter was just turning 19 years old, and you can imagine that she was destroyed. It was very difficult for my wife and me, and for the Christians who came to comfort us in our grief and sorrow.

After ten years, my wife went home to our village and as she was coming back, on a Friday morning, the car she was travelling in was hit a land mine, and she was killed. I felt like a tree that has been split from the top to the bottom by lightning. It was extremely difficult for me even to accept that my wife had been killed. It took me a long time to accept that fact. It was through her death that I

realised one thing: that God was giving me the gift of forgiveness and the gift of love. To forgive those people who had done this to me. And also to forgive those people who had been killing our parishioners over all those years.

I did this, then: I dedicated my life to work for peace. To work for peace because I realised that religion is not the cause of conflict in the world. Religion is the place where humanity meets with God. Everywhere in the world, when somebody believes in religion, he or she has an encounter with God. That is our commonality, where we come together as humanity. So it was through this, our oneness in humanity and our oneness in one God, that it was possible for me to accept the gift of forgiveness and love, and to forgive those who did this to us. It was also possible for me to see, in the faces of those people who led our daughter to commit suicide, the face of a human being, not of an enemy. And it was also possible to forgive, because everybody, every human being, has been created in the image of God.

I want to conclude by telling you a story of a king whose kingdom suffered a terrible drought for almost three years. All the rivers dried up, so the king became very concerned and he ordered that the royal drum be sounded. And they beat the drum [drum sounds]. So, the people heard that the king was calling them, and there was a big assembly in the palace. The king told them, 'My people, we have the problem of the drought. What must we do? All the rivers have dried up in the kingdom and the animals have started dying. Soon human beings will begin to die. What must we do?' An old man rose up and said, 'Your Majesty, I suggest that we dig a well.' Everybody agreed except the hare. The hare refused to work. So the people dug the well

and they got the water. And they sat down and passed a resolution that the hare should not drink the water. The hare laughed and said, 'I'm going to drink water,' and they said, 'We shall see.'

So they asked the elephant to guard the source of the water during the night. So the elephant went with his spears, shield, sticks and big clubs. At midnight, the hare crawled into a big gourd and rolled down into the valley [rolling sounds], 'What is coming?' called out the hare. 'This is the evil spirit of the river!' When the elephant heard that the evil spirit of the river was coming, he took off and ran away. The hare came, got the water and took it home. The news reached the palace and everybody said, 'Ah. There is a problem in this river because the evil spirit will not allow us to guard the source of water against the hare.'

So one day the tortoise came to the palace and asked the king if he could guard the source of the water. Everybody looked the tortoise up and down. They laughed and said, 'If the elephant ran away, what will you do?' But the king said, 'Let the tortoise go.' So the tortoise went. He did not go with a spear. He just went with a club. And he sat there waiting for whatever was coming. So about midnight, as usual, the hare came in his gourd again [rolling sounds], 'What is coming?' called out the hare. 'This is the evil spirit of the river.' The tortoise was unmoved. He sat there patiently waiting for whatever was coming until the hare came so close that he hit it [hitting sound]. The gourd broke into pieces and the hare ran away [flapping sounds]. And that was the end of the story.

We can learn a lesson from this story: the hare represents one percent of the world's total population. There are hares in schools, in governments, in homes—they are everywhere. They are very manipulative, very deceptive and very superstitious. The hare: one percent of the world's population. They don't help anybody. They know everything, they know the truth, but they don't use that truth to help other human beings. Another one percent of the world's total population is represented by the tortoise. This one percent

believes in the truth. They are very truthful, they are perfectionists, they are very good religious people, or politicians, or whatever. They are there. They are also scientists. They don't just do things for the sake of doing them. They must prove that they are true: that if this is water, it is really water that you drink. They are right about that. They test things, they do research and they tell the truth. They are very good, and they help people.

The third group is represented by the elephant. The elephant represents 98 percent of the world's population. And the elephant has a problem. The elephant and all others like him are controlled by fear. I think we talked about fear in this meeting. They are controlled by fear, because we have five things in the world that help us to do things. First of all, our perceptions, which create our belief; our belief creates our faith and our values; our values create our attitudes; and our attitudes create our actions. Now, we know that belief can create fear, and fear controls us. The elephant will run away as long as the hare tells the elephant that he is an evil spirit. The elephant will believe that it is this evil spirit, but not the hare. And the tortoise says, 'What you are running from is the hare, who is deceiving you.' In the world, 98 percent of people will always be controlled by this. This is why they commit certain actions. People can kill in the name of Christianity, in the name of Islam, in the name of Hinduism or whatever religion we have, as long as their perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes and actions are not attached to the ultimate, which is God. They become their own, and therefore they are wrong.

So in this meeting, we are talking about religion. You see that religion is based on the truth. Any religion in this world has elements of truth in it, which means that it comes from God. And so, if it is from God, then we are only different in the way we carve out this religion in the world. But it's not religion itself that divides us. What divides us may be our doctrine, or it may be other things. So, we learn one important thing about the truth: that God has revealed the truth to us through religion, and we can be the tortoise. We don't want to be

6. Concluding Remarks

the elephant. We don't want to be the hare, who uses his knowledge to deceive and manipulate people. If you are a politician, you are not supposed to manipulate people. If you are a religious person, you are not supposed to manipulate people. If you are a doctor, you are not supposed to manipulate people.

You are supposed to help people, like the tortoise.

Thank you.



FRANCESC TORRAEFLOT

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON RELIGIONS AND MEDIATION IN URBAN AREAS LAUNCHED BY UNESCOCAT

A network emerging from the conference

Unescocat has maintained official relations with UNESCO since 1993. Its main aims are to promote the ideals, documents and activities of UNESCO in the fields of education, heritage, access to knowledge and environmental sustainability. Moreover, Unescocat promotes the culture of peace; education in human values and rights; cultural, religious and linguistic diversity; and interreligious dialogue. These goals are pursued by different areas within the organisation: Human Rights, Education, Linguistic Diversity, Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts, Sustainability, Cultural Diversity, and Interreligious Dialogue.

Since 2004, Unescocat has developed initiatives to promote interreligious dialogue, specifically in difficult neighbourhoods, in order to encourage better coexistence among citizens. The demand for initiatives of this kind has increased sharply, especially on the part of city councils. In addition, Unescocat was engaged in the UNESCO and UN-HABITAT project 'Right to the City', where the management of cultural and religious diversity in cities was highly appreciated. As a result, Unescocat decided to convene a special conference for dealing with these issues. This decision was immediately backed by the UNESCO headquarters, the bank "La Caixa" and several departments of the Catalan government. The International Congress on Religions and Cultural Diversity: Mediation towards Social Cohesion in Urban Areas, which we are hosting in Barcelona, has as the following main goals:

- Defining criteria and ways to promote the positive resources of religions and convictions through scientific studies, good practices and

networking, in order to help social cohesion.

- Bringing together people who work in religious, interreligious and interconvictional mediation at a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Examining major international examples of mediation in urban areas.
- Creating a permanent network with the participation of experts and activists in this area.
- Brushing up the knowledge and skills of people working in this field.

One of the better outcomes of the Congress was Unescocat's launch of the International Network on Religions, Convictions and Mediation in Urban Areas. Unescocat realised that conferences are necessary but that specific initiatives, such as the 2005 UNESCO Rabat Conference, are much more interesting. Unescocat did not find a single international network with a similar proposal. We decided to invite all organisations that had developed interesting initiatives in this field to the Congress and to the network, and we are ready to offer them this service.

We aim to offer a permanent international tool for deepening our awareness on religious (or convictional) and interreligious (or interconvictional) mediation in order to improve our theoretical understanding of mediation in practical situations and develop better practical initiatives in order to improve social cohesion and the culture of peace at a very local level.

We developed this initiative because we feel that diversity has been an important factor in recent conflicts and that we need new ways of dealing with and preventing clashes. We believe that

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(inter)religious or (inter)convictional mediation is innovative enough to deserve a special conference. Furthermore, we have realised that, in every new conflict, the mediator faces complex situations that require different methodological approaches and spiritual resources. Religious and interreligious agents have developed some of these approaches and resources. We also understand that the chasm that may open up between theory and practice in the mediation process can easily be avoided thanks to (inter)religious or (inter)convictional mediation. And last but not least, we are aware of the lack of knowledge of practical religious and spiritual resources useful for building peace, very often because of the heavy weight of historical misuses and misunderstandings about religions, convictions and spiritualities.

How the network will function

The specific functioning of this network will be discussed at its first meeting, to be held in Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) next March. But we can already put forward an initial proposal in order to help build the network's identity.

The network will be able to work via computer link. On www.unescocat.org, an online dialogue room will be opened for the project. This is expected to include the following:

- An online room where mediators and institutions can pose questions, share opinions, express doubts or discuss conflict cases.
- An advisory council: A team of international experts will answer the questions put forward.
- Some reference sources: An extensive bibliography of reference material on mediation, beliefs, convictions, interreligious and interconvictional initiatives related to mediation, etc. These materials will be available online.
- Material on religious traditions: A collection of sacred texts and other materials, organised by field, directly or indirectly related to the spiritual and religious resources for peace and, especially, for social cohesion.
- Compilation of good practices from around the world, highlighting initiatives implemented

in urban areas with a great degree of religious diversity.

Premises and members

This network is not a new religious or interreligious structure or institution. It is a gentle and useful way of communicating, exchanging and sharing so as to collect, organise, analyse, design and suggest initiatives that can help manage religious diversity and interreligious proposals for a better society, whether coming from (inter)religious actors, secular civil society organisations or public powers.

We are aware that religious traditions and convictions have too often led to conflict, violence and war. At the same time, however, we recognise that this has not been the will and the spirit of the founders and original leaders, but rather that the avatars of history and political and economical interests or misunderstandings have pushed religions and convictions to this. Many spiritual and religious followers have for centuries worked to build a more peaceful world. This network aims to develop several specific proposals with the help of thinkers and organisations from all over the world, specifically from the United Nations system. These proposals will take advantage of the positive religious, spiritual and convictional resources in order to build a culture of peace and a society of coexistence. This can be the best homage to all those people who, now and throughout history, have shown with their own lives that religions and convictions can be very useful in building a fairer and more humanist world. Humankind can no longer do without it or disregard it.

This international network will be as inclusive as possible. No organisation, expert or activist capable of contributing to it will be left out. Such a network must not follow any criteria related to political, religious or social representativeness. The main criteria should be the competence and ability of initiatives, organisations, experts or activists to use spiritual and religious resources to improve social cohesion. Other related criteria should depend on this.

We aim to be worthy of the umbrella of UNESCO, especially with regard to the 'Right to the City' project and responsible interreligious dialogue. This network is inspired by Unescocat's work in interreligious dialogue and in the management of religious diversity in public spaces. Under our approach, religions, spiritualities and convictions are considered common cultural, humanist, spiritual and social heritage whose positive contribution should not be disregarded by anyone interested in developing better coexistence in cities with a great degree of religious and cultural diversity.

Taking into account these assumptions, our members are expected to fall into the following categories:

- o Religious, interreligious and interconvictional organisations working in mediation or contributing to local social cohesion.
- o Nonreligious and civil society organisations that are aware of the importance of religious and interreligious resources and initiatives in the mediation process or in local social cohesion.
- o Local public authorities that are aware of the importance of religious and interreligious resources and initiatives in the mediation process or in local social cohesion.
- o Experts from various fields of knowledge dealing with the importance of religious and interreligious resources and initiatives in the mediation process or in local social cohesion.

This international network will try to balance representatives from different parts of the world, genders, kinds of organisations, and religious and spiritual traditions and convictions.

We will be working with certain members, who are using our updated online technical services, to determine what kind of mutual contribution can be set up to start the international network's online services without disturbing or duplicating any service already offered by another organisation.

SUMMARIES OF OTHER PAPERS AND WORKSHOPS

THE CATALAN POLICE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY TO IMPROVE URBAN COEXISTENCE

ROSA NEGRE AND FERRAN ALONSO

Since its creation, the Catalan Police has been a public service. Its organisational model is not state-exclusive, in that it also belongs to the citizens. The organisation knows that a relationship of trust and collaboration between the police and the citizens is essential.

Catalonia is currently home to around 1,000,000 people born outside of the region. This means that the police have to work hard to teach new citizens about public service, laws, rights and duties and teach them to recognise the police as their own.

To achieve this goal, the police must excel at diversity management, which is taught at the police academy. Since 2000, each Catalan police station has had at least one community spokesperson. These professionals work with sensitive groups, such as immigrants, and stay in close contact with associations and NGOs that work in the area. In order to welcome these groups and overcome the cultural distance, the community spokespeople give talks and share information about discrimination, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, transportation, etc.

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGIONS IN RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE SOCIETIES AND THE PROMOTION OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: THE MUSLIM POINT OF VIEW ON PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

MARAT GIBATDINOV*

Kazan as a Multinational Commonwealth Urban Area: Multicultural Education and Promotion of Mutual Understanding

The various cultures in Kazan have their own distinct qualities, but cultural exchanges are widely seen as beneficial: the cultures learn about each other and influence each other. City authorities, in collaboration with the government of the Republic of Tatarstan, have developed an official policy of supporting multiculturalism. As the result, Kazan exhibits a rather low level of intolerance. The religious situation in multinational Kazan is more or less based on freedom of conscience and equality of all religions. There are many examples of cooperation between the traditional faiths (Islam, Orthodoxy and Judaism): the joint struggle against narcotics, destructive sects and drunkenness; the protection of families and traditional morals; social help, etc. The main causes of peaceful coexistence in Kazan are the common past (a long joint history of Christianity and Islam in the area); traditionally tolerant Islam in Tatarstan; the common post-Soviet situation; the demographic balance (the population is 50% Tatar/Muslim and 50% Russian/Christian); and the common 'enemies' of godlessness and the Western masscult.

However there are some real and potential conflicts, most of which are related to incomprehension of other groups' religious symbols. One major area of conflict is the issue of religious education in the secular state schools. Possible conflicts include the violation of religious equality in official policy; the disruption of the demographic balance; an increase in the number of migrants; and the spreading of radical Islam.

In order to prevent conflicts and improve social cohesion in Kazan, we have started an interfaith dialogue at the school level and developed a multicultural training course for mutual understanding based on the following principles: cultural diversity as the basis of multicultural education; study of common history; learning about the culture and traditions of 'the other'; and emphasis on similarities rather than differences.

The violent indoctrinations of migrants and autochthonous minorities into the 'better knowledge' of the majority's culture in order to 'reclaim' or 'civilise' them is perceived as a newer, softer version of colonialism. The teaching of various religions in the state schools of a religiously diverse society can be used as a mechanism of state control to prevent religious extremism. However, in a religiously diverse society, in order to promote tolerance and mutual understanding, the education system must provide all members of society with equal access to knowledge of the cultural and ethical bases of all religions present in that society. Pluralism and the possibility of all cultures having access to the means of expression and dissemination of knowledge are the guarantees of cultural diversity and the basis of multicultural education.

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SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT: AN EXHIBITION PROJECT ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

GÖREL BYSTRÖM JANARV

Religion is one of the very strongest and most radical powers on earth, and it cuts both ways. Intercultural, multifaith Europe runs the risk of becoming a source of conflict, especially in urban areas, but it has the potential to also act as a peace-promoting power characterised by dialogue and tolerance. I believe that an open European identity must be based on dialogue, self-criticism and mutual respect of differences. We need to ask ourselves a number of pertinent questions:

On what basis should we build our European identity? What holds us together? How can the world religions in Europe contribute to increased tolerance and dialogue (especially in urban areas where conflicts exist or are very likely to arise)? How can the new generation be masters of dialogue?

SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT is a project in progress. It is an initiative of the National Museums of World Culture in Sweden, of which I, Ms. Görel Byström Janarv, am the creative director. Over the last ten years, I have created national travelling cross-border interactive exhibition projects focused on diversity, contemporary religion, intercultural dialogue and new pedagogical tools.

We are now looking for long-term partners in European and Mediterranean cities. The experience of the award-winning Swedish project 'God Has 99 Names' will play an important role in this initiative.

SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT consists of following parts:

Interactive touring exhibition

Comes in large, medium and small to fit different exhibition venues. Young, locally trained guides are a vital part of the exhibition concept.

Magazine/European atlas

With excellent photos and design, we explore Europe's diversity and best practices.

Interactive website

New city guides

With maps and information on where to explore the cultural and religious diversity of your hometown.

Guide training

Young guides are trained to be local 'Masters of Dialogue'.

Guided city tours

We offer exciting expeditions by bus.

Global kitchen

A unique conceptual idea where people meet to eat in cooperation with cafés and restaurants and around citizens' kitchen tables.

Our project is very important for Europe and the Mediterranean. Not only do we have ideas and plans, we have a proven project!

The project 'God Has 99 Names' is currently the most visited exhibition in Sweden. It has been on tour since 2000, and has been tremendously successful in building bridges. The large version of the exhibition has visited 15 cities. The medium-sized version has visited 74 places. The small version—the rolling suitcases—have made hundreds of stops.

Europe urgently needs a hands-on-project like this.

Make sure your city becomes a partner of SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT!

www.same-same.net (PDFs available in six languages)

Contact: gorel@comhem.se

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR COEXISTENCE IN SPAIN: THE MARCH DECLARATION

ANA RUIZ AND ALFREDO CALVO

In the aftermath of the massive terrorist attack in Madrid on March 11, 2004, a joint statement known as the 'March Declaration' was put together as a Spanish response to a Spanish situation. Through this text, leading secular and religious thinkers in Spain subscribed to a minimum but binding agreement which would guarantee social cohesion in our country for future generations. Drawn up in agreement with the principles of participatory democracy, the document may be signed by any citizen who agrees with it. The need for peaceful coexistence is thereby strengthened. The Declaration discredits any attempt at justifying the use of violence by any of the ideas included therein, whilst at the same time reiterating the condition that every citizen live responsibly alongside his/her neighbours. The aim of the Declaration is to work towards an ethical pact agreed on by the whole nation. This paper analyses the Declaration's content, origins and development, the role of religions in its development, and the work which needs to be done in relation to this key document on coexistence in the coming years in our country. More information can be found (in Spanish/English) at www.pactodeconvivencia.org.

RELIGION AS A CULTURAL FACT: THE MUTUAL NEED FOR MEETING

GUILIO CIPOLLONE

In Europe, there are about 15 million non-Europeans, of whom most are Muslims or in any case considered to be Islamic. In various European nations, in terms of numbers, Islam is the second or sometimes even the first religion.

This has given rise to a new ‘sensitivity’ in European society.

This phenomenon obliges us to distinguish between religions which, for opposite reasons, confront each other with other words such as ‘faith’ and ‘religious community’, and with the world ‘culture’, so intimately related to civilisation and civility.

It seems that rather than a ‘clash of civilisations’, we have to talk about a ‘clash of cultures’. Specific cultures need to open themselves to a universal dimension.

In Italy, religions other than Catholicism find themselves in close quarters with the Pope—that is, the Vatican. There are about a million Muslims in Italy. This calls for a relationship in the religious sphere as well as in that of rights. In Italy, there have been episodes of both intolerance and tolerance. Italy has also seen Catholics convert to Islam and Muslims convert to—or at least become ‘favourable’ to—Christianity or to ‘Western culture’. Meanwhile, religious and political differences have arisen amongst Muslim immigrants.

RESEARCH AND MEDIATION: RELIGIOUS PLURALITY IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH CARE

MARIA FORTEZA, MARIA DEL MAR GRIERA, GLORIA GARCÍA-ROMERAL AND ESTHER FERNÁNDEZ*

The rise of religious pluralism in Catalonia is challenging our institutions and making us face new social realities. Mediation as a method of resolving disputes has become a useful tool in achieving stronger social harmony to this effect. Our purpose is to show that sociological research can be a key factor in mediation.

The technique of mediation establishes, firstly, a neutral and consolidated body of information for those involved. Secondly, it is essential to reaching an agreement among those involved. Furthermore, researchers sometimes act as mediators among parties, thereby offering an impression of shared responsibility. Likewise, they create a discourse in which all parties are acknowledged and valid.

A study on religious plurality in Catalonia in the field of health care, carried out by the isor-uab research team, has produced various streams of knowledge: the legal framework for religious rights in hospitals, the different religious practices of several religious communities (eating habits, birth and death rites, festivities, worship, etc.), and how health care centres are currently managing religious plurality. This research led to the publication of the *Guide to Respecting Religious Plurality in the Health Care Field* by the Directorate-General of Religious Affairs of the Catalan Government. Such guides provide us with systematic information about religious practices and advice to health care services with the purpose of facilitating social cohesion.

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THE INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION NETWORK OF THE “LA CAIXA” FOUNDATION

LOURDES PERACULA*

Before focusing on the Intercultural Mediation Network of “la Caixa”, I would like to clarify some points for people who don’t live in Spain and who therefore may be surprised to find a financial institution like “la Caixa” directly involved in the social field, whether by giving support via bank-organised programmes or by way of economic contributions. Unlike regular banks, caixes (generically, ‘savings banks’) are required by their founding statutes to directly reinvest a part of their profits in society through social work. The Immigration Programme of the Social Work Section of “la Caixa”, which was launched just a month ago, is one such programme.

The Intercultural Mediation Network of “la Caixa” forms part of the Immigration Programme, which emphasises mediation. The Network currently consists of 64 intercultural mediators distributed throughout the 17 autonomous communities of Spain, and is expected to grow. In a society that is becoming progressively more multicultural, it promotes dialogue between newcomers and the receiving community to foment social cohesion via respect and coexistence.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Intercultural Mediation Network is that of working as a network and promoting the tools that make this possible. Many people and entities have long worked in the field of intercultural mediation in Spain, but they often do so independently, without links to each other. In order to carry forward this Intercultural Mediation Network, the Social Work Section of “la Caixa” has signed a collaboration agreement with six Spanish organisations: ACCEM, the Women’s Association for Labour Insertion (SURT), CEAR, CEPAIM, the General Foundation of the Autonomous University of Madrid, and the Receive Network. The common aim is to share information on experiences, among both individuals and regions, to create debate forums and, by mutual agreement, to establish action protocols that promote good mediation practices.

Religion is not usually one of the central themes of the day-to-day mediation activities carried out by our Network’s mediators. Often, however, religion is present as a backdrop for other conflict situations. Thus, as noted by Mohamed Shekrad and Mahdi Salhi (mediators who work in Valencia with the CEAR group), it is important to work to dismantle stereotypes and to promote dialogue among religions in order to gain knowledge of and respect for the other. In this sense, Mohamed’s experience working in schools is highly interesting.

* Coordinator of the Immigration Programme of the Social Work Section of “la Caixa”.

CATALAN EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONFLICT MEDIATION

XAVIER SÀEZ, FRANCESC ROVIRA, JOAN HERNÁNDEZ, EVA TORRES, J.M. LLAGOSTERA AND CRISTINA MONTEYS

The growing religious diversity of our country has inspired parallel growth in sensitivity on the part of religious communities, public authorities and civil society in general, because of the need to understand and evaluate this diversity and interreligious cooperation. In recent years, a number of initiatives have been launched to achieve a cohesive society based on various religious, spiritual and belief-based identities.

These initiatives are quite new in Catalonia, but the range of possibilities, methodologies and formats is rather broad. We find groups and associations coming from civil society and from primary religious communities (the Manresa Group for Interreligious Dialogue, the UNESCO Association for Interreligious Dialogue, etc.), initiatives headed by religious leaders from different communities (the Permanent Working Group of Religions) and services and programmes led by local authorities, which are conscious of the need to manage religious diversity in the public sphere (the Municipal Assembly of Religions of Lleida, the Programme for Citizen Dialogue between Beliefs and Convictions of Badalona, and the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona).

The existence and activities of these associations, programs and services enable the participation of religious communities in city life and the creation of channels and platforms of dialogue open to all social actors (religious communities, civil society organisations, administrations, etc.). These groups are capable of developing conflict-management processes based on participation and cooperation that open the way for a more cohesive society.