Religion, Peace, and World Affairs: The Challenges Ahead

BERKLEY CENTER TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ESSAYS
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The tenth anniversary of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs is an occasion to celebrate a record of accomplishment and to reflect on the work ahead.

Issues of religion and world affairs are as salient in the media today as in 2006 when the center was founded. And unfortunately much of the news is still negative.

Still, there is every reason for hope. The religious people who comprise about four-fifths of humanity overwhelmingly reject faith inspired violence and identify with values of justice and peace. And religious institutions—communities of worship, schools, hospitals, and aid organizations of different kinds—take roles in world affairs that affirm the essential dignity of human beings and advance the common good.

How can we tap these positive currents, within and across traditions, to build a more peaceful world? How can a university like Georgetown make a constructive contribution?

The Berkley Center was created with these questions in mind.

The center’s founding took place at the confluence of two historical streams: the resurgence of religion in world affairs, brought home dramatically in the attacks of September 11, 2001; and Georgetown’s more than two

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centuries-long tradition of academic excellence in service to the world.

A decade ago, the unanticipated rise of “Public Religions in the Modern World” (José Casanova) posed a challenge to academic paradigms linking modernization with secularization. It created an opportunity for a new, interdisciplinary exploration of religion’s changing relationship with politics, society, culture, and the economy.

Georgetown’s academic strengths and identity as a Catholic and Jesuit institution based in Washington, D.C., and engaged around the world positioned it to act on the opportunity. In 2004, faculty and administrators began planning efforts, led by then Dean of Georgetown College, Jane McAuliffe, to explore the most innovative institutional response.

The breakthrough came with a generous gift from William R. Berkley, a member of Georgetown’s Board of Directors, enabling the creation of the center in March 2006. “Recent events show us both the power of religion and the need for a deeper and fuller understanding among people of different religions,” Berkley noted at the time. “It is my hope that this center will allow us to use the power of religions for greater peace in our world.”

Over the past decade the center has sought to live out this ambitious mission. Its research, teaching, and outreach programs have addressed religion’s connection with violence and reconciliation and explored its complex relationship with wider political, social, cultural, and economic and political determinants of peace. Major multi-year projects have addressed the nexus of religion and economic and social development (in collaboration with the Henry Luce Foundation and the World Faiths Development Dialogue); the significance and impact of religious freedom (in collaboration with the John Templeton Foundation); and the dynamics of religious pluralism within and across societies (culminating in a three-volume series published with Oxford University Press).

Support for interfaith dialogue and interaction with prominent thought leaders—in Washington, D.C., and around the world—have also been hallmarks of the center’s work.

Partnerships with the World Economic Forum, the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Building Bridges Seminar, and President Obama’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge have advanced interreligious understanding. The center has convened conferences and workshops with international partners in Antigua, Beijing, Berlin, Dakar, Delhi, Dhaka, Doha, The Hague, Jerusalem, London, Nairobi, Oxford, Phnom Penh, and Rome. Closer to home, it has hosted the $1 million Opus Prize for faith-based humanitarian leaders and has brought leading scholars to address the Georgetown community, including Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, Martha Nussbaum, Abdolkarim Soroush, Charles Taylor, and Tu Weiming.
Over the past decade intensive collaboration among faculty, staff, and students around these and other programs has advanced the dual mission of building knowledge and deepening dialogue around religion, peace, and world affairs. Center faculty, leaders in their respective disciplines, have produced more than two dozen books. They have worked with the center’s professional staff to generate more than 150 topical reports and stage more than 500 events. The center’s website, home to extensive knowledge resources for educators, policymakers, and the wider public, features some 1100 videos and receives more than 100,000 hits per month.

Students have made crucial contributions to the life of the center both inside and outside the classroom. One vehicle is a certificate in Religion, Ethics, and World Affairs offered in partnership with the Walsh School of Foreign Service. Another is the Doyle Engaging Difference Program, which supports courses, fellowships, and the Junior Year Abroad Network, through which more than 500 students studying overseas have shared their reflections on religious and cultural pluralism around the world. Students have also served as research assistants at the center (more than 250 since 2006) and conducted original research around the world as part of the Education and Social Justice Project.

In looking ahead, we should pause to take stock of two premises that have guided the center’s work from its inception: that a deeper understanding of religion and values is critical for addressing pressing global challenges; and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

The first of these premises has borne itself out. That the religious factor is critical for grasping contemporary challenges of democracy, development, and diplomacy is more accepted today than it was a decade ago. Governments, international organizations, and NGOs increasingly acknowledge religious faith as a significant force, for good or ill, in shaping world affairs. And many students at Georgetown and elsewhere have come to see religious literacy as a valuable resource for global careers, whether in diplomacy, business, law, medicine, or other professions. The center has made a vital and ongoing contribution to this greater awareness of the importance of religion for navigating today’s world.

Whether the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another promotes peace is more of an open question. The proliferation of interfaith and intercultural dialogue efforts since 2001 has not prevented an upsurge of religiously inflected conflict over the past several years, including terror attacks sparked by the rise of ISIS; sectarian violence in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia; and ethnic and religious tensions in the United States
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and Europe. Centers like the Berkley Center and universities like Georgetown do not bear any responsibility for this negative turn. But we must think through its lessons for our work.

Why has it proved so difficult to tap into the positive currents in the world’s religions traditions in order to promote peace?

Answers to this question point us away from religion to other causes, whether failed states, economic stagnation, social tensions, or war. There we witness the deployment of faith as a political tool against one’s adversaries and see how its abuse distorts the core values of human dignity, justice, and peace embedded within leading religious traditions.

This inevitable politicization of religion is not cause for despair. The more we learn, through patient research, teaching, and dialogue, about how religion shapes and is shaped by other forces in world affairs, and the more fully we understand and pursue interreligious engagement in its particular historical, political and social circumstances around the globe, the more we can hope to channel powerful religious currents in peaceful directions. This is a collaborative undertaking for the long term.

The essays in this volume, authored by center faculty and leading scholars, religious leaders, and practitioners, lay out some of the context for the work ahead. The contributions provide a survey of some of the main global challenges that are likely to engage us at the intersection of religion, peace, and world affairs in decades to come.

Political and religious leaders will have to grapple with these challenges, as will national and transnational civil society and educational institutions at all levels. Universities like Georgetown are called to contribute as sites for research, teaching, and dialogue.

The Berkley Center will continue to be a partner in these critical efforts. We are grateful for the collaboration of so many over the past decade, within the Georgetown community and around the world, and look forward to the next phase of our work together.
The big news story of 2015 was the European refugee crisis. It was big for the numbers of refugees seeking asylum in the European Union. Experts estimate more than one and a half million refugees and migrants sought asylum and inclusion on the continent last year. Germany was singular in admitting more than one million.

The refugee crisis was a big story too because of the suffering and deprivation it put on view. That suffering was captured in the photo image of the drowned three year-old Alan Kurdi lying face down castaway on the Turkish shore. The boy’s family, refugees from the war-ravaged Syrian town of Kobanî, had been aboard an overcrowded inflatable boat that had capsized only five minutes from shore.

Perhaps no other contemporary global crisis raises such a complex set of political and moral challenges—for governments and societies, but also for transnational organizations like the Roman Catholic Church as the movement of peoples.

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The Church and the World

Strained to the Breaking Point

The refugee crisis was also a big story for its impact on European and world politics. The challenge of resettling large number of Arab Muslims strained the European Union. Right-wing, populist parties gained strength and xenophobia became visible and vocal nearly everywhere in fear of being overwhelmed. Poland, Hungary, and other Eastern European countries resisted a quota plan for distributing the refugees across the continent. Countries from Sweden to Slovakia re-imposed border controls and put the Schengen Agreement, which had provided for open passage between European Union countries, in jeopardy.

Due to her firm commitment to admitting a million refugees to Germany, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the preeminent European leader, though admired at first, lost standing both domestically and Union-wide. Funding to hard-pressed countries of first asylum like Jordan and Lebanon has fallen far short of the need. The resulting hardship led some Syrian refugees to return in despair to their former homes in the war zone.

The scale of the crisis overwhelmed the legal arrangements for refugee admission to the European Union. But the breakdown of free movement across Europe was only the most evident case of the failure of international arrangements for people on the move. Australia blocked migrants and refugees from South East Asia and warehoused asylum-seekers on isolated island stations. Thailand and Bangladesh refused asylum to the Rohingya fleeing Myanmar. Thailand and Indonesia rejected asylum seekers from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The year 2015, however, saw a small reduction of illegal entrance to the United States across the Mexican border. The rush of unaccompanied minors, which had threatened to explode only two years before subsided due, in part, to stricter control by Mexican authorities of their territory. In January 2016, the Obama administration, despite an ongoing campaign of enforced deportation for illegal aliens, announced its intention to make special provision for refugees fleeing violence from the three Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Aspiring asylees would be able to apply for admission to the United States through UN offices in the three countries. The allotted 9,000 slots, however, would only meet a small portion of the previous demand.

The Movement of Peoples in Catholic Social Teaching

As the world’s largest transnational organization, and an actor in world politics in its own right, the Catholic Church has been at the center of the migration crisis. Its agencies care for refugees and displaced persons and settle
migrants and refugees worldwide. More cosmopolitan than nation-states, the Church has recognized the right to migrate as a human right and a core principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Pope Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation Octagesima Adveniens (1971) articulated the right to migrate for economic reasons as a basic right commensurate with the individual and the family’s right to a livelihood. Furthermore, the Church holds that receiving countries have a duty to show hospitality to economic migrants and that the migrants have a right and a duty to integrate themselves into the host society.

The Church recognizes, however, that no nation can bear the burden of major population movements alone. In his 2009 encyclical Caritas in Veritate (“Love in Truth”) Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote, this “social phenomenon of epoch making proportions” requires “bold, forward-looking policies of international cooperation” with especially “close cooperation between their countries of origin and their countries of destination.”

But where the countries of origin are failed and conflicted states, as they are in much of Africa and the Middle East today, the need for a more coordinated and integrated transnational cooperation is clear. Even with international collaboration, the migration crisis will not be easily solved. It involves issues of development, job creation, and welfare. It requires policing of human trafficking, and effective enforcement of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) to check the sources of disorder and underdevelopment that push both economic migration and refugee flight. It will also demand checking terrorism and the spiraling collapse of states across the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. The catastrophic failure of the world refugee system shows the necessity of a global solution to what can be expected to be a decades long problem.

In his 1963 encyclical Pacem in Terris Pope John XXIII proposed that such grave transnational problems were matters of the universal common good, requiring global institutions for their resolution. As philosopher Henry Shue has argued, standard threats to basic rights require institutional solutions. In the case of refugees and migrants, they are the rights to life and bodily integrity, the right to subsistence, and the right to livelihood. Accordingly, in 2009, appealing to the principle of the universal common good, Benedict urged the development of “a true world political authority,” among other pressing tasks, “to regulate migration.”

Practicing the Golden Rule with refugees is a challenge not just for this year, nor for a decade. It is the challenge of the century.
Pope Francis

From the outset of his pontificate, with his one-day journey to the refugee camp on Lampedusa, Pope Francis made migration a top priority. In “The Joy of the Gospel” (Evangelii Gaudium), his first major teaching document, he declared that “Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all.”

The Pope continued, “For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis.”

In his September 2015 address to the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis evoked the aspirations of the American dream. He recalled how “millions of people came to this land to pursue their dream of building a future in freedom.” He continued, “We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners.”

He concluded, “When the stranger in our midst appeals to us, we must not repeat the sins and the errors of the past. We must resolve now to live as nobly and as justly as possible.”

Principles of Responsibility

The international system requires clearer principles of responsibility. Here are two suggestions of our own.

The first moral rationale for reparatory action on behalf of refugees is culpability. The greater the culpability of the actor, the greater the responsibility is to alleviate the burdens of the refugees or migrants. As former secretary of state Colin Powell said, in the context of the invasion of Iraq, “You break it, you own it.”

U.S. culpability for Iraqi and Syrian refugees is somewhat qualified. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, the Islamic State, and sectarian Iraqi politicians are more culpable in the present crisis. But the United States bears remote responsibility for the sectarian conflict generated by the invasion of Iraq.

American culpability is more direct, though shared with local politicians, in Central America where the United States has meddled for years, most recently in the Contra Wars of the 1980s sponsored by the Reagan administration.

A second moral principle is that of capacity. The United States has the financial resources and the space to accept refugees, from Central America to be sure and from Iraq and Syria too. It also possesses exceptional historical experience in integrating the foreign-born into its population, and it has trained personnel and institutions to execute the duty.
In addition to granting asylum to greater numbers of Middle Eastern refugees, the United States shares the duty under the principle of the Responsibility to Protect to provide security and aid in situ or in countries of first asylum. In the long term, it has the duty with others to help create the institutions to protect and support migrants and refugees in the future.

“With the Same Passion and Compassion”

In the most moving and challenging passage of his address to Congress, Pope Francis invoked the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Mt 7:12):

“This rule points us in a clear direction. Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.”

Practicing the Golden Rule with refugees is a challenge not just for this year, nor for a decade. It is the challenge of the century.
Pope Francis clearly understands that he is the pope of a globalized and instantly interconnected world. Superficially, we could note that he is no stranger to selfies and has collected millions of Twitter followers. On a deeper level, the reforms to practice and culture that he is struggling to implement can be understood as efforts to safeguard the characteristic identity of the Church for the postmodern age. The problems with which he is grappling are not merely logistical or practical; they also have deep theological and normative implications.

The challenges that face him—and all Roman Catholics—in the twenty-first century and beyond are closely related to four identifying marks with deep roots in Church history.

From the earliest days of Christianity, believers have identified four distinct marks of Christ’s church: it is (1) one, (2) holy, (3) catholic, and (4) apostolic. These four terms have a meaning that is more poetic than precise; their use tends to be evocative and aspirational rather than empirically verifiable. Moreover, the values expressed by the four terms do not always seamlessly reinforce each other. At the same time, the fourfold account of the Church’s identity provides a helpful lens through which to consider the tasks faced by the Church in a particular time in its development.

In my view, the most pressing challenges Roman Catholics face with respect to the four marks of the Church in our own time are not outwardly

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focused and theoretical, but internal and practical. These challenges stem directly from globalization and the explosion of information technology. The economy is increasingly globalized and interdependent. International communication is easy and instantaneous; not only words, but photographs and videos easily traverse the oceans as email attachments.

**New Ways of Being “One”**

Unity is a distinguishing mark of the Church because the body of Christ is one body. At the same time, unity does not mean complete uniformity. The Church not only recognizes that distinct individuals possess different gifts and face different problems, but also proclaims that distinct cultures do as well. Catholic social teaching has long extolled the virtue of subsidiarity, which enjoins that decisions about social organization be handled at the smallest and most local political level capable of handling the matter. Catholic ecclesiology, however, has not followed the same path. In fact, in his *moto proprio, Apostolos suos* (1998), Pope John Paul II ensured that local bishops’ conferences would have virtually no real power over doctrine or Church governance, which became even more firmly centered in the Roman Curia.

Pope Francis recognizes both the undesirability and ultimately, the impossibility, of governing from Rome more than one billion Catholics situated in diverse cultures around the globe. He is working hard to empower not only the universal Synod of Bishops, but also local bishops’ conferences. Yet the challenges he faces in maintaining communal unity while decentralizing real authority are considerable, as the American political experience suggests. After all, the Articles of Confederation that loosely joined the former colonies were replaced by a Constitution that provided for a more robust federal government, which has acquired even more power over time. It would not be too strong to say that in attempting to reverse centralization in Church governance, Pope Francis is fighting against the natural order of political entities.

**Holiness and the Scandal of Indifference**

It has always been the case that some Catholics ate well and slept soundly while others experienced untold misery on the other side of the world. Yet the age of technology means that the “haves” can no longer plausibly deny knowledge of the suffering, and the globalized economy means that they cannot sidestep their economic complicity. It also means that the “have nots” can see the vast disparity themselves. The “haves” begin to look more and more like the rich and heartless Israelites condemned in the book of Hosea. They risk making an idol of their own financial security. Indifference to the poor and idolatry are incompatible on their face with holiness—they are sins that
the biblical prophets identified as breaking the covenant between God and His people.

Pope Francis has not merely continued the call of his predecessors for social justice; he has also conjoined that call with a highly visible demand for mercy. As the Latin misericordia reveals, a person with a merciful heart suffers with those who are suffering. Pope Francis insists that merciful men and women do not merely write tax-deductible checks to registered charities each December, they live simple lives in solidarity with the poor all year round. In events such as his highly publicized visit to Lampedusa, Italy’s island of refugees, Pope Francis is reconfiguring the ecclesial mark of holiness for the global age.

**Catholicity and Development of Doctrine**

Catholicity is universality—and one mark of universality is that what the Church teaches is the same everywhere. But the universality of moral teaching may be fracturing. Some European and North American Catholics have taken a more open stance on questions such as the role of women in the Church, the use of contraception, the reception of communion on the part of the divorced and remarried, and the morality of homosexual acts. They claim they are advocating “development of doctrine,” whereas those who resist change, including many Catholics in sub-Saharan Africa, maintain they are defending orthodoxy. The progressive claim for development of doctrine is complicated, however, by the specter of cultural hegemony on the part of North America and Europe. Who decides what counts as development and what counts as decay?

Is the Church’s catholicity compatible with a pluralism of approaches on matters of sexuality and gender? While Pope Francis clearly recognizes the problem he has taken only tentative steps to address it.

One such step is to deemphasize the importance of doctrinal propositions in favor of their pastoral application. Another is to infuse a bit more humility in the Church’s presentation of its moral doctrine. When Pope Francis was questioned about a hypothetical priest with same-sex attraction, he responded by asking, “Who am I to judge?”—not by repeating the traditional condemnation of homosexual desire as intrinsically disordered.

*We all need a new understanding of the priesthood of all believers—of all human beings.*
Apostolicity and Authority

The fourth mark of the Church focuses on historical rather than temporal continuity—does it carry on the faith of the apostles? From the time of Eusebius (d. 340) bishops (especially the Bishop of Rome) have been understood as standing in the shoes of the apostles, where they exercise threefold authority of the munus triplex: they are prophets, priests, and kings. These roles have distinct charisms. In my view, the magnetic and authoritative Pope John Paul II emphasized the kingship function, which the tradition interprets as servant-leadership. Pope Benedict XVI highlighted the prophetic function, which is understood as embodying the teaching role of the Church.

What about Pope Francis? He understands, I think, that what Catholics need now is a priest—a reconciler and a healer. The role of the priest is to reconcile God to humanity, and human beings with one another. It is also, as Joseph Blenkinsopp has pointed out, to harmonize human activity with care of creation. The world needs reconcilers and healers too. Religious violence is exploding around the globe. Global warming threatens destruction of apocalyptic proportions. We all need a new understanding of the priesthood of all believers—of all human beings.
How has the Church engaged the global political world in recent times? Sometimes its relationship has been one of convergence with the goals of the international community. From the time that Pope Benedict XV advanced proposals for the peaceful settlement of World War I that anticipated those of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, the Church has espoused international law, human rights, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the reduction of war, eventually embraced the economic development of poor nations, and most recently took up the cause of environmental protection through Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si*. At other times, the Church has stood in tension with dominant secular forces, for instance, over the role of abortion and family planning policies at the Cairo conference of 1994 and the Beijing conference of 1995.

There is another kind of engagement with the world that the Church sometimes pursues, though, that I wish to convey here—namely a world-shaping role. In this creative and distinct posture, the Church taps into its deepest logic and retrieves and adapts it to the times, yielding new possibilities for peace and justice.

Over the past generation, the Church has acted as a world shaper through a message that Pope Francis has now elevated into the theme of the current Jubilee Year: mercy. “This age is a kairos of mercy,” quipped Pope Francis on...
the flight back to Rome at the close of his first overseas trip to Brazil in 2013. In naming the age one of “kairos,” Francis is declaring mercy a “sign of the times,” a movement in history animated by the Holy Spirit. He continues and develops a theme inaugurated by Pope John Paul II, who declared that “loud cries should be the mark of the Church of our times.”

What is especially striking and surprising about the popes’ teaching on mercy is their application of it to politics. Mercy is not a virtue typically associated with politics, especially in the modern nation-state, and has little pedigree in western political thought. So, recent popes’ calls for mercy in the political order, along with its close cousins, reconciliation and forgiveness, come as an innovation. There is at least one historical precedent for a politics of mercy – Pope Benedict’s XV’s plea for the nations of Europe to practice forgiveness after World War I, which he articulated in his encyclical of 1920, *Pacem, Dei Munus Pulcherrinum*. The nations largely ignored his plea, pursued a politics of revenge that led to a second world war, and the teaching of mercy in politics was largely placed on hold.

It was John Paul II who took it up again and established its relevance for our times. His experience of living under Nazism and communism in Poland as well as his devotion to the popular message of divine mercy of the Polish nun, Sr. Maria Faustina, gave him a keen sense of the need for mercy in the world. After John Paul II became pope in 1978, he penned his second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, in 1980 on the message of mercy and in the last section proposed reconciliation and forgiveness as practices for the political order. He repeated the message in his Message for the World Day Peace of 1997 and 2002, the latter appearing just over three months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Pope John Paul II also stressed the social dimension of mercy during the three years anticipating the Jubilee Year, 2000, when he asked for forgiveness for historical misdeeds committed by Catholics in the name of the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI, John Paul II’s successor, carried forth the message of mercy and reconciliation and gave it application in Lebanon, China, and Africa and in his Message for the World Way of Peace of 2011, where he linked peace and reconciliation to religious freedom. Pope Francis’ own fervent dedication to mercy has led to his own interventions in peacemaking and reconciliation, including leading a global prayer for peace in Syria, inviting heads of Israel and Palestine to the Vatican, and making a risky papal
trip to the war-ridden Central African Republic in November 2015.

Such papal gestures and utterances of mercy give concrete clues to mercy’s meaning for politics. Most saliently, mercy, especially as it is expressed in reconciliation, has found application in the large number of countries engaged in processes of dealing with their past over the past generation. One context for these processes is what is known as the Third Wave of Democratization – a set of some ninety countries who have trod the path from authoritarianism to democracy (or at least part way, and not without reversals) since 1974 in Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. Another is the historically large number of civil wars that have been settled through negotiation since the end of the Cold War in 1989. Still another is democracies like Australia and Canada addressing past injustices like the maltreatment of native peoples. In all of these cases, countries face the question: What is the meaning of justice in the wake of massive injustice? Trials, truth commissions, reparations, public apologies, and forgiveness are among the measures they have adopted.

While reconciliation does not reject the principle of justice for wrongdoing, its core concept is restoration of right relationship and it involves a far wider array of principles, practices, and activities, including the transformation of attitudes and emotions, apology, forgiveness, and healing through the public acknowledgment of suffering. Reconciliation has been advocated and practiced in the political realm in South Africa, Chile, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, Timor Leste, El Salvador, Peru, Germany, and numerous other locales. Reconciliation measures have brought a degree of healing and restoration of unity to societies riven by war and massive injustices that rights, punishment, and the rule of law alone could not have achieved.

Advocates of reconciliation are disproportionately but not exclusively religious. Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Catholic Bishop Juan Gerardi of Guatemala, and John Baptist Odama of Uganda are examples of leaders who became prominent advocates of a reconciliation paradigm, in some cases over and against a judicial punishment paradigm rooted in the liberal peace. This religious influence is not surprising, for reconciliation is at the core of Christian theology. Its vertical dimension,
God’s reconciliation of the world unto himself in Christ, is meant to be reflected on a horizontal plane, that is, among human beings and even within political orders. A major component of reconciliation is forgiveness, and in numerous locales where reconciliation has been a prominent paradigm, victims have practiced forgiveness of their perpetrators, often on a widespread scale.

Reconciliation’s animating virtue is mercy. In *Dives in Misericordia*, John Paul II wrote that mercy is “manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man.” True, it is hardly the case that all of the reconcilers of the past generation have been inspired directly by John Paul II and his successor popes, although many surely have been. The rise of reconciliation in global politics over the past generation, though, converges strongly with these popes’ claims that the current age is a “kairos of mercy.” To the degree that this message has been heard and put into practice, especially in political orders, the Church has acted as a world-shaping institution.
The topic of “The Church and the World” is undoubtedly a very interesting one. Times are changing so quickly that they sometimes leave one feeling unsettled.

The Catholic Church is facing situations that seemed unimaginable at the beginning of the new millennium. Pope Benedict XVI began his papacy only ten years ago, and now we have spent three years with Pope Francis.

During the Jubilee Year in 2000, many hearts opened up for peace and justice to make the world a better place. A year later, those dreams were shattered as the war against terrorism began. The invasion of Iraq unleashed a worse war that seems to have no solution.

New Evangelization, the pastoral project to share the Gospel that has been promoted since its approval by Pope John Paul II in 1984, has faced major obstacles that have not aided its progress.

Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation of the pontificate opened a door unprecedented in recent history. On March 13, 2013 something completely unexpected happened: a Jesuit pope from Latin America was elected. A pope from the so-called Third World. In three years, the situation has changed for the better and we look to the future with hope again.

From a Latin American perspective, I see a number of challenges: lack of intercontinental integration, lack of information, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, corruption, unanswered cultural questions, lack of equity, poverty,
environmental problems, neglect of children and the elderly, adequate education for political participation, human ecology, and justice and peace issues.

With the new pontificate, we have begun to experience significant changes in how the papacy functions. A few of these changes include greater levels of closeness and simplicity; the decision to reform the Roman Curia; the exhortation of *Evangelii Gaudium*, which is a governance plan for the Church; seeing missions as a kind of field hospital to heal the wounds of those who are far away from us; and a Samaritan Church. In addition, Pope Francis has encouraged practical ecumenism; political mediation and dialogue; reform of the Synod of Bishops; integration of the College of the Cardinals with smaller or marginal dioceses; and apostolic visits to smaller and poorer nations. The fact that two synods have convened regarding family issues shows us that the topic is urgent and that it cannot be reduced to the possibility of communion for people who have divorced and remarried, or to the possibility of same-sex marriage. We have witnessed significant reforms in Vatican finances, in the media, and in the Code of the Canon Law.

The Pope’s encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*, has had a special impact. We are facing environmental problems that cannot simply be reduced to global warming as they also come from human intervention and the drive for economic advancement. The encyclical has had an important influence around the world, especially at the recent 2015 Paris Climate Conference. The objectives of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals to transform the world are also central themes of the Church’s social teaching.

There is no doubt that achieving peace in the world is perhaps the greatest challenge of our time. Religious fundamentalism is growing in intensity and threatens to bring back Cold War dynamics that we thought were past us. Democracies corroded by the cancer of corruption have been weakened, and all around the world a great lack of leadership is visible.

For this reason, Benedict XVI, in his speech to the United Nations on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008, proposed a return to cultural and religious traditions where human beings are at the heart of society’s institutions, laws, and interventions. He also called for the respect and promotion of human rights in their “universality, indivisibility and interdependence” as “a common language and ethical bedrock of international relations.” He highlighted this as “the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities among countries and social groups” to combat terrorism and increase security.
Similarly, Pope Francis stated during his visit to the United States in September 2015:

“The contemporary world, so apparently connected, is experiencing a growing and steady social fragmentation, which places at risk ‘the foundations of social life’ and consequently leads to ‘battles over conflicting interests’ (Laudato Si, 229). The present time invites us to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society, so as to bear fruit in significant and positive historical events (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 223). We cannot permit ourselves to postpone ‘certain agendas’ for the future. The future demands of us critical and global decisions in the face of world-wide conflicts which increase the number of the excluded and those in need.”

The pontiff went on to remind world leaders that: “The praiseworthy international juridical framework of the United Nations Organization and of all its activities, like any other human endeavor, can be improved, yet it remains necessary; at the same time it can be the pledge of a secure and happy future for future generations. And so it will, if the representatives of the States can set aside partisan and ideological interests, and sincerely strive to serve the common good.”

This is an important moment for greater interreligious dialogue and bridging divides. There is new openness in many places, but additional efforts are needed to promote greater understanding and common action to advance the common good.

With the world watching, the Church has a great opportunity to continue defending the dignity of every human person, promoting the rights and duties of all, proclaiming moral values in a world that has become rich in technical knowledge but often lacks ethical boundaries. It also has inescapable responsibility to promote the common good and dialogue for peace among all nations. In a world of increasing challenges and interconnectedness this should be a central goal for the years ahead.
As we are entering a new age of globalization we find ourselves in the midst of a transitional phase in which the structures of governance of the old system are in serious crisis, while new legitimate ones have not emerged yet. The mirage of the global triumph of economic and political liberalism, celebrated by Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis, was soon replaced by visions of the “clash of civilizations” and more recently by a widespread malaise caused by what appears to be an expanding global disorder running out of control.

One should distinguish between three different levels of governance, which though interrelated may actually follow their own dynamics and work at cross purposes: 1) the geopolitical level of international relations; 2) the economic level of global markets and financial structures; and 3) the socio-cultural and normative level of an emerging global civil society aspiring to universality while having to recognize the irredeemable plurality of the many particular religions and cultures constituting global humanity. I will touch briefly upon the first two structural levels of global governance, while dedicating greater attention to the third level, which is the one that serves as the focus of attention of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

Geopolitically, we moved in short order from the bipolar system of the Cold War to the monopolist hegemony of a single hyper-power that co-
alesced briefly into an ephemeral Pax Americana, which is now been replaced by an increasingly anarchic multipolar global disorder. The multiple simultaneous wars being fought in Syria with the involvement of dozens of state and non-state armed forces and the inability of the international system to contain the violent regional conflicts or to manage the resulting humanitarian and refugee crises offer the most clear evidence of the global geopolitical crisis.

In the long term, only the consolidation of a legitimate international system based on international law that limits the absolute sovereignty of each and every state can offer the hope that the present crisis will not lead to a new global conflagration between world powers. But in the short run, the principle “might makes right” seems to be gaining the upper hand from the South China Sea to Crimea. Even the project of a European Union, meant to overcome the nationalist conflicts of the past that triggered the two world wars, is in serious crisis. The vision of a single European home from the Atlantic to the Urals is receding in the face of a European Union unable to develop solidaristic economic policies that would benefit all its members, to respond in unison to the immigration and refugee crisis, or to confront Russia’s new militarist challenge.

On the economic level of global governance there has been no stable recovery from the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. The crisis itself manifested a collapse of internal corporate and financial governance structures, the widespread failure of regulators, credit rating agencies and market mechanisms, a lack of transparency and ultimately a systemic breakdown in accountability and ethics. Governments that proved unable or unwilling to regulate the economy before the crisis had to intervene afterwards to bail out the financial system. Yet, their monetary policies often coupled with austerity measures have flushed the financial system with easy money but have done little to stimulate the real economy. Market mechanisms alone appear insufficient. Neither the advanced capitalist countries nor China seem to be able to function as engines of growth for the world economy. Most emerging markets are in recession and the global economic peripheries are confronting serious subsistence crisis. Most damagingly, economic

Long-lasting global norms which may serve as the foundation of legitimate structures of global governance will only emerge from sustained interreligious, intercultural, and intercivilizational dialogue.
inequality keeps growing everywhere, reaching unsustainable levels and under-mining the political system as well as the civic trust and the social fabric in most societies.

In sum, the world economic system lacks internal self-regulating governance structures, while the national political systems lack the ability, the political will or the know-how to regulate global economic processes in a productive, fair, and beneficial manner. Nationalist populist responses popping up everywhere are a sign of the malaise but are unlikely to offer long-term creative solutions that may serve to overcome the crisis.

If new norms and governance structures are to emerge which may serve to regulate the global geopolitical system and the world economic system they will have to be nurtured and grow within the emerging global civil society. The crisis in global governance is ultimately a crisis of legitimacy, of accountability, and of participation. The ruling political and economic elites are too detached and inattentive to the people they represent and in whose name they claim to govern. But the rise of populist demagogues, most evident in the United States and Europe, will not serve to reform the system. Only greater democratic participation beyond electoral mobilization can lead to greater accountability and in turn restore trust and legitimacy.

Against this backdrop, the prospect of a global civil society that aspires to the universal representation of global humanity and to the universal common good must appear nebulous at best, if not utterly unrealistic. Any sober look at the emerging world society reveals an irremediable and seemingly unsurmountable plurality of worldviews, moral norms, cultures, and religious traditions in open tension if not in outright conflict with one another. How could paying attention to such a cacophony of voices possibly help in the development of global norms and governance structures? Global cosmopolitan elites would prefer to ignore all these discordant and unruly voices from below and offer instead rational, positivist, and technocratic rules that can be legislated uniformly from above.

But in the long term such a strategy most likely will fail to advance greater and more legitimate global integration. The reaching of consensus among global elites may well be a sine qua non for the development of any viable global governance. But to be lasting such a consensus will need to be grounded in broader norms, which find resonance in the moral, cultural, and religious traditions of the diverse peoples who constitute global humanity. Such norms can only emerge from a sustained conversation and dialogue that recognizes the irremediable plurality of cultures, religious and secular, which coexist in our global era and will persist into the future.

Long-lasting global norms which may serve as the foundation of legiti-
mate structures of global governance will only emerge from sustained interreligious, intercultural, and intercivilizational dialogue.

It will not be enough for such dialogue to uncover shared understandings of norms of justice, peace, and human dignity embedded in different traditions. Those norms will have to be reflected and expressed in the very process of dialogue itself, carried out in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. Only the mutual recognition of our common humanity and shared fate has the potential to inform and support structures of global governance that will promote world peace and social justice for all instead of protecting the national security interests of the superpowers; that will promote economic growth and well-being for all instead of protecting the economic interests of the ruling elites; and that ultimately will promote the common good of global humanity and the protection of the earth, our common home, from greater environmental degradation.
In a world that seems increasingly polarized, greater religious literacy is indispensable. The Pew Research Center’s data shows that the world is becoming more religious as it becomes more interconnected. As individuals and communities become more connected to one another across cultural boundaries, and as technology increasingly transforms our economies and societies, there is an ever-greater need for people to develop a nuanced understanding of the values, perspectives, and behaviors inspired by different forms of religious activity and belief. Sensitive policymaking, which appreciates and respects the values and principles of faiths worldwide has thus become inevitable, while simultaneously creating challenges for groups who fear the loss of their own identity when confronted by the recognition of others.

It is not just enhanced connectivity, which is driving change. We are at the beginning of a new economic and social period, which I see as the fourth industrial revolution, one unlike any preceding period within the industrial era. A staggering confluence of technological innovations across the physical, digital, and biological spheres are creating disruptive transformations that will leave no aspect of global society untouched. The exponential speed, breadth, and depth of these changes herald shifts in entire systems of production, management, and governance and are transforming the way we work, live, worship, and express our human identity. The constant integration of technology in everyday life is powering major changes in social structure, culture, and behavior, reshaping individuals’ sociability and networks in ever-changing patterns.

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The changes underway are so profound that, from the perspective of human history, there has never been a time of greater promise or potential peril. As I discuss in *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, there is worrying evidence that recent and upcoming technological advancements may contribute to higher levels of unemployment, exacerbate inequality, and fragment communities both across and within countries. Alternatively, the same breakthroughs have the potential to empower local economies, allow developing countries to rapidly engage in global markets and enhance dialogue across cultures, religions, and geography.

We can only meaningfully address these challenges if we draw on the collective wisdom of our minds, hearts, and souls. This includes all of us, across all sectors and stakeholder groups, taking responsibility for shaping a future that reflects common objectives, values, and ethical principles. We must ensure that we develop and use technologies to empower and strengthen communities rather than disempower and divide them. Furthermore, we should reflect on the everyday choices we make that shape the role of technology in society. The more we think about how best to harness the technology revolution, the more we will engage in self-reflection and examine the underlying social models that technologies embody and enable, and the more we will have an opportunity to shape the revolution to serve the global public interest.

The engagement of religion and faith leaders in defining the moral framework of the fourth industrial revolution is therefore essential. Faith is the most powerful force guiding societal and economic interactions, and it is the source of moral and ethical guidance for individuals and communities. In order for us to increase levels of religious literacy and appreciate better the complex ontologies that link religion, technology and society, we need nuanced, constructive conversations among religious leaders and with their followers about the ethical standards that should apply to emerging technological innovations. Only then can we start to discern a common, positive and coherent narrative that overcomes the fragmenting power of technology in favor of its unifying elements.

This is a task easier said than done. While interreligious dialogue is occurring in many ways, in many places and on many topics around the world, there is still much to be done to raise awareness regarding the importance of engaging with different religions. In addition, efforts must also be made to increase the general sensitivity towards, and knowledge of, religious beliefs and doctrines, which are often portrayed as diametrically opposed.

Perhaps the core challenge facing those engaged in this task is that negative, violent and intolerant behaviors are often linked to the practice of reli-
nation in media headlines. Shared messages of peace, equality, and tolerance are thus overshadowed by reports of extremist and violent behaviors, which often favor the creation of stark divisions and—in worse cases—brutal conflicts. The rise of radicalism and the latest waves of extremism that have inundated the world are of deep concern, as is the misuse of religious vocabularies to serve political, ideological and, ultimately, earthly purposes.

Indeed, despite the world having become overall more peaceful, an increase in religious hostilities has been recorded worldwide and has been accompanied by a rise of non-state actors supposedly motivated by religion. All of this creates significant confusion and angst for people trying to appreciate the role of religions other than their own in modern life. Only a concerted effort to increase religious literacy can appropriately counter the propagation of such harmful narratives.

From its inception, the World Economic Forum has recognized the significance of faith and values in guiding societal and economic interactions. As the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation, the Forum engages leaders of diverse faith traditions to contribute to multi-faceted and nuanced discussions of economic, social, and political development. The Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Role of Faith is developing a toolkit for business and government leaders to encourage a deeper understanding of the impact religion and faith have on society, extending invitations to governments and companies to engage religious people more openly in world affairs and key ethical debates. By integrating faith communities into global, regional and industry agendas, the Forum aspires to foster elements of inclusiveness and tolerance, and harness the power of values and principles. This is to keep the human being—and what I call “inspired intelligence”—at the center of efforts to improve the state of the world.

Indeed, navigating and shaping the fourth industrial revolution will require us to master multiple different “intelligences.” Most obviously, we need new approaches to contextual intelligence—the ability to understand and apply knowledge across a wide range of topics, sectors and stakeholders. The fourth industrial revolution, however, also demands increased emotional intelligence—the ability to process and integrate our emotions and feelings and those of others to remain sensitive to impacts outside our own experience. It certainly requires physical intelligence—the ability to carefully support our
own vitality and energy while operating in volatile, challenging and often stressful environments.

Perhaps the most important today, however, is the need for inspired intelligence—nourishing our spiritual and creative faculties to ensure that we retain and build a collective moral consciousness that allows us to work together to overcome both common and individual challenges. Religion and faith are not just the wellspring of this consciousness; they also offer rich philosophy and transformative experiences that connect us to the ineffable.

We are in the midst of an incredible social, political, ecological, and economic transformation. The speed and types of changes we are experiencing require greater appreciation for nuance and human understanding, as well as deeper connections to one another. Religion, spiritual beliefs, and faith have the ability to explore new forms of modernity while staying connected to the nourishing aspects of our traditional value systems. We must therefore take every opportunity to draw on the power of faith to catalyze a new cultural renaissance that will enable us to be part of something much larger than ourselves—a global, connected civilization.
The challenges of development, religious harmony, and ending conflicts are so intertwined that the separate approaches to each facet that are so commonly followed make little sense. As president of the World Bank (1995-2005), I worked to expand and redefine our operations in this common spirit. Forging links among three areas proved especially controversial: stepping up action to respond to conflicts and natural disasters; dealing with the overhang of indebtedness; and engaging systematically with religious institutions. That peace and religion are both at the heart of development was even more obvious during my work in the Middle East as the Quartet’s representative from 2005 to 2006.

Reconstruction after conflict, especially in developing countries, needs to be swift, purposeful, and undertaken with an eye both to urgent needs and long-term strategies. Wars and conflicts, like those that raged in the Balkans during my term as World Bank president, leave people in parlous circumstances. Speedy response is essential so that, within the limits of what is possible, hardship is alleviated and reconstruction can advance. Rather surprisingly, many members of the Board of Executive Directors, who represent the World Bank’s member countries, questioned this extension of our reconstruction work, arguing that we should engage in physical reconstruction only when peace was firmly in place and formally established authorities explicitly invited us in. We should only launch programs with this formal structure as
the task of immediate intervention belonged to humanitarian agencies that typically responded quickly (but with inevitably limited scope and means). Board members were especially wary that we might be forced to take sides between parties where religious tensions were involved, worrying that we would be caught up in difficult political and diplomatic issues.

We did step up our response to reconstruction and other interventions in fragile states (with strong and courageous staff support). In the Balkans we moved quickly into conflict areas as soon as fighting had nearly stopped. We made great contributions to saving human lives and establishing the foundations for peaceful reconstruction. The Red Cross and similar institutions were already engaged in the last stages of conflict and religious organizations often played positive roles. None of the existing players had the same capacity and experience as the World Bank. By moving quickly we were able to accelerate progress and move toward real development.

Our work in reconstruction around the world and the intensive debates and ultimately transformative action involved in efforts to address poor country debt (where religious organizations were deeply engaged) confirmed my long-standing sense about the importance of religious actors in development—a blind spot for many of my World Bank colleagues. Under my leadership, the World Bank began to engage religious groups not just in reconstruction but in combating poverty and promoting development more broadly. One source of inspiration came through my friendship with Monseigneur Paglia and his colleagues from the Rome-based Community of Sant’Egidio, whose rich experience coincided with my initial thoughts. My next step was to contact the renowned Protestant leader, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, who was keenly interested in these issues. I spoke to my longtime friend, the Aga Khan, to get a sense of possible Islamic reactions. Finally, Cardinal McCarrick of the Catholic Church, in Washington, gave me a sense of Rome’s interest in the close connection between religion and development.

After these preliminary discussions, George Carey and I convened a conference with a range of senior religious leaders in February 1998 at Lambeth.
Palace in London, to test out the idea of launching a bold dialogue among faith and development leaders. We had to determine how world religions could be brought to support a common plan to reduce poverty that would link faith run programs with the many other civil society initiatives. The idea was to build mutually supportive programs that would have a large and lasting impact on poverty. George Carey and I convened a further conference in Washington in November 1999 to develop specific plans to engage a larger group of religious leaders. We agreed to establish a modest institution to build solid and creative partnerships. But rather to my surprise the World Bank’s Executive Directors raised a host of objections. After extensive consultations we moved forward but were frankly stymied by the hesitations that the very topic of religion unleashed.

On September 11, 2001, the terrorist attack aimed at the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, ironically, made leaders of countries and institutions more responsive to bringing religious leaders together with civil society. Thus we organized a third meeting in Canterbury (the largest so far) in October 2002, with more than 50 religious leaders. On the first day, there was much apprehension and some tension. It was a first ever where such a wide spectrum of leaders engaged on issues of alleviating poverty and responding to conflict. After 24 hours, the group came together in an exceedingly constructive way. Many joint initiatives followed. What was most important was that in individual situations local religious leaders were able and willing to work constructively with each other as well as with civil society and aid organizations. This was something quite new and potentially of immeasurable value.

The group’s final meeting took place in Dublin in January 2005, on the invitation of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin. He, George Carey (no longer archbishop of Canterbury), and I shared the chairmanship. We reviewed what we had achieved and gave a final push to both religious and lay leaders to come together to their mutual advantage. We agreed that the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), led by Katherine Marshall, should have its base in Washington and should pursue the initiative, albeit cautiously and often under the radar given manifold sensitivities. I am deeply pleased that WFDD, under Katherine’s dynamic leadership, and from its base at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center, has pursued both the ideals and the practical opportunities it offers.

I left the World Bank in June 2005 to take up my position as the envoy in the Middle East. My task was to do all that I could to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians together to their mutual advantage and to encourage the other Arab nations, with whom I had been privileged to have great contact while
at the World Bank, to join in the international peace efforts. Much could be said about that situation but it would take a new book. Suffice it to note that once again the situation offers great positive potential. Sadly, instead of working for common benefits for human life and the dignity of those concerned (political and civil society, secular and religious), the negotiators have yet to find common ground.

Finding this common ground and the creative approaches that can come from breaking down the walls among different sectors and approaches lie at the heart of what is vitally needed to bring about peace and truly improve people’s lives. The experience of the past two decades of working to build partnerships with a wide range of religious leaders and institutions is a testimony to how much more can be achieved when this common ground is defined and when there the different parties listen and learn from each other.
I’d like to reflect on the Berkley Center’s first decade by considering two novels of the years just past: Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead* (2004) and Michel Houellebecq’s *Submission* (2015). Chronologically, the two novels bracket the decade. Thematically, they speak to present concerns: the changing character of Protestant Christianity in the American heartland, and the fresh claim of Islam in the heart of Europe. It’s hard to imagine two novels superficially less alike; but their seeming unlikeness has led us to overlook a common approach that works in counterpoint to the prevailing account of religion in our place and time.

*Gilead* is tender, retrospective, ardent-reverent, and distinctly American. This dying heartland pastor’s valedictory letter to his still-young son begins in the 1950s and looks back, to his boyhood, and to his father’s boyhood, and to the years just before the Civil War when the issue of slavery divided father from son. Its most striking quality is the sincerity that Rev. Ames and the novelist share, as they share a confidence that the Christian point of view is credible, interesting, complex, and familiar enough that the reader—Ames’ son, reading the letter; the person of our time, reading the novel—will feel a spark of recognition.

*Submission* sounds like a bad joke of the priest-and-an-imam-in-a-boat variety. When the Muslim party comes to power and restructures the Sor-
bonne along Islamic lines, what is François to do but become a Muslim? After all, he was bored with things as they were—bored with his girlfriend, with teaching, with politics, with Paris. After all, religion makes no difference to thinking people, so why not go along with Islam to get along? Offhand, ironic, the novel has the feel of a sketch, with Islamist militias, halal markets, and headscarved women penciled in along dotted lines extending out from the present to 2022.

Religious beliefs in our time are put to the test in the testing ground of the individual.

Gilead and Submission seem profoundly unlike each other because they are profoundly unlike each other. And yet together they are set squarely against the assumption underlying most current discussions about religion: the assumption that religion is a social problem.

This assumption, long fermenting and multiply sourced, came to market after the World Trade Center was destroyed by Islamist terrorists in 2001. All of a sudden Western societies had a religion problem. Conservatives who had spent two decades pushing against the notion that religion is a private matter suddenly had partners on the left. Liberals who had spent a couple of decades inveighing against religiously inspired violence suddenly had partners on the right. Overnight, the questions “What do I believe?” and “What do I consider believable?” were displaced by the questions of what to do about society’s religion problem, from Islam-inflected fanaticism to the health-insurance policies of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The two novels speak to this state of affairs with an individual voice and point of view.

Shortly after Gilead was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, the American Scholar published an essay by Marilynne Robinson called “Onward, Christian Liberals.” George W. Bush had been re-elected president, after campaigning on what Robinson called a “neo-fundamentalist” story of Christian America under threat. Per contra, Robinson reminded her readers that much of American liberalism was brought into being by liberal Protestants: colleges and universities, abolition and women’s suffrage, the idea of economic inequality as a “social sin.” Taking up a thread of religious experience from the nineteenth century, she told a story in which people phobic of Christianity could recognize themselves. That is what she had done in Gilead: in the reader’s encounter with Rev. Ames’ religious belief, believable for the narrator, becomes believable for the reader, if only for a little while.

As Submission begins, François has lost interest in the Symbolist novelist Huysmans because Huysmans’ later work involves his conversion to
Catholicism. And yet François still believes in literature: “...only literature can put you in touch with another human spirit ... a spirit from beyond the grave...” When the Sorbonne is reconstituted as an Islamic university, he is out of a job, and the louche professor becomes a seeker. He feels he is “completely lacking in spiritual fiber.” A social scientist tells him that the capacity for transcendence is genetic: you’ve either got it or you don’t. And yet his voyage out from riot-ravaged Paris turns into a pilgrimage. At Rocamadour, he recognizes the power of the Black Madonna as distinctly religious, not just cultural. At an abbey where he once did research, he is shocked when a monk remembers him. When a colleague observes that “Only religion ... could create a total relationship among individuals,” the idea strikes him as credible: the transcendence he has sought in literature is there in religion, too.

If all this had been embedded within the story of a Sorbonne professor’s conversion to Catholicism, Houellebecq would have been celebrated as a French Walker Percy. Because the conversion is to Islam, everybody figures that he is pulling our chain. He is—but not only. Sure, François’ conversion to Islam is improbable—but no more so than Rev. Ames’ late marriage to a young former prostitute. Sure, François converts because doing so gets him his job back at triple the salary and with a harem to keep him satisfied sexually—but Muslims all over the world submit to Allah in part for the worldly incentives. Sure, his conversion is tenuous and halfhearted, but as such it is more convincing than an about-face would have been. Sure, neither character nor author are wholly sincere—but it seems a crude prejudice on the reader’s part to assume that a famous French writer’s novel depicting Islam as attractive to a native Frenchman, a successor to Romanesque Catholicism, must not be taken seriously.

Prior to publication (and prior to the murders at Charlie Hebdo), Houellebecq characterized François’ search, and his own, as more sincere than not—and his approach is more akin than not to Marilynne Robinson’s approach. Taking up a thread of religious experience from the nineteenth century, he tells a story in which people phobic of Islam can recognize themselves. In François’ monologue he makes Islam believable; and in the reader’s encounter with the novel religious belief, credible for the narrator, becomes credible for the reader, if only for a little while.

Their seeming unlikeness has led us to overlook a common approach that works in counterpoint to the prevailing account of religion in our place and time.
Religion is a social phenomenon in many respects, and in many respects it is a social problem. And yet these monologues complicate the assumption that the encounter of religion and culture takes place mainly in the social sphere, where religion is primarily a problem to be solved. *Gilead* refutes the idea that liberal Protestantism is “exhausted” because it has lost numbers and influence: in this book, one believer—Rev. Ames—is more persuasive than any poll data. *Submission* is a big *non* to the view that Islam claims vast numbers of immigrants in Europe because it serves them as a social anchor in a strange land. Cynical François comes to see Islam in religious terms: as a portal to transcendence, one that enables the individual—native or immigrant—to enter into real relationships with other people.

Religious beliefs in our time are put to the test in the testing ground of the individual. These two novels dramatize the point. They remind us that our religion problem won’t be solved in this decade, or the next—and that our religion questions won’t be settled or banished as long as there are people, in life and art, who grapple with them personally.
I am writing this essay in the closing days of 2015 and the first days of 2016. The opening of a new year should be a time of renewal and hope but right now I find it hard to summon those sentiments. 2015 was supposed to be a year of celebration. For those of us who have spent decades pursuing various forms of interreligious engagement, particularly dialogue between Muslims and Christians, 2015 opened with a big anniversary on the horizon. We could look forward to celebrating Nostra Aetate as that extraordinary Vatican II document reached its half-century mark. It was fifty years ago, on October 28, 1965, that Pope Paul VI promulgated the declaration that flung open the doors to Catholic interfaith efforts.

Nostra Aetate unleashed a flood of scholarship, outreach and transformative theological reflection. For those of us raised in the enclave Catholicism of the mid-twentieth century, this intellectual ferment was exhilarating. At least on the ecumenical and interfaith fronts, we suddenly became a vanguard Church and for several decades took the lead in organizing international, national and regional dialogue forums. Through the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and its affiliate organizations, by the 1990s, Catholic outreach to Muslim countries and communities had created a robust network of enduring engagements, with national bishops’ conferences and Vatican dicasteries both initiating and sustaining multiple forms of

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encounter. The momentum achieved in the decades following *Nostra Aetate* accelerated through the turn of the millennium and into the new century.

Less than two years into that century, however, the watershed tragedy of September 11 whipped through our world and interreligious engagement jumped from ‘church work’ to front page news. Suddenly, departments of Political Science and International Relations discovered religion, especially the religion of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims. Religious Studies and Theology departments put faculty recruitment in Islamic Studies at the top of their hiring priorities. Students flocked to first-year Arabic and signed up for every course available on Islam and Islamic history, on Muslim cultures and societies, on the modern Middle East and the role of religion in war and conflict. Bookstores could not keep introductory works on Islam in stock and scholars in the field found themselves besieged with lecture invitations, interview requests, bibliographic queries and publishers’ book proposals.

The formation and funding of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs was a consequence of these events. The Berkley Center was born in a tumultuous decade, one that reached from the celebrations of the new millennium to the first euphoric weeks of the Arab Spring. Yet in the early weeks of 2011, soon after the Ben Ali regime fell in Tunisia, the Mubarak regime toppled in Egypt and the Qaddafi regime tottered in Libya, revolutionary waves began to weaken and finally die under the crushing retaliation of forces loyal to Muammar al-Qaddafi and, in Syria, to Bashar al-Assad. In August 2014, the geopolitical landscape again shifted with the emergence of ISIS and the eruption of its heart-rending atrocities, perpetrated on unbelievers and co-religionists alike. These horrors, plus the diabolical deployment of traditional and social media, focused world attention and drew recruits from across the globe.

Although there were celebrations of *Nostra Aetate* in 2015 and recognitions of its significance and legacy, as that year ended we were not swept forward on an ascending wave of interreligious harmony. Far from it. At least in the United States, we are reeling from a triad of terrorist attacks—the Russian plane downed over the Sinai, the Friday-night massacre in Paris and the San Bernadino shootings—that have left us mired in an anti-Muslim backlash unlike anything I have ever witnessed. A presidential candidate advocates closing

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this nation’s borders to Muslims, while a college president urges students to bear arms against them. A tenured professor is threatened with dismissal for stating that Muslims and Christians worship the same God and a Virginia county closes its schools because a teacher used Arabic calligraphy of the shahada, the Islamic profession of faith, as part of a lesson on world religions. And 2016 promises no respite from this backlash as ever escalating fears of terrorism mirror a Middle East falling ever more deeply into chaos. With refugees flooding into Europe, that continent’s fragile union flits on the edge of disintegration as xenophobic rhetoric runs rampant.

So how do we go forward? How do we sustain the promise of an institution like the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and the ideals to which it has committed itself? How do we find a sense of hope and renewal when our nation—and much of the world—seems to be retreating into postures of virulent intolerance?

One place to look is our own history. As we lament the lunacy that passes for political discourse in this pre-election period, it may be useful to recall some of the other dark periods of the American past. We need look no further back than World War Two and the forced internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans. Two decades earlier, the 1924 National Origins Act put severe restrictions on immigration from Asia out of fear for the “yellow peril,” another instance of racist terror about alien cultures. Speaking specifically of religious intolerance, it is worth recalling the anti-Catholic sentiments that plagued earlier periods of American history, from Colonial period restrictions to the Know-Nothing party of the 1850s to Ku Klux Klan cross burnings in the 1920s. The point of rehearsing this history is not to wallow in it but to remind ourselves that we have overcome and moved beyond these benighted eras.

Another basis of hope is the witness given by prophetic acts and voices. A few years ago, I contributed to a volume entitled Christian Lives Given to the Study of Islam, a collection of essays that spoke of the inevitable theological and spiritual transformation wrought by the prolonged encounter with another religious tradition. One of the essays evoked the memory of the Trappist monks in the Atlas Mountains who were kidnapped and murdered during the Algerian civil war. It quoted lines from the final testament that one of the monks, Fr. Christian de Chergé (1937–1996), left for his family and confreres in the event of his death:

“If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to engulf all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community,
my Church and my family to remember that my life was GIVEN to God and to this country. . . . I am aware of the scorn which can be heaped on the Algerians indiscriminately. I am also aware of the caricatures of Islam which a certain Islamism fosters. It is too easy to soothe one’s conscience by identifying this religious way with the fundamentalist ideology of its extremists. . . . Obviously, my death will justify the opinion of all those who dismissed me as naïve or idealistic. . . . But such people should know my death will satisfy my most burning curiosity. At last, I will be able—if God pleases—to see the children of Islam as he sees them, illuminated in the glory of Christ, sharing in the gift of his passion and of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to bring forth our common humanity amidst our differences.”
Interfaith practitioners from deeply committed faith communities often encounter strong opposition within their own communities. This is usually a reflection of insecurity, either in relation to a specific alternative religion, or indeed in relation to the wider human cultural context. It may also come from an obscurantism that believes that there is nothing “true,” nor of value to learn about or from, outside one’s own tradition.

Deserving of more regard though, is the fear often expressed that dialogue may undermine a particular faith commitment. However, while all real living encounter inevitably does involve risk (which is not at all necessarily a negative thing), my experience is that interreligious encounters actually strengthen the commitments of those who are faithfully and knowledgeably rooted in their respective traditions. In requiring one to be able to define and articulate one’s own commitments, one deepens one’s self-understanding.

There of course is the rub. Often those engaged in interfaith activity are not adequately knowledgeable and rooted in a particular tradition, and often interfaith relations in themselves serve such persons as an “alternative faith community,” which can even undermine the interests of true inter-faith dialogue.

A challenge that is sometimes related to this phenomenon is the attitude that minimizes difference, to the point of viewing all religions as basically the same. Of course we are able to discern important shared values, principles, and even practices in the different religious traditions, but these do not make us all the same. Portraying different religions as the same prevents us from seriously

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learning from one another. It also manifests a cultural arrogance, for in claiming that we are all basically the same, one makes one’s own subjective understanding of one’s own faith tradition or heritage, the sole criterion for a positive value judgment of others. Such an approach not only reflects the limitations of only being able to appreciate and respect those who are very much like oneself, but also minimizes the value of the diversity of human society and its various forms of spiritual expression.

Another challenge for interfaith dialogue comes from an almost diametrically opposed approach, from the world of post-modernism. This approach declares that each religion or culture is a completely self-contained system that expresses itself in a particular language and pattern of symbols that can only be understood in relation to other words and symbols that constitute the complete system. This leads to the claim that interfaith dialogue is impossible because the participants are never talking the same language or mean the same things.

There is merit to the argument that much is lost in translation whether verbal or cultural, and that we need to be wary of simplistic attempts in this regard. Nevertheless, those of us who are deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue will treat the abovementioned theory similarly to the way Benjamin Franklin treated the postulates of Bishop Berkley—experience teaches us otherwise!

Anyone who is genuinely engaged in interfaith encounter knows that even if we do not always have the language, terminology and experience to understand everything in another religious culture the way it is understood within itself, this does not mean that we cannot learn from one another.

So many of us involved in interfaith dialogue can testify to profound enrichment gained from dialogue with people of other faith traditions. Our experience repudiates the very idea that we are destined to have to live in exclusively different cultural, linguistic systems without being able to understand one another in any meaningful way—an idea which both falsely denies us the enrichment of such dialogue, as well as the promotion of true global understanding and wellbeing.

Finally let me refer to what is one of the biggest challenges for contemporary society as a whole and that is the violent abuse of religion that threatens peaceful coexistence everywhere. With it comes the question of what it is that makes this path attractive to so many. While there is no one simple answer to this question, it is clear that certain conditions create a climate that enables such mentalities to flourish. These include some obvious factors like economic and political marginalization. But no less important, if not more so, is the wounded psychology of those who feel that they lack the respect and value they crave. Because religion seeks to give meaning and purpose to who we are, it is inextricably bound up with the different components of human identity and plays a key role in nur-
turing identity when threatened (or perceived as such). However in contexts of alienation and conflict, religions not only provide support and succor; they can also provide a framework for self-righteousness and denigration of the other, enabling one group to see itself as the Godly in conflict with diabolical forces, inevitably leading to a betrayal of their religion’s most sublime universal values.

Of course, when we are confronted with the violent abuse of religion as with all threatening violence, it is essential to take necessary steps for self-defense and paradoxically this may require the use of violence to combat violence. However it is not enough to be reactive; this challenge necessitates pro-active steps as well.

It is here that interreligious dialogue in particular can play such an important role. Reaching out to the other in an Abrahamic spirit of hospitality can play a critically valuable role in giving communities and their members a sense that they are welcome and respected by other communities, and help combat feelings of alienation and lack of respect that fuel violent reactions.

Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions present Abraham’s tent itself as a manifestation of this spirit, with its flaps raised so that sojourners from all four corners could find hospitality and welcome there. Genesis Chapter 18 opens describing Abraham sitting at the entrance to his tent “and he lifted up his eyes and saw and behold three men were standing in front of him; and he saw and ran towards them”… Abraham greets them and offers them hospitality—no questions as to their origins, beliefs etc.

In the course of this encounter he discovers that they are Divine messengers, as he is promised the wondrous birth of a son a year later.

However two of the three visitors still have work to do, both to warn of the pending doom of Sodom and Gomorrah and to rescue Lot and his family from it; and the next chapter opens with the words “and the two angels came to Sodom.” Asked one of the Hassidic masters, why does the text refer to the visitors only as ”men” regarding the loving and righteous Abraham; but concerning Sodom of all places, they are referred to as “angels” And he answered, because Abraham didn’t need to be told that they were angels, because Abraham saw the angel in every human being.

That is the ultimate ideal of hospitality, and perhaps the greatest challenge for interreligious dialogue in our times, to facilitate the discovery of the Divine presence in each and every person, all created in the Divine Image and to receive them accordingly.
ESSAYS

RELIGION AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
"All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind."

UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global blueprint blessed by the United Nations General Assembly for the 15 years ahead build on noble aspirations and hard won lessons. The ideals they articulate: to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want (leaving no one behind), heal the planet, and secure peace, go beyond the post-World War Two visions for a United Nations inspired by equal rights and opportunities. The concrete 17 goals—bolder and far wider reaching than their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals—reflect lessons learned and three central ideas. These ideas are the heart and soul of the Berkeley Center’s mission and history.

First, global challenges, whether they focus on the broadest and boldest goals (ending poverty and preventable child deaths, equality for men and women) or far more specific targets (cleaner cook stoves, textbooks, and

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Religious perspectives often link different sectors and issues in ways that can yield distinctive and valuable insights when they are explored and appreciated.

Toilets for all) involve many sectors and institutions and the “stovepipe” approaches we are used to rarely work in addressing them. Complex linkages, say between fighting corruption and quality education or water supply and women's empowerment, demand plans and programs that are attuned to different dimensions and actors. We understand better today how far security, prosperity, and protecting the environment, long treated as distinct fields, are tightly intertwined and demand common frameworks, at least in the many areas where they intersect.

Second, transforming the world to meet the ideals of justice and equity demands partnerships. Public private partnership has a long history and the call to partnership is something of a mantra. But the challenges that lie ahead call for bolder, far more inclusive efforts to harmonize collective action toward well-defined common ends. The vogue for partnership needs much more rigorous approaches that deal with, for example, asymmetrical power and different worldviews. In short, building better partnerships is a demanding task that needs fresh thinking and approaches.

And third, earlier hopes or beliefs that carefully tuned technical solutions offered the optimum path are largely discredited. The challenges that face humankind pose ethical challenges at each and every turn. That calls for a discerning eye to the tricky balance between the moral and technical dimensions. Examples where this tension emerges are climate change, where wise leaders argue that moral arguments are essential to mobilize action, and efforts to end corruption, where experience shows that balanced approaches combining technical and ethical threads yield the best results.

Religious institutions, beliefs, and practices come into the picture in all three cases. The Berkley Center’s work around three questions has highlighted and integrated the religious dimensions around each challenge: What does religion have to do with it? Why does that matter? And what policy implications follow from the conclusions?

Richly complex religious factors touch every aspect of global challenges. Name an issue and there is a religious dimension. And religious perspectives often link different sectors and issues in ways that can yield distinctive and valuable insights when they are explored and appreciated. The Berkley Center, working in partnership with the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), has explored many development challenges, including energy
access, maternal health, malaria, tuberculosis, housing, and countless other topics. In each case religious actors are involved and bring experience and opinions, with often quite fresh and significant perspectives. A recent example is the Ebola pandemic. We explored the complex religious dimensions involved, pointing to often hidden work. The direct link between religiously inspired burial practices and new infections highlighted the need to engage religious actors more actively. We have gained a much richer understanding of how intricately problems are linked and a growing awareness that religious actors are central to understanding most issues and pointing to solutions.

Demands for more creative and inclusive partnerships follow from this appreciation of linkages. Here a first lesson is that religious actors and perspectives, commonly set apart or ignored in the past, play important roles. They need to be engaged as partners in addressing virtually any of the SDGs. However, existing forms of partnership tend to be rather patchy and generate much grumbling, in part because they are colored by asymmetrical power and gaps in understanding on all sides. The Berkley Center works to mitigate the lack of knowledge, mutual unease, and practical obstacles like differing language that often stand in the way of common efforts to tackle even such tangible and well-agreed targets as keeping girls in school or fighting malaria.

Notwithstanding the views of religious optimists, religious leaders and communities have no monopoly on ethical behavior and understanding. However, the complexities of moral dimensions of challenges and programs are ingrained in theology and in religious approaches. Religious teachings and practice often highlight moral dimensions of an issue. Linking a change in behavior to underlying religious principles can inspire or goad people to action on widely different issues. Ancient religious traditions of altruism and love of neighbor are as much part of what is needed to achieve the global goals as an appreciation of the realities of economics or engineering. Two prominent challenges where the mobilizing, emerging force of religious teachings can make a difference are climate change and fighting corruption. Hopefully thoughtful engagement and dialogue can also highlight areas of tension and nuance, and lead toward better solutions.

“Religion,” we are frequently reminded, is not a monolith or a tendency. “People of faith” are not a separate category of beings. No one is exempt from the search for meaning nor immune to the beliefs and cultures they inherit.
with their community. Each discussion that presses for more precise definitions of religion, faith, or spirituality underscores the diversity of traditions falling under these various headings. Efforts to pin down precisely what is meant and who is involved can be elusive. Care and humility are essential in engaging religious actors. Recognizing these complexities goads us to explore more creatively and deeply, because the religious dimensions, long ignored or distorted, shine light on the ways in which different elements of the web are connected.

During the 10-year Berkley Center journey, we were reminded constantly that, in relation to the global challenges of religion and world affairs, “religion is part of the problem even as it is part of the solution.” The dark side of religion is most evident in, for example, religious and cultural traditions that contribute to stigma against people living with AIDS or tuberculosis or LGBTQ people or fatalism in the face of inequity and injustice. With the sharp focus today on religiously linked conflicts, these dark sides are prominent. But the religious dimensions of global challenges highlight the enormous and often unappreciated value that religious communities and inspiration can and do bring. The bounties include insight and inspiration, courage and persistence, the mobilization of hands to achieve what seems impossible, a capacity to build richly diverse communities that include people from different faith traditions, and a joy that gives meaning and substance to life.
A recent exhibit at the Louvre in Paris inspired by Jacques Attali conveys, graphically, a disturbing picture of the state of our world. Underlying his vision and his message is a conviction that the path, indeed the very survival, of our civilizations is fundamentally tied to their spiritual roots. Empires upon empires have died spectacular deaths and it is worth reflecting whether such a fate may be upon us. If we open our eyes we can see the potential of bleak prospects: take for example the endless processes of refugees and migrants, constant images of destruction and hunger, and countless young parents who, every minute somewhere in the world, mourn a child who died of hunger or because their water was contaminated. Count up to seven: one, two, three... Seven seconds passes swiftly! And during those seven seconds a child somewhere has died.

Can we, with our gifts for reason, expect that these realities can continue without provoking a revolt? Can we truly believe that things will calm down, that the “trickle down” of wealth will automatically allow the infamous “invisible hand” of the market to bring so much suffering to an end? It would be a foolish illusion to believe so. It is quite plausible to believe that the empires built on trade that today extend their grip across the world will, like those that preceded them, sooner or later come to an end. That end could well find its precipitating force in the tendency we know too well for everything to become a commodity, or in the impulse to seize whatever one can. Likewise it may be inevitable that the pressures that stem from inequalities will provoke

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revolts and conflicts, possibly with violence on a scale that we have yet to witness.

Faced with these forces surely our impulse and our will is to change the course of history. Are there forces or ways not yet tapped into, actions that we could take (or not take), ways to work together, to avoid this future Apocalypse? Can we regain some control of our destiny, to make it truly human? Does that path lie in efforts to eradicate poverty and violence? Surely it does.

In many ways and in many places, spiritual forces—humanist or religious—give us hope. They offer a real chance to turn us from the grim path that Atali’s vision of apocalypse and our newspaper headlines portray so graphically. Looking to the resilient strength of spirituality we find a sense of solidarity and fraternity that binds us to people of many persuasions. Throughout the world, even if often too scattered, many are already engaged in efforts to change the path: silently, quietly, heroically, and in a holy manner.

These spiritual forces, it cannot and must not be denied, are not all good news. It is foolish to argue that the track record of religious ideas and communities is always inspiring. We could mention the Crusades of history or massacres in the twentieth century, carried out in the name of crazy ideologies that often are framed in religious terms and language. Perhaps. But we should also highlight the presence of repentance and the will to reflect on history and to change. Should we not listen to the appeal that these spiritual traditions, each in their own language, make to the brotherhood of man?

Is it not time to recognize that all who follow different spiritual traditions seek a path to human development and salvation?

We need, all of us, coming from different disciplines and institutions, different religious traditions or none, to listen, to borrow more boldly from each other’s wisdom, to chart a path together toward a world of justice, peace and brotherhood, and fraternity.

Is it not time to work together with leaders of different traditions to help them to see themselves, and be seen, not as causes of division and violence but as workers in the same field, striving to build a better world for all men?

Is it not time also to listen as they tell us what language or expression they could convey, both individually and together, to pacify negative instincts, address the factors of greed and envy, and civilize relations among all men and women?

And is it not time, at long last, to hear what they expect from each other,
so that the promise they offer as they engage more intensively in a fraternal dialogue, can fulfill the promise of making ever more concrete contributions to saving the world on so many fronts?

This kind of dialogue and exchange are more essential today than ever before. We need, all of us, coming from different disciplines and institutions, different religious traditions or none, to listen, to borrow more boldly from each other’s wisdom, to chart a path together toward a world of justice, peace and brotherhood, and fraternity. For this is the most important, common duty for all mankind.

Should we not listen to the appeal that these spiritual traditions, each in their own language, make to the brotherhood of man?
The gravest global problems of our time—genocide, HIV/AIDS, violence against women and girls, hatred of LGBT people, and natural and human-made disasters—affect people regardless of their faith tradition. Hundreds if not thousands of organizations work around the world to help those impacted by these tragedies. Sometimes these groups are secular though in many cases they are religiously inspired. While much is written about Catholic and Protestant development and aid organizations, less is known about international development in the Jewish tradition and how it is addressing today’s pressing challenges.

As president of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the first and only Jewish organization dedicated solely to ending poverty and promoting human rights in the developing world, I believe responsible, ethical international development can be rooted in four values: kavod (respect), b’tezlem elohim (the inherent dignity of every person), tikkun olam (repair of the world), and tzedakah (acts of justice).

These values are an important framework for development projects because in many countries religion looms large and has had a major influence on culture, philosophy, politics, art—and, certainly, development and human rights. This sometimes means that religious beliefs and practices add many layers of complexity to realizing human rights—particularly for people who are acutely vulnerable: women, adolescent girls, sex workers, LGBT people, indigenous communities and others.

The beneficiaries of our work, who may or may not have met Jewish people or encountered Judaism, understand quickly that we do not have a religious or cultural agenda. Often, they appreciate us for this and relate to Judaism as a posi-
tive force in the world. On an AJWS program to Uganda, a college student met a farmer who shared that he had decided, after working with this student for several months, that he, too, was Jewish. “Why?” The student asked him. The farmer responded, “Because I, too, want to leave the world better than how I found it.”

Beyond the unintended impact of changing people’s perceptions of American Jews, there are three Jewish frameworks that animate our work for responsible global development: partnership, listening, and organizing for justice.

**Partnership**

Partnership is deeply embedded in the particularities of Jewish tradition. The core structure of Jewish learning is to study with a *chavruta*—a partner—predicated on the notion that intellectual, philosophical, religious and spiritual learning is an intrinsically social endeavor. *Chavruta* study is decentralized, democratic and egalitarian. It encourages learning with neither an authority figure to provide the “right” answer nor the assumption that there is a definitive right answer to begin with. From a Jewish and social justice perspective, leaders are encouraged to wrestle with and live the questions of our time instead of accepting easy answers.

Imagine what our community—and our world—would look like if today’s leaders in international development and beyond adopted a *chavruta* model for catalyzing social change!

**Listening**

The most central prayer in Jewish tradition is called the *Sh'ma*, which literally means “listen.” The essence of the *Sh'ma* is the imperative to pay attention and to do so with focus, clarity and unity of heart and mind. When applied to development work, the *Sh'ma* functions as a framework for asking critical questions that enable responsible global development. How can we more effectively listen to people who are silenced, disempowered or rendered invisible—really pay attention to them and what they say?

One experience that underscores the importance of listening took when place in 1998 when I traveled to Zimbabwe to visit an impoverished rural settlement with no government services. I met a teacher working with 80 children outside under a tree and asked him what he wanted most: Was it desks and chairs, books, pencils or perhaps a chalkboard? He replied, “I don’t need any of those things. I just need the children to have breakfast.”

I had come to Zimbabwe thinking that my solutions were the key to helping Zimbabwean children get a better education. I thought I had all the answers. But it turns out the people I had perceived as powerless—the people I was trying to help—were the ones who knew best what they needed. They were the ones with the answers, and it was up to me to listen.
Organizing for Justice

The Exodus story is the Biblical centerpiece of Jewish experience. It shapes the core narrative of Jewish communities and offers thematic resonance with the stories and struggles of other oppressed peoples. The telling of the Exodus story, along with so many other stories in Jewish tradition, provides an authentic framework for engaging in social justice work infused with Jewish values.

The Exodus story presents a foundation for understanding ourselves and for approaching responsible global development in the twenty-first century, rooted in the belief that all people have the capacity to move through the narrow, confined passages of their lives to actualize their visions of liberation—if only they had the resources to do so.

AJWS’s curriculum, “Expanding the Universe of Obligation: Judaism, Justice, and Global Responsibility,” offers an educational context for our Global Justice Fellowship, a program that brings rabbinic leaders to the developing world to learn about human rights issues. This curriculum challenges Jewish leaders to experience “productive discomfort”—not guilt or a feeling of overwhelmed paralysis, but a kind of psychic dissonance that pushes them to keep their values present and lead responsibly as global citizens. The units of this curriculum are shaped by several core questions: How does culture affect how I experience the world? How can I be a responsible actor in my own life and in the lives of those around me? Who are the people to whom I am obligated? How do I define poverty and understand its causes and effects? In light of my experience in the developing world, what can I do once I return home to the United States?

By asking these questions, Jewish leaders strengthen their catalytic impact—not only during a one-off experience in a developing country, but as engaged global citizens during the course of their lives.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel observed that “living is not a private affair of the individual; it is what we do with God’s time, what we do with God’s world.” The challenge for today’s leaders is to live the principles of partnership, listening and organizing for justice. We must engage in acts of loving kindness and mend the world’s brokenness. The wisdom of Pirkei Avot (Ethics of Our Ancestors), a collection of Jewish prophetic texts, reminds us that “it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.” Indeed, we are all responsible for building a better world, even if we never witness a world that is fully calibrated, holy and just.

At a time when religious dialogue is too often dominated by divisiveness, hate, and exclusion, we must create a new paradigm. It is up to religious leaders and religious organizations to write a better story for global development in the twenty-first century—a story that expresses our moral obligations and ethical commitments to improve the world and make it whole.
The earth’s climate has undergone major changes, but the current situation of global warming is quite different from that of the past, in that human activity is causing it. Technological advances offer solutions to this problem. For example, the technology exists to control environmental conditions.

We religious leaders, however, must make an appeal to society about environmental ethics that involve such things as the attitude and lifestyle of each person. All of us, whose lives are supported by this miraculous planet earth, need to think about what we can and should do to protect the earth’s environment, so that all of us can continue to live here.

“Thou shalt not kill” is one of the Ten Commandments on the tablets given to Moses, and freeing oneself from desire is a core teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. Religious leaders continue to teach these values today, from which we should know that human beings are a weak form of existence that, if left to our own devices, will increase violence and greed. Therefore, in every generation, tempering human desire has been one of the key issues addressed by religious leaders. In other words, the question before us is, “how can we control the flames of human desire?”

Ryoanji is a Zen temple located in Kyoto, Japan. This Rinzai sect temple is famous for its stone garden. In one corner of the garden sits a hand-washing basin that was donated by the influential Edo-era feudal lord Mitsukuni Tokugawa (1628-1701). Carved around the rim of the basin is the phrase, “I only know satisfaction.”

Kosho Niwano is the president-designate of the Rissho Kosei-kai school of Buddhist teaching. She serves on the board of KAICIID and has been deeply involved in interreligious engagement in Japan and the rest of the world.
This phrase tells us that the source of human happiness is a mind that knows what it means to be satisfied. Nothing can make us happy if our minds cannot grasp the deeper meaning of satisfaction. In that case, no amount of financial, material, or social reward can ever make us truly happy.

According to Shakyamuni Buddha, a person who truly knows satisfaction is calm in heart and mind, and a person who does not know satisfaction is confused in heart and mind. To wit, a “poor person” is not someone lacking in possessions, but someone who cannot find satisfaction in any number of possessions.

“I only know satisfaction” does not merely mean that we should be satisfied with what we now have. It means that we should know that God and the Buddha have already given us everything we need. This phrase expresses the sense of riches and plenty that come from knowing the satisfaction that everything we might ever require has already been given to us.

All of our lives, we have been sustained by the natural resources of the earth—gifts received from God and the Buddha, gifts that come from the universe. And now, we are faced with the problem of global warming due to greenhouse gasses. However, we religious leaders should not think about this problem in simple terms and suppose that we should change what is unsuitable to human life to what is suitable. Instead, we should think about it from the perspective of “I only know satisfaction.”

The problem of climate change is extremely inconvenient for we human beings. However, is this not also a message from the earth giving human beings the chance to return to an authentic way of life that accords with the wish of God and the Buddha? We should accept climate change as something that has given us the chance to reclaim this way of life intrinsic to human beings, as a chance to rethink all of our human endeavors, and to understand the importance of living each day with humility.

Some are of the extreme opinion that “were it not for humanity, there would be no damage to the environment,” and in one sense, this is true. Human economic activity, in and of itself, continues to impact the earth’s environment. And in looking back at my own lifestyle, I cannot say that I have done nothing to adversely effect the environment. On the one hand, there are my brothers and sisters who have been left behind by development, or who suffer in poverty because of the effects of development. Now more than ever, we should be truly, humbly grateful and revere all life forms, and we absolutely must think about how to bring our lifestyles into harmony with the wishes of God and the Buddha, and make such lifestyles our daily practice.

Moving forward, we will be confronted with numerous environmental issues, and we must address them. Instead of thinking about how to produce
short-term solutions to them, we must have action programs with results measured in decades or even centuries. I believe that religious networks will hereafter play increasingly important roles in implementing, in every corner of the world, ongoing, global-scale environmental programs.

One of the basic teachings of Buddhism is that “all things are impermanent.” Through this teaching, we can understand how much our lives are sustained by a great many things, and can experience our own selves being made up of everything outside of ourselves. It means that we are all mutually interdependent, that we are coexisting. If we continue to let our desire and greed grow larger, however, we will no longer have the choice of being either victimizers or victims. As long as we are living here on this earth, everyone is a victimer and everyone is a victim. Therefore, it is important that everyone personally feels that climate change and environmental issues are his or her own problem.

My grandfather, Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, said that, “Everything we receive is a gift from nature. We can never give rise to right faith without asking ourselves, ‘What is the purpose of our lives being supported by a great many things?’”

I will continue to make every effort, while continuing to ask myself the question posed by Founder Niwano, to lead a lifestyle that acknowledges that I am one living being whose life is sustained by planet earth.
**Top:** President DeGioia presents the 2013 Opus Prize to Sakena Yacoobi.  
**Bottom:** Thomas Farr, Timothy Shah, and Rémi Braque meet Pope Francis as part of a Religious Freedom Project conference in Rome.
Top: Religious leaders participate in the 2006 Sant’Egidio Prayer for Peace. Middle Left: Paul Elie and author Alice McDermott discuss Catholicism and the modern literary tradition. Middle Right: Thomas Banchoff welcomes guests to a lecture on Confucianism and liberal education. Bottom: Participants at President Obama’s 2015 Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge.
Top: Junior Year Abroad Network blogger Elizabeth Zehe (SFS’09) in Nanjing, China.  
Bottom: Education and Social Justice fellow Hopey Fink (C’15) in Burkina Faso.
Top: Managing Director Michael Kessler discusses religious freedom and healthcare reform. Middle Left: Jean-Luc Marion addresses the roots of the distinction between theology and philosophy. Middle Right: President DeGioia and Cardinal Donald Wuerl at “Catholic Perspectives on Religious Liberty” event. Bottom: Millennial mayors discuss the future of American politics.
Top: Ambassador Melanne Verveer discusses Islam, gender, and democracy. Middle Left: Hans Küng explores global challenges to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Middle Right: Sulak Sivaraksa and Katherine Marshall discuss Buddhist economics and globalization. Bottom: Melody Fox Ahmed with panel on complex faith and family identities on campus at the 2015 President’s Interfaith and Community Service Challenge.
Top: Timothy Shah moderates a discussion with Pastor Rick Warren.
Bottom: Thomas Farr, José Casanova, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Banchoff, and Michael Kessler.
In 2014, Georgetown University, the Archdiocese of Washington, and Pope Francis’ Pontifical Council for Culture convened the “Faith, Culture, and the Common Good” conference.

Top: E.J. Dionne, Krista Tippett, and David Brooks discuss the legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr and the future of Christian realism.
Bottom: José Casanova, Michael Walzer, and Jocelyne Cesari.
In 1993, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) landed on President Bill Clinton’s desk with the support of a unanimous House and near-unanimous Senate. Clinton signed the act into law. Five years later, in 1998, the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) arrived carrying near-unanimous House support and a unanimous Senate vote. Again, Clinton signed the act into law. The pair of bills gave religious freedom teeth—creating new diplomatic envoys and a foreign policy imperative dedicated to religious freedom, and reversing a Supreme Court ruling by requiring the federal government to accommodate religious freedom in its domestic policies generously, as legislators believed the “first freedom” demanded. Both bills marked a consensus and apparent fulcrum point. Neither touched off controversy.

Now, in 2016, the landscape of religious freedom looks very different. Around the world, religious believers and non-believers have watched their liberties wither under devastating attacks. The most recent data indicate that roughly five and a half billion people, 77 percent of the world’s population,
now live under high or very high levels of hostility toward their religious freedom—hostility either social or governmental. Ten years ago, that number stood at 68 percent. In the last decade, that means, over 600 million people—people the world over—have been subjected to levels of religious persecution they did not experience before.

That astonishingly big number—600 million people—gives a sense of the scale of the challenge the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown’s Berkley Center was founded to face, but not its texture. Religious freedom faces complex challenges, not just large ones. In the United States, for instance, religious freedom has been placed on the defensive. But not, as in Europe because of longstanding laïcité and rising anti-Semitism, nor, as in parts of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, because authoritarian governments and violent extremists have expanded their reach.

In the United States, the culture wars have driven a wedge into a long-standing consensus on religious freedom. As same-sex marriage and federal rules requiring the provision of birth control, sterilizations, and abortifacients come to the fore of debates on religious freedom, advocates of exemptions and accommodations increasingly face accusations of bigotry. In Indiana, those accusations gained broad corporate backing and led the governor to reverse course on legislation modeled after RFRA, vetoing a bill that would have easily passed in the 1990s. The threat posed by the Islamic State (ISIS) has also challenged American’s convictions on religious freedom—the first freedom. In a December poll, only 60 percent of Americans endorsed the importance of religious freedom for Muslims. In a country where both houses of congress voted overwhelmingly to pass legislation protecting religious freedom for all Americans, that number is disheartening and challenging.

America’s crumbling commitment to religious freedom has defanged its foreign policy. It is hard for any administration to convince other nations of the importance of religious freedom. It is doubly hard when the administration is selling a remedy in which it no longer believes and indeed opposes in court. The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom—a very senior diplomat at the State Department whose job, created by IRFA, is to advance global religious freedom—has never been treated as other such ambassadors are within the department.

But in the last decade and especially during the Obama administration

Religious belief is, as research increasingly indicates, a natural and indestructible component of human experience.
support for the role has dipped to an historic low. Unlike other ambassadors at large, the ambassador for religious freedom is not really considered a senior official at the Department of State. His status is far below that of other similar diplomatic officials, and he and his office lack resources. Although at this writing a very able man, David Saperstein, has been appointed as ambassador, it is nevertheless revealing that when he was appointed, the Obama administration had left the position unfilled for more than half the president’s tenure.

Now is a dangerous time for America to be asleep at the wheel of global religious freedom policy. In the European Union, antisemitism is rising. According to Pew, Jews face harassment or hostility now in almost forty percent of the world’s countries and over three quarters of European nations—an increase of 50 percent from a decade ago. Meanwhile, the Islamic State in the Middle East, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Al Shabab in Kenya are targeting Christians for slaughter—hundreds or thousands at a time, in towns, schools and shopping malls. Communist, authoritarian and theocratic states, such as North Korea, Cuba, China, Russia, Egypt, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia continue to regiment and punish religious believers who refuse to recognize the state, or the official religion, as the most important authority in their lives. They reserve that role for conscience.

The last decade, in short, has been fraught for religious believers and for believers in religious freedom. But those challenges are not insurmountable; religious freedom advocates possess an arsenal of strategies and advantages as they look to the future.

It might be said of religious freedom in America that reports of its death are exaggerated. Religious freedom in America is under threat, not defeated. A majority of Americans continue to believe in the importance of religious freedom, even as they spar, sometimes despairingly, over its applications, and bipartisan enthusiasm dims. The current political controversy over religious freedom has spurred research on religious freedom’s benefits—invigorating an academic community near the core of which sits the RFP. Academics have built a formidable and palatable case for religious freedom that should buoy and arm supporters: religious freedom, we know now, is good for democracy, good for economies and capable of soothing violent religious tensions. Religious freedom advocates, even if they have lost ground in

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the last ten years, can cloak themselves in the confidence that comes with selling a good product.

Promising data analysis aside, religious freedom advocates ought to draw their most abiding confidence in their case from religious believers and the nature of religion itself. Religious belief is not easily extinguished. Even under the gravest repression—in the Soviet Union, in China in Rome—believers have borne witness to conscience. Religious belief is, as research increasingly indicates, a natural and indestructible component of human experience. Indeed, even as restrictions on religious belief have grown through the past decade, religion has resurged, not retreated. So too, for religious freedom advocates, who have refashioned their arguments, built political and social networks, and can look forward from a decade of challenges steeled to meet them.
Debates about the nature and scope of religious freedom revolve, in part, around the idea of conscience, an old idea in the western tradition. In moral theology, conscience typically represented a capacity of moral self-reflection that could correct our normal rational and appetitive moral processes, reminding us of the most fundamental moral principles even when we had (mistakenly) convinced ourselves to act against them. Over time, the idea of conscience became a more general idea of an inner sanctum, which encompassed all of the moral deliberations that a human undertook. Anglo-American jurisprudence, under the influence of western Christian ideas, absorbed the idea that each citizen has an unassailable inner sanctum over which the legal polity could not rule. Yet over the past hundred years, we are faced with the awareness that growing pluralism and cultural heterogeneity challenges any easy consensus about how conscience is to be protected in a community of diverse people pursuing many different good lives.

Within the U.S. context, the idea of liberty of conscience is rooted in seminal ideas underlying the republic. The free exercise clause enshrined in the Bill of Rights was built upon the modern liberal idea that while citizens form a government by alienating certain rights over to a central sovereign, some rights like conscience are inalienable. As Elisha Williams put this in a 1744 sermon “The members of a civil state do retain their natural liberty or
right of judging for themselves in matters of religion. Every man has an equal right to follow the dictates of his own conscience in the affairs of religion.”

Yet over the course of the last 200 years, the idea of conscience has been transformed under the conditions of modernity. The ease of making recognizable claims of conscience within a largely homogenous religious citizenry has disappeared. Our age is now marked by an immense diversity of religious views, with greatly conflicting prescriptions for morally-shaped ways of life, a situation that complicates any easy consensus about how “matters of conscience” can manifest in public acts.

The intellectual justifications for protecting conscience have also undergone radical shifts. No longer is there a viable narrative about a rational horizon of shared moral principles and the privileged position of religious conscience has given way to broader ideas about moral subjectivity unrooted from religious life or theological narratives. Appeals to stable, permanent truths within moral and political debates no longer convince large portions of our fellow citizens. We act on the basis of reasons that are evermore shrouded within insular identities, subjective preferences, and carried out among communities of the like-minded, while our justifications are decreasingly persuasive to others. We simply hold fewer norms in common.

So, today we are confronted by new, vexing challenges about how to strike a reasonable balance between protecting conscience and religious liberty and allowing the pluralistic political community to advance laws and regulations for the well-being of the polity.

In this situation it is facile to think that what we need is more law, to fill in the gaps. As Robert Cover brilliantly explains in *Nomos and Narrative*, the problem we face is not some deficiency in the law. Rather, we already live with too much law—that is, we live amidst a conflicting multiplicity of laws that guide our individual and communal lives, and lead us into many different, sometimes colliding, ends. The state has a monopoly on only one version of the law and holds power over citizens who are fully aware of many other
modes of power, sources of norms, and diverse goals for their lives, many beyond state control. The modern bureaucratic state’s regulatory control over more parts of our lives multiplies while simultaneously butting up against enduring and thriving modes of normativity that escape the state’s power.

The American political order tried to protect conscience by recognizing this limit on state power: from Locke to Madison and forward, the political theory underlying conscience protection aimed to allow for principles of toleration and respect for the fact of conscience, while resisting any official endorsement or sanction about the substance of a conscience’s claims. Classic liberals cordoned many facets of life and associations—particularly religious and moral ones—for private treatment and control in order to protect these modes of life from what Luther had called the blunt instrument of the state’s sword. The constitutional framework of our liberal democratic order protected conscience through self-imposed limits on how far the state can intervene into the lives of diverse citizens.

Thus arguments made by a citizen about what impacted their conscience were generally deferred to, since many of them could be tolerated in our midst without a crumbling of the social order. When Mrs. Sherbert, a Seventh-day Adventist was fired after she refused to work on Saturday, her Sabbath Day, and was denied unemployment benefits because other jobs were available that she refused (also requiring Saturday work) the Court declared this forced her to make a choice that was forbidden by the Constitution. The State’s laws could not make you give up your religious scruple to gain a government benefit that is otherwise open to you, especially when accommodating this religious way of life comes with very little political cost.

In the fifty-three years since Sherbert v. Verner, though, the stakes have risen. Claims about government regulations forcing conscientious believers to violate their deeply held beliefs have multiplied. Now, many citizens are far less sympathetic to religious claims. Some of the demands for exemptions impose real costs to the social order. Ethnic, racial, and gender biases manifest in sympathy or hostility to conscience claims: Those sympathetic to Christian bakers objecting to wedding cake sales for a same sex ceremony may often be far less inclined to think the state ought to accommodate Muslim taxi drivers who do not want to carry passengers with alcohol, in violation of carrier regulations. What appears to one citizen as a legitimate regulation by the government is to another a deeply offensive intrusion. The future instances where citizens may make demands for exemptions are not yet fully imagin-
able. We will need to sort out how to handle complicity claims that approach and strain credulity.

A hallmark of liberal democracy has been the recognition of different worldviews and moral configurations. Today, we are less tolerant of imposing onto others a unified moral truth. At the same time, recent seismic shifts in moral views about gender roles, sexual identities, configurations of partnerships and marriage, among many other areas of life, have dramatically altered socially acceptable modes of life. For many, these changes mean that liberty has fully awakened and moral progress has been made toward equality and inclusivity. For others, good moral patterns and justified legal regulations of harmful behavior have been stifled. Now we face the question of what to do with those whose moral views have not changed with the times. Does the state have any justifiable interest in forcing the “stragglers” to adopt new, “enlightened” views about moral ideas relating to contraception and marriage equality? Or, are progressives now in danger of committing what Doug Laycock has called the “Puritan mistake,” where the formerly oppressed now become intolerant of those with different views?

Exemptions have emerged as an avenue to achieve conscience protections for those who refuse on religious and moral grounds from participating in activities they deem a moral violation. These can be good political compromises to advance a cause while leaving a safety valve for those who object to “opt-out.” Yet, granting an exemption may at times implicate the government in endorsing the unequal provision of goods or services or legitimate certain kinds of dignitary harms to those who are refused service by a conscientious objector.

Accommodating religious actors will have to be done, if at all, with the full recognition that a balancing of goods and harms is a necessarily imperfect, even tragic, path to settling these conflicts in a pluralist democratic order. Tolerance for a free and diverse people is a messy affair.
Shared Norms in a Globalized World?

Stanley Hoffman said, “If death defines the human condition, injustice defines the social one. There is a duty, national and international, to reduce it as much as possible. But there is no definitive victory.” Victory may remain elusive, but the imperative to strive to eliminate all forms of injustice wherever we can must remain at the forefront of any international ethics. Governments throughout the world are increasingly aware of the need to address political, economic, security, and ethical challenges across national boundaries. Although state interests differ on a variety of human concerns, the use of the phrase “global society” emphasizes humanity’s interconnectedness and interdependence despite the diversity of cultural, religious, economic, and social practices. As such, there is a desire for a more inclusive way of thinking and acting that can create a global order of shared practices and good governance without homogenization.

While it may not be practical to speak of a global community bound together by certain norms, neither is it impossible to uphold certain norms as being indispensable to good global governance and human flourishing. At the very least, reflection on shared norms and values reminds us of questions we have forgotten to ask, of human idealism in its deepest sense. Values such as justice, equality, empathy, religious freedom, and human rights for all may seem to be distinct values of secular modernity, the Enlightenment heritage, and the preserve of liberal democracies. But they also resonate across diverse religious populations and political aspirations. Even if they are considered

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politically or theologically charged terms, today such values have become fundamental to our understanding of human desire, agency, and aspiration. They are about establishing moral accountability and principles aimed at connecting rather than disconnecting humanity.

Globalization, innovative technology, and ease of travel mean that we are connected more than ever before to the hopes and suffering of others. In many ways, it has never been easier than it is today to foster the sense of a shared earth, shared values, and a shared humanity. As Mohammad Samiei argues, modern technologies have “annihilated” and “compressed” distance or space “so that distant events and decisions affect local life to a growing degree and any crisis anywhere can virtually affect human beings everywhere. Hence, what happens to ‘others’ nowadays matters to us to an unprecedented extent.” Thus, this process of globalization has immediate local impact in multicultural societies so that how we understand the world may be how we understand our neighbor.

We all speak from a particular place, but today we cannot escape the fact that modernity has done away with many of the premodern ideas of justice, male-female relations, and ideas of the common good. Humankind is a locus for unending growth and possibilities where law itself should be seen as a cultural construct, rather than only as natural or divine law. International legal norms are applied in largely multicultural diasporas with competing moralities and interests. Shared values are not about the homogenization of norms or governance or ignoring the moral, legal, and social complexity of any society. Rather, they aim to rise above daily politics and help us realize a more authentic self and a more authentic society.

Religious institutions may be on the decline in the global north, but religious life and values still shape how many of us think of the world and the questions we continue to ask. But we need to rethink our human concerns in the light of our faith and also the effects of modernity. In most western societies the political language is that of liberalism and liberalism speaks a language of rights where the individual is at the centre of the worldview; liberalism recognises the individual over the collective. This has given a new

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model of freedom to society, along with a new social order where religion no longer retains its former elevated position in society. The rise of democratic rule, the concept of civil society, the consciousness of all kinds of human rights including religious rights, gender rights and sexual rights are all part of this new political and moral consciousness. Thus, irrespective of East or West, the human rights language, including its international dimension through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has captured our imagination and immersed itself in the global political and legal discourse.

The rights based language recognizes human freedom as essential to human flourishing and that there is no human dignity without human freedom. The freedom of the individual citizen to choose his or her own moral life must lie at the core of any humane governance. From the Islamic perspective, this is thrown into sharp focus with the verse, “If God had so willed, he would have made you all one community, but [He has not done so] that He may test you in what He has given you; so compete in goodness” (Q5:48). This is not a matter of private morality but rather demands the public imperative to recognize and accept religious pluralism and freedom of conscience as intrinsic to a just society.

This is the debate which must be kept alive for the next generation who may become complacent about their own freedoms. Our humanity is reduced if we are not free. Human rights are a struggle and an aspiration in many parts of the world where there is poverty, inequality, violence and degradation. Thus, it seems to me that if religious voices want to tell a different story from the one told by the state, they cannot dismiss human rights as optional or irrelevant. Religious ethics must compliment, not clash, with the rights—based discourse in a language which is meaningful not just authoritative. Only then will religion surface forcefully and justly as a public good rather than simply a private passion. The idea of “global civil society” calls for a widely agreed-upon body of universal principles, a global ethic, to guide our norms and relations with one another.

Our hopes for a more equal and more just world where people can live without fear and oppression depend on how each of us thinks of “international morality.” Ideas of justice and how nation-states conceive, even legislate for, human freedom and rights are central to this discourse. Today freedom of religion, whether understood as an individual or collective right to practice a faith, to convert to another faith, to worship in public, is considered by many as a moral good which is indispensable in a community of free

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individuals. And yet individuals need to live within and experience a variety of freedoms, including intellectual freedoms before the full meaning of religious conscience can be understood. Religious freedom cannot exist as a theoretical principle alone, it must be a lived reality. This becomes harder in societies where basic human rights are denied, where people live with violence and where religion is a coercive force imposed by the state or a community. Whatever our ideals, at the very least, religious freedom is imperative in creating a moderate world order in the face of sectarian violence, ethnic conflicts and bloody revolution. If politics is a goal-oriented activity, international relations is the domain of moral choice. Norms cannot be analyzed outside the structures of power or the specific embodied social practices in which they are embedded and expressed. Even though we know that the world is characterized by diverse moral codes and competing moral systems and theories, this reality should not preclude us from having the courage to engage in international debates on the value of freedom and justice.
ESSAYS

RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND PEACE
Until the collapse of the Soviet Empire, religion did not matter in the study of world affairs. There were several reasons for this neglect, most notably the building of the international community after the Westphalia treaty as a club of rational state actors acting on material and security interests, although the reality may not have been as compliant to this dominant perception.

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of religiously motivated political groups dramatically changed this perception. It is the work of Samuel Huntington, first presented in a 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs* and subsequently elaborated in a 1996 book, which has dominated the discourse on culture as an element in international conflicts. Huntington argues that Islam is uniquely incompatible with and antagonistic to the core values of the West (such as equality and modernity).

This argument resurfaces in most current analyses of international affairs and globalization, notably in terrorist studies since September 11, 2001. However, as abundantly proven by the social sciences, civilizations are not homogenous, monolithic players in world politics with an inclination to “clash,” but rather consist of pluralistic, divergent, and convergent actors and practices that are constantly evolving. Thus, the “Clash of Civilizations” fails to address not only conflict between civilizations but also conflict and differences within civilizations. In particular, evidence does not exist to substanti-
ate Huntington’s prediction that countries with similar cultures are coming together, while countries with different cultures are coming apart.

The cultural divide is thus envisaged as the primary cause of international crises. Admittedly, the Huntingtonian position is based on a premise that cannot be simply dismissed: that identity and culture play a decisive role in international relations. Additionally, Huntington’s argument can be situated within the current trend of researchers attempting to understand the scope of the political revolts against the Western-dominated international order. But what culture and what Islam are being spoken of here? The idea of a monolithic Islam leads to a reductionism in which the conflicts in Sudan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan are imagined to stem collectively and wholly from the domain of religion. It is, moreover, ironic that the role of religion, so long ignored or neglected in terms of international politics, is now exaggerated and decontextualized in an ahistorical perspective, which has elicited its fair share of criticism from scholars of Islamic cultures.

Seen in this light, the clash of civilizations thesis represents an attempt, albeit a consistently inadequate one, to shift international politics away from an exclusively nation-state-centric approach, only to immediately re-create and legitimate the view of a fixed world of cultural agents participating in predetermined conflicts of interest. This is to say that any attempt at an analysis of culture and global cultural conflict is an admirable one, but it must not be done through a reification of both culture and civilization. This ahistorical approach to Islam’s global role extends to all religions in world politics leading to the major problem of when and how religion matters internationally.

More generally, the Western experience of separation of religion became normalized with the Westphalian order and has become the international standard of interactions. The concept of secularism is a crucial aspect of this international order. It is based on the fiction of a clear-cut border between public and private space and state and religion, borrowing from a romanticized interpretation of European and American history. In this context, any manifestation of religion on an international scale is seen as something opposed to modernity and a form of resistance to the secularized liberal order.

The second major problem is one of classification. Within international relations, religious manifestations are categorized almost exclusively as ideological phenomena, that is, identified and studied primarily as ideas or beliefs. Such an approach reduces religion to a rhetoric that is used in political mobilization and hence gives the illusion that knowledge of the concepts and symbols of religious traditions is the major way to understand their role in politics.

The politicization of religion cannot be found solely in the study of
religious doctrines, which is often the bias at play when it comes to political Islam. In fact, the politicization of Islam has not significantly affected theology or doctrines (except in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the introduction of the *vilayet a faqih* concept). But it has certainly changed the belonging to the Islamic tradition by mingling it with national belonging. It has also modified the praxis of the religion by transforming personal piety into public behaviors.

In most Muslim-majority countries, political Islam is not the monopoly of Islamic parties but also a foundational element of the nation-states. Although most of the founders of Muslim-majority countries were indeed westernized, they nevertheless included Islam in the state apparatus, spurring its politicization by turning it into a modern national ideology, which operates as a common denominator for all political forces, secular or otherwise. As such, political Islam should be understood in a broader context that goes beyond Islamist political ideology or Islamic parties. In this broader sense, political Islam includes the nationalization of Islamic institutions and personnel under state ministries and the use of Islamic references in law and national education.

More specifically, the adoption of the nation-state by Muslim-majority countries after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 has been the decisive political change that led to the reshaping of Islamic values and institutions. These changes have translated into a brand new status of the religion that I call the hegemonic status of Islam. This term refers to a combination of two or more of the following characteristics:

- Nationalization of institutions, clerics, and places of worship of one religion;
- Insertion of the doctrine of that religion in the public school curriculum (beyond the religious instruction, for example, in history or civic education);
- Legal restrictions of freedom of speech and expression as well as restrictions of women’s rights (marriage/divorce-abortion) based on the prescriptions of that religion.

Most Muslim countries, including Turkey possess two or three of these features. The only exceptions are Lebanon, Senegal, and Indonesia (although discriminatory practices do exist). Interestingly, they are also the only ones that qualify as democracies according to the Freedom House index. While

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democracy can accommodate some forms of state involvement into religions, the hegemonic status granted to one religion can be an issue for democratic life or a transition to democracy. It is the reason why most Muslim countries rank low on the democracy index and high on most of indexes on political violence.

To sum up, certain types of state-religion relationships are related to lack of democracy, *not* Islam as a religion. Therefore focusing on Islam (or any religious tradition) as the variable to understand conflict and political violence is not productive. The existing statistics on political violence should not be explained by the essence of Islam but the state-religion status in each country. In other words, it is crucial to utilize grounded, historical approaches about any religion and democracy in order to provide different conclusions on existing data.
In much scholarly writing on religion it is taken for granted that different world religions constitute separate traditions with their own authoritative discourses and practices. The scholarly practice of dividing the domains of expertise in religion to correspond to different religious traditions such as “anthropology of Islam” or “anthropology of Christianity” ends up posing the issue of religious pluralism in terms of two or more fully constituted religious traditions encountering each other. The issue then gets rendered as that of promoting understanding between comprehensive worldviews that are incommensurate with each other and finding ways of “tolerating” differences.

The issue of religious difference, when posed in these terms, suffers from a particular form of presentism by taking the anxieties articulated in Europe about the increasing presence of Muslims within its own boundaries to be equivalent to the experience of religious difference itself. This clash of civilizations perspective, first popularized by Samuel Huntington in the 1990s, has been refined in later writings but nevertheless forms an underlying assumption behind prescriptions on how to promote religious tolerance. Instead, paying attention to other contexts (both historical and contemporary) in which the presence of an interreligious milieu was taken to be the normal condition of life can help us broaden our conceptual repertoire for thinking about ways of being in the world that are both singular and multiple. These ways of being, in which the life of the other was engaged at different scales of social life, did not eliminate conflict across followers of different religions, but

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these conflicts were part of a more complex understanding of what it was to live in and inherit a multi-religious milieu.

A paradigmatic way of positing the issue of religious difference in contemporary societies starts with the assumption of clear fault lines in which a modern sensibility that is flexible and open to multiplicity confronts a more rigid sensibility encompassed by the word “fundamentalism.” Consider this diagnostic statement by David Held and Henrietta Moore:

“[Fundamentalism] has no time for multiple identities, complex allegiances, and cultural ambiguity. The fault lines running through contemporary society divides those who call themselves guardians of tradition to reassert themselves and those who accept and welcome cultural diversity and seek dialogue and minimum rules of coexistence so that all can live peacefully without resort to violence and coercion.”

In this formulation, there are no conceptual challenges either with regard to the collapse of such categories as “fundamentalism” and “guardians of tradition” or to the subjectivities that are assigned to these categories. But if these are the kind of subjectivities encountered in the contemporary world, then a theory of the subject that does not take it as fully formed must ask: what are the historical conditions that might account for the continuities or ruptures produced under new conditions of modernity? Pious intentions notwithstanding, one might ask along with Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood whether a secular mode of regulating differences might have unintended consequences in producing the very subjectivities signaled by such terms as “traditional” or “fundamentalist” within the discourse of modernity. How might the direction of “solutions” offered to the challenge of religious diversity within modern polities, such as the cultivation of “workable cosmopolitanism” or “civic inclusion” be altered if we were to take alternate modes of engagement with the other into account?

We might be able to expand our understanding of religious diversity by looking at “tradition” and “modernity” through a different lens than that provided by these dominant discourses. The first example is from a letter—Zafar-namah (The Epistle of Victory) that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs and the founder of the khalsa order, wrote to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb after the evacuation of his warriors from Andanpur fort in the foothills of the Himalayas, and the subsequent battle of Chamkaur in Punjab in which a large number of Sikh warriors were massacred. Why call his letter an Epistle of Victory at precisely the moment of defeat? The key to the text is what Guru Gobind Singh isolates as the moment of defeat for the
Mughal Emperor, alluding to the fact that Aurangzeb had betrayed an oath, duly recorded on a copy of the holy Quran with his signature and sent to the Guru, promising free passage to his band of warriors if he evacuated the Anandpur fort.

The letter read: “I don’t have trust even equal to a drop (of water) in your Generals. They were all telling lies. (...) You neither follow the teachings of Islam nor do you understand its meaning. You do not know the ways of the Lord nor you have any faith in the Prophet Mohammed.”

Particularly fascinating here is the ability of a Sikh leader to fault an emperor not because the emperor is a Muslim, but because he is not a good Muslim. The expressions of sorrow, complaint, and betrayal come from criteria honed in a shared world, in which the ability to cohabit comes not from contractual agreements and rules of cohabitation, but from the assumption that another religion allows possibilities for a follower to be a good or bad Muslim.

The ability to project words across different religions comes from drawing upon a shared vocabulary, but one neither infinitely stretchable nor immune from being misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented. For instance, though Guru Gobind Singh starts with verses of praise for the one god, all the words used are adjectives that would be recognized in both Muslim and Sikh (or Hindu) forms of speech—such as paravrardigar (sustainer) or rahim (merciful) or words for scripture such as ahl-e-kitab (the divine tablet). There is an avoidance of specific proper names in this text—so god is not referred to as Allah.

All these examples raise fascinating issues of translation across religions and how absorption of categories or genres from a neighboring religion expands the potential of one’s own religious experience. These issues arise within a milieu of cohabitation of different religions in which both antagonism and attraction form the texture of relationships.

Another example illuminated the waxing and waning of solidarities and antagonism that marked the relations between religious experiences of
different communities rather than standing enmities or alliances between them. Distinguished historian Shaid Amin provides a marvelous account of such nomadic forms of solidarities by stitching together various narratives through which Ghazi Miyan, a warrior-saint of North India, finds a footing among both Hindus and Muslims. Ghazi Miyan is actually absent from the historical record though he is popularly believed to have been a nephew of the well-known Sultan Mahmud, who invaded India seventeen times. What substitutes for the historical record, Amin shows, is a hagiography by the Sufi saint Abdur Rahman Chishti, entitled *Mirat-i-Masudi* – purporting to be the life story of Salar Masud, later also known by the epithets of Ghazi Miyan or the more affectionate Balle Miyan (diminutive form), Dulhe Bhai (the bridegroom). The latter, names of endearment, appear in the popular culture of North India as the story of his exploits gets absorbed in a variety of forms such as children’s ditties and women’s songs and forms of devotional worship, especially by women seeking his blessings or making votive offerings for the birth of a son. Amin shows how the figure of Ghazi Miyan encompasses within itself many contradictory attributes. He is seen as the killer of *kafirs* (infidels) who wages a war against idolatry. Perversely, it seems, he embraces the company of a dog, considered impure in Islam. He is also the protector of cows and dies on the way to his wedding because he heeds the call for help by village women against cow rustlers. Amin’s work beautifully weaves together the contradictory impulses of speaking of Muslims as invaders and destroyers of temples, as well as protectors of cows and brothers to women. Amin shows the ability in these stories to distinguish those who combined conquest with an attraction and attachment to local cultural milieux and those who were simply marauders.

The work of popular culture here creates figures through which a contradictory history of the relation between Hindus and Muslims might be inherited. Instead of the idea of syncretism, which would imagine mixtures between elements of two fully constituted bounded entities, Amin suggests that a kind of consent was given to the presence of the other. In doing so, even antagonisms could be absorbed within more fundamental agreements about openness to the experience of the local milieu by those who came as warriors and

The ability to project words across different religions comes from drawing upon a shared vocabulary, but one neither infinitely stretchable nor immune from being misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented.
conquerors as well as by the original settlers who recognized a certain kinship of affects across religions.

These complex renderings of what it was to inhabit a milieu composed of different religious traditions cannot provide the kind of policy prescriptions through which religious differences are sought to be contained and regulated, in the public sphere in modern polities. They do however point to different regions of the imaginary through which the life of the other might be engaged in everyday life, such that the inevitable conflicts and betrayals within a cultural milieu might yet be contained not through a cultivated “tolerance” but by allowing these unhappy moments to be absorbed in the everyday, acknowledging the diverse ways in which “life” knits disparate “lives” together in mutual attraction and antagonism.
I have been asked, quite often, whether Nigeria ever witnessed a purely religious conflict. My answer has always been a qualified no. In this response, I was not unmindful of the rich tapestry, which has interwoven our socio-political and political ethos with our diverse religious beliefs and practices. Such richness had irretrievably given our various and varied communities their unique identities and had helped to build cohesion and a sense of togetherness which remained strong even after several decades and centuries.

But it should also be stated, without much trepidation, that when religion focuses undue attention on the particularities of our emergent and increasingly complex societies, it stands a great risk of losing its universalism. Unfortunately, it also allows the parochial elements among us—the ethnic chauvinists, the rabid nationalists, and the political opportunists—to foster their narrow, and in many instances, destructive agenda on the rest of the society. The leaders of these groups know very clearly the fault lines within our societies and are not afraid to exploit them, especially when they serve their bruised egos and vested interests. They know the holy alliance between religion, ethnicity, and politics that had once boosted our identities and togetherness, could turn neighbor against neighbor and community against community, all in the name of sustaining ethnic and group supremacy and political ascendency.

This tragedy finds illustration in the many ethno-religious crises that rocked Nigeria in the recent past. The Sharia Riots, beginning in 2000 came and went, but it left in its wake thousands of dead and injured, both Muslim and Chris...
Christian, and indeed a huge political controversy. The Jos Riots of 2008 and other ethno-religious riots that took place in many parts of the Northern States also took a heavy toll on life and property. Many areas that served as epicenters of this senseless mayhem have yet to fully recover from this tragedy.

But despite the severity of these ethno-religious crises, the Jos Riots underscore the crux of our argument so far. The riots were not triggered by an overt religious controversy but by a disputed chairmanship election in Jos North Local Government. It also became the most intractable. As the president-general of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs and co-chairman of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, I had the opportunity to tour the area in the company of the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, then bishop, now John Cardinal Onaiyekan. We could not but reach similar conclusions: Yes, the Jos crisis had pitched Hausas who were Muslim and Beroms who were Christian against one another. But it was essentially a political conflict and not a conflict between Islam and Christianity. While we must empathize with our flock and do our utmost best to ameliorate their sorrowful situation, we must invoke the common religious values we share to ensure that the individual pain of anyone of us becomes the collective pain of us all. The decision we took to tour Jos together was not a popular one at the time. But it remains my firm belief that religious leaders must endeavor to tell the truth, however inconvenient it may have been at the time. And we did.

At a time when religion is too often co-opted for political means, religion and religious traditions must rescue themselves from the clutches of demagoguery and opportunism and re-establish the universality of their value system. Parochial groups and vested interests must not be allowed to use religion to pursue their various agendas. Religion must marshal its value system to dialogue with and mediate between various societal forces. We must always focus on and elevate the primacy of our common humanity, which has been endowed not only with dignity but with respect.

The Holy Qur’an, for example, is explicit in stating that God had created us into diverse groups and ethnicities so that we would be acquainted with one another. However, the most pious before God is one who holds to piety. No religious tradition, interpreted in its proper context, would condone the usurpation of the basic human rights of a fellow being, wherever he may find...
himself or herself across the religious divide. A religion fails to uphold these values at its own peril.

It is also of critical importance for religions and religious traditions to guard against pandering to religious extremism and to the extremists in our midst. We must sustain an efficacious and responsive hierarchy of learning and status to ensure that extremism does not find a foothold in our respective societies. Nigeria and its neighbors have had the misfortune of harboring a virulent extremist sect generally referred to as Boko Haram. This sect, which had been most active in the north eastern parts of the country, has done untold damage to the socio-economic infrastructure of Nigeria, leaving tens of thousands dead and over two million as refugees in their own homeland.

Although substantially degraded, the lessons of the Boko Haram attacks will remain fresh in our minds. Firstly, religious leaders should never remain oblivious to errant ideas that shall lead to violence and destruction. Boko Haram began as an insignificant and inconsequential entity, but soon arrogated to itself the status of being the only Muslim group. All “others,” Muslim and Christian, were declared unbelievers and targeted for extermination. We must have the courage to resist evil in all its guises. We must be able to form a broad and enlightened front to build a formidable resistance against such groups. It is equally vital to point out that we must never allow poverty to aid extremism. The Northeast remains one of the poorest regions in West Africa, with poverty indices hovering around 70 percent.

Our common humanity must impel us to ensure that poverty does not hobble any portion of our global community. It must be deemed a common enemy that shall be fought by all.

By pooling efforts across religions and countries, we can demonstrate that we will no longer allow our faiths to be co-opted by politics or extremism. Only together can we combat extremism, poverty, and other global challenges.
I am an old man now, whose lifetime has coincided with the transition from the Industrial to the Technological Age. I was around when people still drove Model T Fords, when they cranked their telephone to get through to an operator to place a call, and when they began dispensing penicillin to treat infections. I have witnessed incredible changes in what we eat and how our food is produced, how we communicate and entertain ourselves. The catch-all term to describe all of the above would be “progress.” But progress implies forward momentum toward a destination, or development towards an improved condition, and this is where our progress as a species—as a human family—becomes a little murky. What is our destination?

For, while there can be no argument that we are devilishly clever when it comes to inventing things, there can be equally little argument that our emotional growth has been neglected… That we have allowed the pursuit of profit to shove fairness and justice aside… That, in the pursuit of profit-driven progress, we have dragged the earth and our family to the very brink of disaster…

What progress have we made when the rich are getting richer, and the poor are being left further and further behind? Where is the progress in spending billions of dollars on weapons to be fired at people who don’t look or think as we do? Or exploiting new reservoirs of fossil fuels when we know that continuing to use them will inevitably choke us? When the first waves of climate refugees are already abandoning their homes?

*Desmond Tutu is archbishop emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa. He is the winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring justice and racial conciliation in South Africa.*
For all our cleverness, we have—quite remarkably—failed to grasp our need for each other. That those people, over there, whether they worship in synagogues or mosques or temples or churches, are actually our sisters and brothers. That we are made for each other. That we are inter-dependent. That we are born for goodness, and for love. All of us. And that we are all vulnerable.

There are more than enough resources in the world to sustain all members of the family. None need succumb to preventable diseases. None need starve. None need live in ghettoes. None need live in fear for their security.

This is not Utopian. It is doable if we can apply some of our cleverness to finding the means to create greater equity among people.

The first step, in which we can all play a role, is developing the understanding, across peoples, continents, and classes that none is superior and none more entitled than any other. It sounds flippant, but we actually need to teach and practice it, in our families, in our communities, in our clubs and societies.

The Iraqi mother’s pain at losing her child to a sniper’s bullet is equal to the pain that the sniper’s mother feels on hearing that her child has been killed in a roadside bombing. And, while we’re about it, surely, if it’s possible to transfuse blood donated by a Jew to a Muslim patient, or vice versa, it’s difficult to regard them as anything but sister and brother.

I don’t want to blow my own country’s trumpet—and, 21 years into our democracy, we face more than our fair share of economic and social pressures, not to mention a poorly performing government. But, looking back, we did achieve some quite extraordinary, miraculous things.

Among them was our spiritual transformation. I grew up in a state in which God was said to most closely approximate a westernized, white male. The apartheid government banned most of the organizations that opposed it, and faith communities were able to partially fill the void. Our interfaith movement was a critical building block in the conscientization of our people that apartheid was intrinsically evil.

One of the symbols of the extraordinary Mandela presidency that made my heart soar was to see other faith groups joining Dutch Reform Church

African philosophy has a name for our primary obligation to each other: Ubuntu. It speaks to our co-ownership, co-existence, and co-stewardship of our world. A person is a person through other persons. It’s about being part of something much bigger than ourselves.
clergy in blessing state functions. None were excluded. It remains government practice until this day.

It seems obvious that profound societal change must be accompanied by profound spiritual and emotional change. Yet, as the world has catapulted along to what is now termed a global village, we have made little progress—there’s that word again—in bringing people together.

We’ve created a global village in which to conduct business, a world market. But we’ve done it without breaking down the social, cultural, faith and class divisions, and suspicions that have historically separated us.

For all our cleverness, we have—quite remarkably—failed to grasp our need for each other.

Our grandchildren have Facebook friends in countries with which our country—“we”—are at war. Combatants on both sides of the conflict wear the same popular brand of sneakers.

Presently, much of the world is fighting—with the most deadly intent—against an ideology, as if you can bomb thought out of existence. As if there’s no necessity to change how we view ourselves, and one another, in a fundamentally changed world. As if bombing the hell out of Iraq or Syria or Afghanistan or Palestine is going to make the “baddies”—those who we consider unlike us—disappear.

If peace and justice are the desired destinations, what progress can we claim to have made in cementing our family ties?

African philosophy has a name for our primary obligation to each other: Ubuntu. It speaks to our co-ownership, co-existence, and co-stewardship of our world. A person is a person through other persons. It’s about being part of something much bigger than ourselves.

We acknowledge people for who they are in all their diversity and integrity, with their conscientiously held beliefs. We walk reverently on their holy ground, taking off our shoes, metaphorically and literally. We respect them as we respect our brothers and sisters, for ultimately that is what we are: members of a family.

When we read the classics of the various religions in matters of prayer, meditation, and mysticism, we find substantial convergence, and that is something to rejoice at.

Indeed, the golden rule of reciprocity, which underpins many faiths, places us under an obligation to do unto others as we’d have them do to us. It does not restrict us to only being nice to people who look or live or worship as we do.
Mahatma Gandhi, the great soul, who was raised a Hindu, said of himself: “I am a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew.” It is that spirit we must foster if the village is to thrive.

The adherents of all religions I am aware of are enjoined to pay special attention to the needy, the poor, and the sick. There’s no fine print requiring a magnifying glass stating that this applies to certain needy people only.

Humans are moral beings. We are able to reason, to disagree, to be persuaded, to reconcile... We are naturally compassionate, though our compassion is often un-learned as we are taught to be prejudiced.

We are all God-carriers, beings with the natural inclination to live in peace and harmony with each other. It is the extent to which we are able to allow the goodness within us free reign that is important, not what we call or how we worship God.

When we can say that we are united by our common concerns for our family—the human family—and the world we share, we will have both reached our destination and improved our condition. That’s progress.

And peace will reign across the earth.
Countering Violent Extremism’s Subjugation of Women

Countering violent extremism has become one of the most urgent and constant security challenges of our time. Women and girls are high on the terrorists’ hit lists and pushing back on women’s rights is a key component of their deadly strategy. Girls are attacked in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and many other places simply for going to school. Malala Yousafzai, the 2015 Nobel Peace Laureate and education activist, barely escaped with her life after an attempt to kill her for advocating for girls education. Young women are sent into markets to blow themselves and others up. Girls are sold into child marriage and sex slavery, and Yazidi women—at the hands of ISIS—have been targeted with the most barbaric acts of violence in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The atrocities of the Taliban against women continue in unspeakable ways, including a brutal attack against a devout Afghan Muslim woman, Farkhunda, who was wrongly accused of burning the Qur’an and killed. This is the fate of women and girls in many parts of the world today because of violent extremism.

A significant challenge for religion today is its manipulation in the hands of radical extremists. To be sure, this has had its share of historical antecedents across all religions. However, today Islam, in particular, is being hijacked by extremist groups who undermine its theological grounding in peace and human dignity to justify their own nefarious ends. The subjugation of women is a central tenet of their strategy, justified in the name of Allah.

Melanne Verveer is director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security. She served as the first U.S. Ambassador for Global Women’s Issues at the Department of State from 2009-2013.
Religion predicated on a patriarchal foundation has often been used to limit women’s rights. Similarly, scriptural interpretation has been used to legitimize discriminatory practices. So too, the systematic devaluation of women’s roles within religious institutions has often led to their exclusion from leadership positions, reducing their influence and disempowering them as decision-makers in their communities. In its most prevalent form, efforts to advance women through the full realization of their human rights have been pushed back as inimical to “religious values.”

Extremist groups like Boko Haram, the Taliban and others like them go even further. They are hijacking Islam and using it as a justification of unspeakable violence against women and girls. The abuses they perpetrate, from sexual slavery to mass rapes, from forced illiteracy to denying freedom of movement, are being used strategically as a weapon of war and being justified in the name of religion sanctioned by references to the Qur’an based upon their radical interpretations.

The sexual subjugation of women and girls is an effective tactic for the extremists because it destabilizes communities, disrupts families, stigmatizes women and produces psychological scars long after fighting ends. ISIS, for example, uses sexual violence as a cheap and effective tool, central to their mission of re-establishing the Islamic caliphate. To establish and extend this new caliphate, territory is captured and held and bureaucratic governing structures enforce their corrupted version of Islamic law. The lure of sex slavery helps to recruit foreign fighters while rape is employed as a bonding experience to build camaraderie among the men.

Under international law, sexual violence in conflict—such as the mass rapes committed in Bosnia in the mid-1990s—has been recognized as a war crime, a crime against humanity and, in certain situations tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 linking women to peace and security. 1325 recognized the unique and disproportionate burdens faced by women in warfare, the need to protect them and the importance of their participation in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Since then several augmenting resolutions have been adopted condemning sexual violence and calling for accountability and an end to impunity, as well as underscoring the crucial role that women can and must play in decision-making and peace-building. The most recent resolution adopted in 2015 by

Countering violent extremism has become one of the most urgent and constant security challenges of our time.
the Security Council, Resolution 2242, specifically included countering violent extremism as part of the women, peace, and security mandate. What is happening to women deserves a far greater response both in terms of counter terrorism strategy, engaging women in countering violent extremism and galvanizing the religious community, particularly leaders in Islam, to do more.

Women’s organizations at the grassroots level are working to empower women as agents of positive change, including in some of the most conservative communities.

Women are leveraging their identities as family members and community members to deter the rise of extremism and to foster tolerance. For these reasons strategies to counter violent extremism need to ensure the promotion of women's rights and support the role of women’s organizations. All too often, well-meaning, strict anti-terrorism financing rules exclude civil society groups, including women’s organizations. A single-minded approach to countering violent extremism through hard security measures alone—as essential as they are—has often meant that investments in areas women know are critical—from economic opportunity to community support—can be shortchanged or ignored. The price for this can be significant, risking the possibility of greater radicalization.

We also know that women are recruited to be perpetrators of violent extremism as soldiers, planners, logistics handlers and recruiters. Sometimes their role is voluntary; sometimes it is coerced; sometimes they are being duped into believing that they are furthering a higher purpose such as building a new caliphate. What pushes such women into radicalization? What attracts them? We need to enhance the tools and means to detect, prevent and respond to women who are sympathetic to terrorism. We need to close our knowledge gap through practically relevant research and analysis, and we need to share lessons-learned.

The UN Security Council and other key international actors need to focus on the roles and experiences of women in relation to countering violent extremism in a more concerted way. Gender needs to be mainstreamed into CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) deliberations as well as in critical areas, from the security sector and policing to development.

Muslim women who are on the frontlines of change in championing the rights of women and living out their faith need support in contending with the radical interpretations of their faith that force them to be viewed as unfaithful.
The religious community has an important role to play. Religious leaders, including moderate Muslim clerics, need to step forward and condemn the distortion of religion that the radical Islamist groups represent. Many such progressive imams and public intellectuals have done this but their voices are not always heard in decisionmaking, and their message of peace and tolerance is not always carried by mainstream media. Religious leaders in every community should use their authority and voice to reject extremism and to end the stigma and ostracization of those who are victims of sexual violence.

Muslim women who are on the frontlines of change in championing the rights of women and living out their faith need support in contending with the radical interpretations of their faith that force them to be viewed as unfaithful. Networks need to be forged to train women and arm them with the religious education and arguments they need to push back on radical interpretations that are used against them in the name of Islam. They are often struggling in very conservative societies where reform can only occur when rooted in a religious context.

To effectively counter violent extremism requires recognizing its consequences on the subjugation of women and girls and their universal human rights. At the same time, women have a crucial role to play in prevention and in participating in response strategies. A comprehensive, coordinated, multi-sectoral approach—one that engages not only governments and military forces, but also religious leaders, community groups, and women’s organizations—is required. Moreover, a focus on human rights, development and a commitment to gender equality must be integral to this approach. Nothing less will serve to counter violent extremism and the threat it represents.
DISCUSSION

Education on the Hilltop and Beyond
The Doyle Engaging Difference Program and the Religion, Ethics, and World Affairs Certificate (REWA) bring Georgetown faculty and students together to address challenges of religious and cultural pluralism around the world through research, teaching, and outreach. Signature Berkley Center programs such as the Junior Year Abroad Network, Doyle Seminars, Doyle Undergraduate Fellows, and the Education and Social Justice Project engage with issues of difference along multiple dimensions, including the religious, cultural, national, social, and ethical. Over the past decade, hundreds of students have participated in these programs or served as research assistants at the center.

This conversation brings together members of the Berkley Center community and outside experts to discuss the importance of this work and the ongoing challenges it presents in a world frequently confronted by sharp divisions, polarization, and violence. Participants include William Doyle, chair of Georgetown’s Board of Directors, Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, Melody Fox Ahmed, the center’s assistant director for programs, and two center alumni, Aamir Hussain and Joelle Rebeiz.

How does engaging with religious, cultural, and other forms of difference enrich liberal education in a global era?

Eboo Patel: So many of the “big questions” that make up liberal education—What is the good life? What does it mean to be human?—are questions central to the great religious traditions. Among the great questions of liberal
education and contemporary times is how people from a range of religious identities can build a common life together.

William Doyle: I don’t think you can really be considered educated if you allow prejudice to form your life. By engaging your limitations, you open yourself up to true understanding and free yourself to make a significant contribution to the common good.

Joelle Rebeiz: Unfortunately, we live in an age where misinformation about different cultures and religions is running rampant, which has proven to be a real detriment to mutual respect and shared cross-cultural understanding. Learning through engagement is one of the most salient tools we have to ensure that no one’s judgment is clouded by stereotypes or false perceptions, and that every person is given the respect that he or she deserves.

Aamir Hussain: We are living in a time where constructive dialogue across difference seems to be breaking down in many aspects of society, notably in

THE DOYLE ENGAGING DIFFERENCE PROGRAM
The Doyle Engaging Difference Program is a campus-wide collaboration between the Berkley Center and The Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship to strengthen Georgetown’s core commitment to tolerance and diversity and to enhance global awareness of the challenges and opportunities in an era of increasing interconnectedness. Doyle faculty fellowships support the redesign of lower-level courses to incorporate themes of cultural, religious, and other forms of difference, while Doyle Seminars facilitate in-depth explorations of similar themes in smaller, upper-level courses. In addition to curricular innovation, the Doyle Program supports the Junior Year Abroad Network, through which Hoyas blog about their encounters with diverse host societies, Doyle student fellows, who engage intercultural and interreligious dialogue on campus, and the Education and Social Justice Project, which supports international summer research fellowships. The program is made possible through the generosity of William Doyle (C’72), chair of the Georgetown University Board of Directors.
the political arena. Therefore, engagement across difference is a way to inject this feature of American life back into liberal education and allow for the possibility of constructive, joint action on issues of mutual importance.

**Melody Fox Ahmed:** Around the world, universities are globalizing—we cannot help but be connected through technology, media, and shared interests. Now students have the chance to interact daily with their counterparts from other countries, religions, and cultures—on their own campus or in a Skype session with another classroom in Doha or China. The knowledge and friendships these kinds of encounters build are significant, and fulfill the goal of liberal education to prepare students to encounter complexity and diversity through a deep and nuanced knowledge of the wider world.

**Q** How does such engagement with difference, and the skills it engenders, help graduates to navigate their careers in a globalizing world?

**William Doyle:** Post graduation you encounter the real world on a daily basis. You soon realize you have to learn to relate to people who look at the world from a completely different perspective. Consideration and empathy for their perspective is the only way you will help solve problems, which is at the core of being women and men for others.

**Eboo Patel:** Interfaith and intercultural engagement teaches us that we do not have to agree on a theological or philosophical level in order to genuinely learn about and respect the worldview of another person. It teaches us that we can be in service with one another, act toward common causes, and not agree in many ways. Navigating various careers in today’s world—whether medicine, teaching, law, journalism, entertainment, or the not-for-profit sector—requires the ability to understand one’s own worldview and to navigate diversity well.

**Joelle Rebeiz:** By interacting with people from an array of cultures and backgrounds at Georgetown, I became much more open to looking for jobs
outside of the United States and found a great opportunity with University College Dublin and developed a strong network to support me with career advice. That’s the beauty of it: enabling encounters with diverse individuals who have both encouraged me to consider new opportunities and provided useful and impactful advice.

Aamir Hussain: In my field of medicine, engagement with difference is absolutely necessary because many of the challenges are global and intercultural. Consider the Ebola epidemic. While all health professionals agree on the fundamental value of treating the sick and combating the disease’s spread, it took a multinational, joint effort with people of different national, political and cultural backgrounds to come together to provide solutions.

Melody Fox Ahmed: There were over one million foreign students studying in the United States this past year. Many go on to become leaders in their countries. The cultural experience that they have here—where dialogue, debate, and deep engagement with difference is encouraged—returns with them to their home countries where it may not be as common. That is all the more reason for us to promote and deepen interreligious and intercultural dialogue on our own campuses.

Melody Fox Ahmed
is assistant director for programs at the Berkley Center, where she has worked since 2006.
Violent religious extremism remains a persistent problem in world affairs. How can intercultural and interfaith dialogue in a university setting help to address it?

Joelle Rebeiz: Bringing individuals from different backgrounds together serves to highlight that this extremism is not endemic to any one ethnicity, faith, or culture. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue at Georgetown and other universities serves to shed light on the objective socio-economic conditions that give rise to extremism, as well as the subjective experiences that can draw individuals toward it.
**William Doyle:** The problem of extremism will not be resolved overnight and will be alleviated one step at a time. Without sufficient understanding of intercultural and interfaith differences, the first step is impossible. That is where universities, as places of learning and dialogue, have a critical role to play—both in educating students and in modeling deeper tolerance for the wider society.

**Eboo Patel:** Extremism grows out of an “us” versus “them” mentality when people don’t have access to healthy relationships with people who are different from themselves. This is why it is important that we break down boundaries early on. It’s important to incorporate interfaith issues into both the general education curriculum and also to create pathways for students to develop deeper expertise. One of our successful approaches at the Interfaith Youth Core is to take stories about thorny religious diversity issues from the front page of the *New York Times*, present them to students, and ask them how they would lead in a given situation.

**Aamir Hussain:** Universities like Georgetown should empower students to use their talents and academic interests to fight against religious extremism, but also emphasize that this work must occur outside the university setting. Too often, interfaith dialogue can devolve into echo chambers where like-minded people only “preach to the choir.” Universities can use interfaith and intercultural dialogue to teach etiquette of disagreement, and show students how to create coalitions of diverse people. Ultimately, universities should emphasize that students must harness their education to make a difference in the real world.

**Melody Fox Ahmed:** A Pakistani minister recently said that once there are economic alternatives, no young person wants to go to war. Economic opportunities come through education. Making higher education a viable and accessible opportunity for young people around the world, through promoting more exchange programs, scholarships, and government initiatives like the Fulbright program to countries where violent extremism is drawing young people, will go a long way toward addressing grievances often blamed on religious fanaticism. Young Pakistanis don’t hate America. They want to study here. But opportunities to do so remain limited.
How does interfaith service outside the classroom impact the educational experience?

Eboo Patel: One of the easiest things universities can do is to create spaces where people from different cultural and religious traditions can interact with one another and work together in healthy ways. Encouraging interfaith service projects and dinners are some of the easiest ways this can happen. We have to show that Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc. are not enemies, but people who have a different religious identity but who also hold similar civic values. Interfaith service allows students the opportunity to build fruitful and trusting relationships with people whom they may have once feared.

Joelle Rebeiz: Service should be a cornerstone of every student’s undergraduate experience. In my case, interfaith service through my time at the Berkley Center gave me a chance to engage with people from different backgrounds in a way that transcended the often-sterile classroom interactions. It serves to make the realities of others less abstract, while also giving them a chance to learn about your experiences as well.

Aamir Hussain: Interfaith service is a good way for students to apply their dialogue sessions toward practical goals. It also can involve a wide variety of students with different interests. For example, religion majors can work on building partnerships, business majors can work on making the service work sustainable, political science majors can work to use the service as a form of advocacy, etc. The possibilities are limitless.

Melody Fox Ahmed: Interfaith service work done outside the classroom should be clearly linked and reflected upon inside the classroom as well. Educating faculty about how to engage these questions of difference and fostering dialogue through their pedagogy should be a priority. The world has changed since we talked about the end of history and the triumph of secularism—our teaching and student engagement models must change as well. Thousands can take an online MOOC, but the one-to-one interactions with faculty and colleagues in the classroom discussing how interfaith
service impacts peacebuilding or development work, for example, cannot be replaced.

Q How has your time at the Berkley Center impacted your career trajectory and personal growth?

Joelle Rebeiz: By trusting me to carry out research projects, interview people of interest, attend and report on interesting events—while making me feel like my work and opinions were valued—my Berkley Center mentors truly allowed me to grow as a student, worker, and person. The research and writing I did about interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a Doyle Fellow also made me realize the extent to which I am challenged and motivated by this kind of academic and intellectual environment, and just how much I enjoy this work. In fact, I decided to pursue MA studies abroad in Ireland because of this.

Aamir Hussain: At the Berkley Center, I had opportunities to explore diverse disciplines and how they related to each other and interfaith dialogue. The “Religion, Ethics, and World Affairs” course taught by Thomas Banchoff was a great example of an interdisciplinary course that helped me focus on my research interests. The Berkley Center was also the first place that I began writing articles for the White House Interfaith Service Blog, and eventually the Huffington Post Religion blog; these communication skills have become incredibly important to me as a future doctor, where I seek to use my status to advocate for health policy changes.
Benjamin Jury (SFS ’17) studied abroad in Jordan during the spring 2016 semester.

**Interfaith Solidarity at the Barbershop**

In Jordan, rather than being a source of division, religious identity serves as the glue that binds society together. The reality of the interreligious harmony in Jordan is simultaneously tangible and intangible, spoken and unspoken. In a lot of ways, I feel like my first haircut in Amman epitomized the sense of interreligious solidarity in the country. Eventually, the inevitable question popped up:


“Oh, because I’m Muslim.” He put down his cigarette and continued trimming the sides of my hair. “You know,” he continued, “Christians and Muslims have a lot in common. I love Jesus. All us Muslims love Jesus.”

I laughed. “I love him, too,” I said and asked, “Muslims consider him a prophet, right?”

He beamed. “Yes. How can a Muslim hate Christians when we love Jesus?”

Jews, Christians, and Muslims: cut from the same cloth, children of the same patriarch, Ibrahim—Arabic for “father of many nations.”

My haircut was one of the best I’ve ever had. I paid and started to leave but suddenly stopped, realizing after half an hour of chatting about family, life, and religion, I never asked for his name.

He looked at me, clearly thinking the same thing, and asked, “What’s your name?”

“Benjamin,” I say—Hebrew for “son of my right hand.” “And yours?”

“Sadiq,” he replied—Arabic for “friend.”
The founder of Georgetown University, Archbishop John Carroll, believed strongly in the vision of a new country of, for, and by the people. He was persuaded that Catholics, like other people of faith, would make a significant contribution to the development of the United States. Over more than two centuries Georgetown has in fact educated men—and later women—from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to contribute to the national welfare, cope with crisis, and address injustice. In our global era, the critical role for a university that is grounded in faith and a commitment to human dignity in advancing the common good can be extended in an international direction. For a decade now, the Berkley Center has spearheaded Georgetown’s efforts to do just that: explore the connections between faith and the great global challenges of our time.

There is no doubt that achieving peace in the world is perhaps the greatest challenge of our time.

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others. In between these bookends there are many quite varied belief systems and levels of commitment to them. These faith perspectives provide the lenses through which we see ourselves. And they help us to frame our most important decisions—for ourselves, for our families, our nations, and the world.

It should not surprise us that this plurality of perspectives goes hand in hand with a country and a global community that are often very polarized. Add to it the significant economic disparities and no one should be struck by the level of violence we confront within and across our societies. In our struggle to cope effectively with this challenging situation, it is tempting to view faith itself, whatever its form, as the enemy of reason and the adversary of compromise. On reflection, however, we can think of many examples of faith as a positive force, furthering reconciliation and justice. What we often lack is deeper understanding of when and why faith makes a difference, for better or worse.

In its mission and activities over the past decade the Berkley Center has reaffirmed a critical truth that our systems of belief—how we view ourselves, our existence, and its meaning—are essential to understanding and effectively dealing with the most challenging issues in our world today. The two premises that guide its work, “that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges” and that “the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace” should be touchstones for wider efforts to build a more just social and political order.

Just a glance at the research, teaching, and outreach activities of the Berkley Center reveals the promise of this ambitious mission. The center has helped to build and share knowledge around issues ranging from religion and development to religious freedom and Islam and world affairs. And it has brought together perspectives that are diverse—religiously, culturally, and ideologically. This work grows out of Georgetown’s Catholic and Jesuit tradition while exemplifying that tradition’s openness to other faiths and cultures. The center’s success to date, and its promise for the future, is a vital expression of Archbishop Carroll’s insight into the deep connections between faith, education, and the common good. His legacy is alive and well in its work.