Report of the Georgetown Symposium on
Proselytism & Religious Freedom in the 21st Century
March 3, 2010

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About the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is part of a university-wide effort to build knowledge about religion's role in world affairs and promote interreligious understanding in the service of peace. The Center explores the intersection of religion with contemporary global challenges. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Berkley Center builds knowledge, promotes dialogue, and supports action in the service of peace. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center’s founding director.

About the LUCE/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs

The Luce/SFS Program on Religion and International Affairs has been exploring the intersection of faith, world politics, and diplomacy since September 2006. A collaboration between the Henry Luce Foundation and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS) and Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University, the Luce/SFS Program initially focused on two issue areas: Religion and Global Development and Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy. A follow-on award from the Luce Foundation in November 2008 has enabled the continued growth of both program areas and the addition of two more: Government Outreach and an online Religion and International Affairs Network.
# PROGRAM

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On March 3, 2010, the Berkley Center’s Program on Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy sponsored a day-long conference on “Proselytism and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century,” in which scholars and policy makers debated the issue. The results, we think you will agree, were both fascinating and informative:

Do religious individuals and groups possess a right to share their beliefs with others in the hope that those beliefs will be embraced? For many, including most Muslims and Christians, religion represents an objective and universal Truth, one that comprehends the temporal good and the eternal destiny of all persons. For those who believe they have access to such a Truth, the desire to offer it to others is both natural and rational. After all, if the claims of Islam are true, should we not all want to be Muslim? If the claims of Christianity are true, should we not all seek to become Christian?

On the other hand, do religious groups have a right to defend their respective identities against efforts to convert their adherents? Proselytism has sometimes been socially disruptive and even rapacious, undermining the structures of families and communities. Is there a way to balance a right to persuade by peaceful witness with a right of communities to defend their respective identities? If there is a legal "right" to pursue one or both of these activities, what are the limits to that right? Can the law legitimately ban foreign missionaries? Can it punish apostates?

The way these and related questions are addressed and answered will have enormous implications for American interests, justice, and world peace in the 21st century.
What do the sacred sources within your tradition tell you about converting others? In what sense is it the duty of adherents to induce others to understand and accept the truths conveyed in your tradition?

Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention
For Christians, the two most important passages concerning witnessing to your faith and seeking to convert others to Christianity are Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. In both passages the resurrected Jesus commands His followers to “Go... make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) and to witness to Him “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These passages are seen as marching orders to go out and evangelize all people everywhere. The passage in Matthew is known universally among Christians as “The Great Commission” and has historically been viewed as an imperative to evangelism with a consequent duty to obey our Lord and Savior.

Imam Mohamed Magid, All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center
The Islamic perspective of conversion is that in Islam we believe that the conversion is a decision that people make. We do not convert people, they make the decision on their own. The right term to be used for this is “invitation,” or sharing faith with others. Qur’an 41: 33 says, “Who is better in speech than one who calls people to Allah, works righteousness, and says, ‘I am of those who bow in Islam’?” The definition of the word dawah means to invite someone to something. In another verse (33:45-46) God All Mighty refers to the prophet as a “one who invites.” The principle that governs the invitation are: 1) you do not belittle another person’s beliefs, but you represent your own in a market of ideas; 2) a person should not force others to the religion as the Qur’an teaches “there is no compulsion in religion”; and 3) use wisdom to know what to say and how and when to say it. The Quran also says in Chapter 16 verse 125, “God says call to the way of your lord with wisdom and beautiful teaching and engage them in dialogue in the best manner.”

Randi Rashkover, George Mason University
With a few noteworthy exceptions, the Jewish textual tradition does not advocate active conversion of others. This is not the same as saying that there are no legal provisions for conversion within the Jewish tradition or that conversion is unacceptable. The biblical text introduces the concept of the ger which refers either to an individual who chooses to adopt the commandments addressed to the Israelites or a political stranger whose rights must be protected. While the latter category clearly presupposes Jewish sovereignty in the land, the former does not. There is ample historical evidence for the wide-spread reality of conversion and the possibility of proselytizing of non-Jews into Judaism during the first century of the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, scholarly consensus holds that large-scale Jewish/non-Jewish boundary crossing ends with the rise of rabbinic Judaism. Accordingly, rabbinic texts permit conversion within strict halakhic limitations. As stated by one rabbinic text, “Just as Israel did not enter the covenant except by means of three things: circumcision, immersion and the acceptance of a sacrifice – so it is the same with proselytes.” Consequently, rabbinic Judaism does not advocate active proselytism of non-Jews. We can present three commonly recognized pieces of evidence to support the view this view: 1) rab-
binic law permits but discourages conversion. Yevamot nicely illustrates this point: “Our rabbis taught: A proselyte who comes to convert at this time, we say to him: ‘Why did you decide to convert? Do you not know that Israel at this time is afflicted, oppressed, downtrodden and rejected . . .?’”; 2) gentiles have no need to convert to Judaism since according to Tractate Sanhedrin 105a, “Righteous gentiles have a place in the world to come.” That is if they adhere to what are referred to as the Noa-hide laws, they are considered righteous; and 3) historically speaking, rabbinic Judaism becomes self-preservationist and internally focused after the destruction of the Second Temple. These tendencies coupled with Jewish political powerlessness decreased potential interest in the pursuit of converts into the tradition.

Historically, how have adherents of your tradition pursued converts?

Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention
I am a Baptist and an Evangelical. So, my tradition dates from the early decades of the 16th century and the earliest days of the Reformation. Baptists broke both with the Roman Catholic and emerging Lutheran and Reformed traditions over the concept of a regenerate or “born-again” church membership. In other words, instead of being born and baptized into Christianity, one had to respond to God’s call at a point in life when one had developed rational thought processes and the individual ability to respond to the propositional truth claims of the Gospel and the Savior.

For Baptists, the only true faith has always been a voluntary, non-coerced faith. Consequently, Baptists have rejected any and all forms of coercion. (Although they have been victimized often by coercion from their religious competitors both in Europe and colonial North America.) The main methods of pursuing converts in the Baptist tradition have been preaching, individual witnessing, teaching, and publication of tracts, pamphlets, and Bibles.

Imam Mohamed Magid, All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center
The Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) has called people to Islam by speaking to the elite of Arabia. He met people in pilgrimage but also by setting the examples of credibility and being trustworthy, kind, and merciful and by sharing the divine revelations with others. His companions traveled the world to share their belief but were sometimes confronted by people who would not allow them the freedom of religion. This did, on a few occasions, lead to physical confrontation. Islam also spread through merchants, business, and trade. The Sufi orders have played a great role in spreading Islam in Africa by using some of the African traditions as part of the Islamic culture such as drumming and singing.

Randi Rashkover, George Mason University
As indicated above, there have been some instances of proselytism within the Jewish tradition. Scholars point to the conversion of the Idumeans upon the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty (approximately 168 BCE). Such an event had no historical precedent how-
ever and there has never been any analogous effort since. On an academic level, the rise of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic apologetic thought during the golden age of Islam helped create positive conditions for Jewish thinkers to argue for the superiority of Judaism to the other two dominant traditions and even advocate the conversion of non-Jews to Judaism. Judah Halevi’s Kuzari offers a classic conversion narrative whereby a non-Jewish king comes to be persuaded of the originary value of Judaism over and against the derivative meaning of Christianity and Islam. Even more noteworthy perhaps are the arguments regarding the encouragement of Christians to learn how to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures according to rabbinic standards offered by Moses Maimonides. While Halevi’s claims reflect his account of the mystical closeness of the Jewish people to God, Maimonides’ assertions were philosophical in character, arguing for the purity of Mosaic monotheism and its unique capacity to cultivate proper ideas about God. It is permitted, he says, “to teach the commandments to Christians and to draw them to our religion . . . when the Scriptural texts shall be interpreted with correct exegesis it is possible that they shall return to what is best . . .” Not surprisingly, Maimonides also advocated enforcing the Noahide laws among gentiles living within a Jewish state. It is important to note, however, that both Halevi and Maimonides accept forms of Jewish self-certainty which ground their claims to superiority and justify their argumentative efforts towards non-Jews. When viewed in light of the rabbinic tradition’s pluralism in matters of belief, Maimonides and Halevi’s willingness and/or interest in convincing non-Jews to convert to Judaism registers as out-of-character with the main thrust of the tradition. The will to persuade others of one’s truth presupposes a certainty about one’s truth, a certainty not afforded by the persistently self-interrogating character of rabbinic thought.

Within your tradition, what is the border between acceptable and unacceptable proselytism? How can one distinguish among persuasion, material incentives, and coercion in practice?

Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention

Baptists have rejected coercion as a matter of principle, believing that voluntary discipleship and worship are the only legitimate expressions of true and genuine faith. It would be unacceptable to coerce anyone in matters of faith. Material incentives would also be rejected either as a method to induce conversion or as a reason for professing faith in Christ. It should be said, however, that Baptists do engage in the widespread practice of “needs-based” evangelism. For example, Baptists are deeply involved in disaster relief work, both domestically and internationally. Baptists provided tens of millions of dollars in aid to victims of Hurricane Katrina as well to Haitians after the 2010 earthquake. Literally tens of thousands of Baptist volunteers have helped in immeasurable ways. Baptist youth groups are still dedicating their time to clean up neighborhoods in Louisiana. Quite often, they also do Vacation Bible Schools for children during the day and then for parents at night, explaining the Gospel of Jesus. Inevitably they are asked, “Why are you doing this? Why are you helping us?” The unchanging answer is: “We love you, and we love you because Jesus loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your life. May I tell you more about Him?”

Imam Mohamed Magid, All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center

The use of physical force to convert is unacceptable, as is denying one’s right to practice one’s faith. People must convert on their own will, by free choice, with no pressure. The only acceptable way is to represent the ideas and belief system in a way that does not put that person...
under pressure physically or mentally to be forced to accept Islam or any religion. It has to be absolutely and completely free will.

Randi Rashkover, George Mason University
Within the past few decades, the question of whether or not Jews should actively pursue converts has re-emerged in conjunction with the rise of Jewish intermarriage and the steady decline in the Jewish population. While all three major Jewish denominations, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox, have considered the permissibility and/or desirability of promoting conversion among non-Jews married to Jews, only the liberal wings of the Jewish community have explicitly endorsed this effort. In a 2005 speech Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President of the Union of Reform Judaism, argued in favor of actively inviting non-Jews married to Jews to convert to Judaism. It is, Yoffie argued, “a mitzvah to help a potential Jew become a Jew-by-choice.” In fact, he said, “We owe them an apology” for not inviting them to convert sooner. When speaking about how one might go about extending such an invitation, Yoffie described a process of on-going discussion with the couple culminating in the non-Jewish spouse’s free and rational acceptance of the terms of conversion. By contrast, Orthodox Judaism rejects the notion of actively reaching out to non-Jews on the grounds that 1) conversion ought to be for religious, not practical purposes and 2) even if one might argue that the conversion of a non-Jewish spouse to Judaism offers religious benefits both to the couple and to their children, Orthodox Judaism considers such a possibility only when it is rooted in the non-Jewish spouse’s own request for conversion. It does not advocate active outreach towards them.

Should there be national or international regulations governing proselytism? Do voluntary codes provide a viable alternative?

Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention
The only national or international regulations governing proselytism should be international norms which guarantee religious freedom and freedom of conscience. No one—government or private sector—should have the right to interfere coercively in the sacred relationship between an individual and his or her God. As that great Baptist Roger Williams said in the 17th century, such interference is “soul rape” and is not to be tolerated.

Imam Mohamed Magid, All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center
First, international law should not allow missionary groups from any faith to take advantage of the needy through bribery. This particularly is an issue in adopting children and converting them to Islam or Christianity after promising their families a better life (by way of wealth and/or education). Second, conversion or proselytism should not be connected to a political agenda. A person should not use political power to impose proselytism, or for a group of people to seize power…This could happen among different religions or the same religion with different schools of thought or sects. There has to be clear distinction between political agenda and general sharing of one’s faith.

Randi Rashkover, George Mason University
Religiously speaking, Judaism does not need national or international regulations governing proselytism…My argument against a Jewish (or Christian) right to proselytism is rooted in the elective character of each tradition. If I have above suggested the link between proselytism and dogmatism, here I will demonstrate how a theology of election presupposes a divine prerogative and authority which guards against the right of those elected [the elect] to assert propositional certainty regarding their own theological claims. Undoubtedly, election means the reception of divine favor. Still, the reality of such a reception is always de-limited by the alterity of God’s sovereignty as the source of this favor. To be elected means to be loved in law. Election therefore does not elevate my humanity to divine status, but rather marks the divine choice to draw near and affirm the character and limits of my humanity. Theologically speaking, election never warrants an absolute proclamation of theological truth but only modes of witness or testimony to God’s unique expression of grace…[This] demands not only an end to active proselytizing by either tradition but the transformation of Jewish-Christian dialogue which has remained mired in triumphalist thinking despite recent overtures to the advancement of authentic dialogue.
What is the border between acceptable and unacceptable proselytism? How can one distinguish among persuasion, material incentives, and coercion in practice?

Leah Daughtry,
House of Lord Church, Washington, DC

In America, we practice forms of proselytism everyday. In business, it’s called marketing. In the legislative process, it’s called debate. In politics, it’s called campaigning. In each case, an entity discusses its merits and the advantages of its product in an attempt to win new customers, supporters, or voters. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, we encourage the free exchange of ideas, believing that consumers, given the broadest span of information, are the most qualified to make their own decisions about what’s best for them.

When it comes to religion, we call it proselytism. And then, for some reason, we want to change the rules or create new guidelines. And that is its own problem. I would argue, however, that the same rules apply. It’s okay to talk about your company (your legislation, your candidate, your faith). It’s okay to claim you’re the best. It’s okay to talk about the benefits of your product. And it’s even okay to share your version of the consequences of not using your product. But it’s not okay to arrest people because they don’t buy your soap. It’s not okay to destroy someone’s livelihood if they won’t vote for your candidate. And it’s not okay to threaten people with bodily harm if they don’t adopt your faith. Proselytism is acceptable as long as there is no tangible material or physical consequence—good or bad—for the person hearing, accepting, or rejecting the message.

Matthew Richards, Brigham Young University

Defining the border between acceptable and unacceptable proselytism depends on how one balances converging human rights: On the one hand are the missionary’s right to “manifest” and freely express beliefs and the right of the target to receive information and make an informed religious choice; on the other are an expanding right of privacy, the right to hold opinions without interference, and the right of indigenous cultures to preserve their way of life. The balance should favor free expression (with religious persuasion protected as strongly as other forms of speech) and the right of informed choice.

Physical force, extreme psychological pressure, direct economic inducements, and taking advantage of one who lacks capacity to choose are unacceptable missionary tactics. The state is entitled to prevent harm and ensure the freedom of choice. But regulations must be narrowly tailored, proportionate, and leave open ample opportunities to express and manifest faith. It is difficult to define “coercion,” and vague or overbroad regulations risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater. For instance, directly offering material goods (a house, food, employment) to someone in economic straits is improper, yet nearly every religious teaching implies a promise of betterment—at a minimum, that God will bless and prosper the convert. Indirect promises inherent in virtually all religious communities cannot be deemed coercion—or precluded by regulation—without impacting the religious teachings themselves.
Aside from narrow regulations to ensure health and freedom of conscience, a state that regulates the religious marketplace by restricting the ability to express faith, persuade another, or select among competing views paternalistically substitutes the state’s choice for that of the individual. The ability to freely decide matters of conscience presumes access to a robust marketplace of ideas. We are adept at making decisions as to what to buy, what to eat, how we spend our time, our tastes in art, matters of love and lifestyle, whom we choose as friends, our political allegiances, etc. We should also have full opportunity to decide for ourselves matters of religion and belief. Matters of conscience, like love, cannot be coerced.

Salam Al-Marayati,
Muslim Political Action Committee

The border between acceptable and unacceptable proselytism is vague. Promoting justice, feeding the poor, establishing educational institutions are legitimate forms of religious work that can be construed or misconstrued as forms of proselytism. If a community is benefiting from the work of a religious group, then the activity is legitimate. There are two major limits to proselytism: respect for the religion of the host country or host community; and the unholy alliance of a government with a brand of religion, violating the “separation of church and state” in US terms and “separation of ulema (Islamic scholars) and state” in Islamic terms.

The persuasion part is easy: people can talk all they want about their faith. The coercion part is easy too: it’s always wrong. The main issue is using the promise of material benefits in exchange for either converting or simply listening to someone talk about their religion. I think that really crosses a line. Ideally, religious groups can define proselytism as exemplary behavior, being generous and hard working for the under-served. This definition is what Muslims are told to aspire to. There should be no suggestion that the aid is in exchange for someone’s adopting or even hearing about the faith, unless they ask.

Do voluntary codes of conduct governing missionary activities provide a viable alternative to national or international regulations? What are best practices in this area?

Salam Al-Marayati,
Muslim Political Action Committee

For Islam, the voluntary code of conduct governing proselytism is very clear: no coercion in matters of faith, do not compel people to believe since God’s will is religious diversity and freedom of choice, and invite to the path of God with wisdom for the purpose of benefiting humanity (not necessarily to convert them to the faith). Theological argument is discouraged. Other religious groups do not participate in countries that do not allow proselytism or any form of open religious expression. There is a problem, however, in what is happening on the ground. I don’t believe that religious groups can govern themselves. I favor having this governed by international consensus but I also respect the right of countries to make their own laws in this regard, especially if there is no global agreement.
Leah Daughtry, 
*House of Lord Church, Washington, DC*

A voluntary code of conduct, developed and agreed upon by all parties, is optimal. But voluntary codes of conduct also often mean voluntary compliance and enforcement. Proselytism can be a complicated and layered issue, involving matters as “simple” as the definition of proselytism, as diverse as a common understanding of its importance in various faith traditions, and as complicated as religious freedom itself. To protect and respect the rights of the proselytizer and the “proselytizee” as well as the rights of individual sovereign nations, the best practice may be the development of international guidelines and regulations.

Matthew Richards, *Brigham Young University*

A growing number of ecumenical groups and NGOs have developed codes of conduct as ethical guidelines for missionary activities. These voluntary codes are not designed as substitutes for national or international regulations; they promote ideals such as “respect,” “courtesy,” and “sensitivity” that are vague and unenforceable as law. However, the best codes promote discussion and understanding about how to balance competing interests, and encourage self-regulation by religious organizations. These codes are neutral to any particular viewpoint and both acknowledge and respect the rights of religious persuasion and informed choice. The motives of a code’s drafters often predict the legitimacy and usefulness of the code. To the degree codes of conduct, like cartels, aim to restrict religious competition, they are themselves a form of proselytism promoting a particular viewpoint (usually the dominant religion or culture) at the expense of new or unfamiliar views.

**What are the implications of proselytism, and efforts to restrict it, for international relations, human rights, economic development, and democratic governance?**

Matthew Richards, *Brigham Young University*

Regulations that restrict matters of conscience typically favor more established religions or ideologies over newer ones, which can lead to increased social pressure, violence, and then to further regulation of choice. A state may succeed temporarily in clamping down on freedom of expression or choice, but a clamp down often drives proselytizing groups underground only to emerge more divisive. Close regulation of religious choices risks delegitimizing the state in the minds of significant segments of the population. In contrast, there is a strong correlation between religious freedom and positive social outcomes, including greater civil liberties, levels of wealth, and economic development.

Leah Daughtry, 
*House of Lord Church, Washington, DC*

The ability to fully and openly practice one’s faith must be understood as a key principle and characteristic of a free and open society. This necessarily includes the right to worship privately and publicly (meaning not in secret), the right to openly associate with others of your faith, and the right to discuss your faith in public—without fear of penalty or recrimination. Of course, this also includes the right to not practice any faith at all. Attempts to restrict proselytism in a blanket manner must be seen as an attempt to restrict free speech and the even more fundamental right of self-determination. Governments engaged in such activity signal to their international partners an intolerance for the free expression of their people. And this might feasibly be linked to questionable human rights standards and/or a lack of adherence to democratic principles.

Salam Al-Marayati, 
*Muslim Political Action Committee*

Human rights and religious freedom are viewed as instruments of Western interference in the Muslim world. The first Gulf War, for example, was promoted for the defense of human rights. Christian missionaries were reportedly given preferential access to Iraq in the second Gulf War. Perceptions of those Christian groups became negative, adding tension to Christian-Muslim relations. On the other hand, the most effective vehicles for emergency response to natural disasters are comprised of religious institutions. The response to earthquakes or floods are good examples of religious groups helping the needy, whether or not proselytism is a driving motive for that activity.

It is hard to predict if restricting proselytism would have
a negative impact on economic development. To argue otherwise would suggest that proselytism alone helps promote economic growth. Also, since there is so much controversy about what type of proselytism is allowed and whether it is an integral part of freedom of religion as viewed by most of the world, it does not necessarily follow that restricting proselytism would interfere substantially with democratic governance. The problem is that in non-democratic regimes, this would just be used as a good excuse to further silence groups.

Should the US government actively defend the rights of missionary groups to proselytize overseas?

Salam Al-Marayati, 
*Muslim Political Action Committee*

The US government should defend religious freedom but must avoid the perception of preferential treatment for Christianity. Missionaries have an unfortunate reputation of “mopping up” after a military intervention in the Muslim world. This perceived connection endangers missionary workers or humanitarian aid workers misidentified as government agents. Furthermore, any humanitarian group, religious or secular, must maintain its independence with the US government or it will be perceived as an extension of US law enforcement or intelligence. If we are concerned with violations of religious freedom, then speaking out against all manifestations of this injustice is imperative.

Matthew Richards, Brigham Young University

The United States should partner with others in the international community to promote the rights of religious persuasion and informed choice as fundamental human rights. These rights are no less valuable or in need of protection than other human rights, and should not be compromised based on speaker or subject matter. The great majority of the world live in states that restrict religious liberty. Restrictions on proselytism range from absolute bans, to restrictions on religious gatherings, to censorship, to travel limitations, to recognizing only “traditional” religious organizations with an established local presence, and the like. These restrictions present far more than just an American problem, but a universal issue of the freedom of conscience.

Leah Daughtry, 
*House of Lord Church, Washington, DC*

The Apostle Paul wrote, “All things are lawful yet not expedient.” Just because you can do a thing, doesn’t mean you should do a thing. Sometimes the best use of freedom is being quiet even when you have the right to speak. As the U.S. government supports and promotes the principles of democracy around the world, it would follow that our government would also support the right of individuals to share and promote their beliefs around the world. However, in order to be a respectful international partner, the United States must also respect the sovereignty and the laws of other countries, even if we don’t agree with those laws, and even while we work through various channels to advocate and encourage change.

What is legal in the United States may not be legal in other places, and we should not be in the business of encouraging our citizens to go overseas and knowingly engage in illegal activity. While we may believe in the moral right of missionary groups to proselytize in other countries, it may not always be possible for our government to defend their legal right to engage in such activity.
“Proselytism” is religious expression with a mind to change another person’s beliefs.

Anti-proselytism laws prohibit that sort of behavior. But what sort of behavior are we talking about?

Decent laws and sound moral reasoning exclude trying to change another’s beliefs by force or fraud or where the effort is incompatible with parents’ rightful authority over their children. That sort of thing is not at issue here. The question before us is about “win[ning] adherents by persuasion,” not by trickery or duress or by Pied-Pipering kids.

Base components of religious liberty are not at issue either. Sound reasoning and good law protect (to take the phrasing of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18) religious “worship, observance, practice, and teaching” in private and in public, alone or in community against state interference. These activities constitute “religious expression” if anything does. Any of them could be engaged in, at least partly, for the purpose of converting others. Commonly, they are.

For “proselytizing” rarely involves any sort of explicit “ask” or plea for conversion. I am not sure about Islam, but its expression may have parallels to the universal extension and propositional character of the Christian kerygma: Christ died for everyone’s sins, yours just the same as mine. The greatest missionary this world has ever known did not proselytize by asking people to convert. Saint Paul instead told people how things really are. Or (to paraphrase the prologue to Luke’s Gospel), Paul gave his audiences “an orderly theological account of the things which had been accomplished among us, so that they may know the truth, and knowing the truth may come to believe it.” Today, what could be more potent an appeal for converts than listening to Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, or a reading of one day in the life of Mother Teresa, or even watching a video of the many Christians who flocked to Port-au-Prince earlier this year. In any event, the spirit blows where it wills.

The distinguishing feature of proselytizing is an aim which typically supervenes upon “ordinary” religious expression. It is an accompanying mental state, or maybe just the unintended effect of witnessing to the truth of one’s faith. Proselytizing is very often not a distinct and observable chunk of behavior. It is an unstable analytical category. And so anti-proselytizing laws are quixotic and notional, or they are certain to sweep up the more elemental religious expression—teaching, preaching, worship—which expression is eminently deserving of protection. This is enough to establish that these laws are unjust, as they surely would be without any further analysis in American constitutional law.

No doubt some missionaries are so aggressive that they need to be restrained by just laws against forcing conver-
sion. But more often the problem (where there is one) is that they are annoyingly persistent and self-righteous. These folks should be corrected and ignored; they should not be arrested. Almost all missionaries are guilty of their Original Sin, which is to present their own cultural instantiation of the faith—Irish Catholicism, say, or Midwestern evangelicalism—as part and parcel of the gospel. This Original Sin naturally leads to unjustified criticism of local customs and folk traditions which are not incompatible with the faith. I know that distinguished folks such as Publius have said that but for the original Original Sin no government would be necessary. But I am certain that no government should be charged with undoing the effects of the missionaries’ Original Sin.

Of course anti-proselytizing laws are not so vulnerable to criticism as it may so far seem that they are. These laws are a corollary of anti-conversion strictures. Together they form a coherent matrix much more real than notional, especially where they are supplemented by laws against apostasy. What justification is on offer for the matrix? Proselytizing is often criticized under the generic rubric of “interfering” and even “attacking” other religions, usually indigenous ones honeycombed with folk traditions. What justification is on offer for the matrix? Proselytizing is often criticized under the generic rubric of “interfering” and even “attacking” other religions, usually indigenous ones honeycombed with folk traditions. What sorts of behavior does the larger criticism refer to? And what are the pertinent norms for judging the validity of that criticism?

To take up the latter question first. John Witte phrases the question this way: “How does one craft a legal rule that respects Orthodox, Hindu, Jewish, or Traditional groups that tie religious identity not to voluntary choice, but to birth, caste, blood and soil, language and ethnicity?” The authors of an essay in Rosalind Hackett’s recent collection Proselytization Revisited assert that, with regard to the “problem of proselytization, it seems logically impossible to interpret the principle of religious freedom in a way that is neutral between religions like Islam and Christianity and the traditions of Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains.”

The authors seem to be scandalized by this “impossibility.” Why should we expect the “principle of religious freedom” to be “neutral” about freedom to talk to others about what is true and what is not true? Besides, the “principle of religious freedom” protects, for example, “worship” in “groups.” Many religions involve no worship at all and are relentlessly individualistic. Does the thought that religious liberty is therefore unjustly partisan leap to mind? Religious liberty also protects belief. Religions which define themselves otherwise—by ethnicity or place of birth, for example—are not thereby victims of bias.

The claim circulating in the above quotation is that “religious freedom” ought to be about “religious identity” and that it should then (somehow) be neutral as to various modes of “identity.” This is not the law anywhere I have mentally visited, and there is little critical support for such a position, not least because “identity” is not a perspicuous term. In any event, it is a decidedly non-neutral proposition.

The matrix is also sometimes justified by appeal to norms
of fairness—that evangelical religions (such as Islam and Christianity) which claim to be uniquely true have an unfair advantage in recruiting compared to religions which are not (such as Buddhism and Hinduism).

The appeal of truth is surely different than the appeal of the putatively more vulnerable religions. But it is scarcely apparent which sort of appeal is, all things considered, more, well, appealing. It seems to me that the appeal least likely to win adherents is precisely that the body of teaching is simply true, most especially where (as with Christianity) the truth claims include promises of hard times in this life for believers. In any event, insofar as anti-proselytization laws aim to level the playing field in the contest for adherents it privileges one account of what religion’s proper appeal ought to be over other accounts. It is time to turn to that privileged account.

We get glimpses of it in such drive-by reports about anti-proselytizers as John Witte, who asks, “How does the state balance one community’s right to another person’s or community’s right to be left alone to its traditions?” Tom Farr frames the question in terms of a “right to win adherents by persuasion,” “balanced” against a “right of communities to defend their respective traditions.”

Here is a short but nonetheless packed version (also from the Hackett volume) of these terse verbal signs: “[A]ttempts to proselytize are experienced as violations of the integrity of a community. Since ancestral practices are considered to be the common inheritance that holds a community together, any denunciation of them as false religion and idolatry is viewed as an attempt to destroy the social fabric. From this perspective, successful conversions to Christianity and Islam create tears in this social fabric. Religious conversions disintegrate communities and families by drawing individuals away from these ancestral from the ancestral traditions. ...[a] stance on non-interference is central to those traditions.”

Here we have ample reason for caution. Abdullahi An-Na‘im argues that the proselytization question involves an individualistic conception of freedom of religion, which “cannot adequately address the concerns of communities about proselytization and its consequences.” What’s needed (he says) is a “dynamic and creative understanding of collective rights.” I agree that international legal norms of religious liberty and the local constitutional law of many western countries is deficient, perhaps even gravely deficient, when it comes to comprehending and protecting institutional religious activity.

We are painfully aware of how little we understand about the cultural unity which a political society today requires for the fruitful collaboration among its members, a cooperation which cannot be secured solely through the coercive means of law, a cooperation which should not be attempted by state-driven -ideologies of collective identity, a cooperation which must include spontaneous willingness to sacrifice one’s interests for the good of others, even at very great cost to oneself. Note, MacIntyre observed that no one wants to die for AT&T. Religion supplies one way to thicken these bonds; a shared and, yes, a stable faith can generate community.
We are also painfully aware of the fragility in many places of peace among different religious groups, and of the special difficulty of sustaining collaboration for common purposes across religious boundaries. Proselytization is in some places a source of such conflict; prohibiting it may be a means of keeping the peace among contending religious groups.

Indeed, the embeddedness of religion in culture and in social life is an undeniable and, in general, a welcome fact. Pope John Paul II wrote, “At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence.” But the late Pope’s observation does not imply approval of any static or closed culture and, in fact, John Paul II often spoke enthusiastically in favor of a critical theological culture and never—never—uttered a word of approval for any state establishment of religion, even where Catholicism was or might be that religion. And whenever the state goes beyond recognizing, and beyond welcoming, the social benefits of religion—that is, whenever the state uses its coercive power to stage management of the local religious culture—it is acting for political ends. It is not serving the cause of religious liberty. It is not “balancing” the denial of one quantum or special sort of religious liberty against a greater quantum gain or realization of some other special sort.

There is a great deal more that could be said—both critical and sympathetic—about the compact but rich passage I quoted above. For this occasion I shall make one further comment, and it is a very critical one indeed: think of religious liberty that way and you will decapitate it. The duty of any political community to respect religious liberty as it is defined in countless constitutional, legal and—yes—religious documents, and to respect even in people whose beliefs and practices are largely false or misguided, is in the end rooted in the basic moral (not legal or social) duty of everyone to seek the truth about reality, including reality’s furthest reaches which transcend the concerns of the political community itself, and to shape one’s life according to what one judges to be the truth about reality. From here one can see straightaway that anti-conversion and anti-proselytizing laws strike at the heart of religious liberty.

From here you can see, too, that if one thinks religious liberty attaches to any established social order in which religion plays an important role, and if one credits reports that even peaceful encounters with articulated alternate conceptions of reality are “experiences” of attempted “destruction,” one might well then affirm some putative right to “non-interference.” But then one will have drifted very far from the understanding of religious freedom we find in so many authoritative documents, and abandoned its foundations altogether.

José Casanova
Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The following is a transcript of Dr. Casanova’s remarks delivered at the Symposium on Proselytism and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century, held on March 3, 2010, at Georgetown University.

I view my task not as that of winning points in a debate on the grounds of logical or rhetorical argumentation. I
concede defeat already. No layperson could ever win a
debate with an American law professor, much less with
Gerry Bradley. My task is to complicate the framework
and the context of our arguments. In fact, I would like
to argue for and against proselytism simultaneously, not
because of indecisive avoidance, wanting to both have
my cake and eat it too, but because of a recognition of
the tension between two goods.

I would like to divide the rationales for and against pros-
elytism into three groups—theological, legal-juridical,
and socio-cultural—and to argue both for and against
proselytism on each of these grounds.

1) Theological Rationales: I fully acknowledge the reli-
gious duty to preach the good news, to proclaim the Gos-
pel. For some religions at least, certainly for Christianity,
this is a duty, an obligation which must be taken very
seriously as central to the religion.

But against this religious duty there is the moral obliga-
tion, which I must take equally seriously, to respect other
versions of the good news, other gospels, which other
religious persons, other humans, take equally seriously.
In the case of the Christian Gospel, the mystery of salva-
tion is complicated by the historicity of revelation and of
God’s economy of redemption.

Just think of the genealogy of Jesus as it appears in the
gospels as being linked directly to Abraham. This clearly
reveals that the incarnation is linked to a particular gene-
alogy of the children of Abraham that has nothing to do
with other, unrelated ancestries.

Here we are confronting the fundamental theological-
philosophical paradox, which becomes evident with the
multiple competing universalisms that emerged with the
axial revolutions: Jewish, Greek, Confucian, Buddhist,
etc. Every universalism is particularistic and irremedi-
ably so.

The mystery of salvation, for a Catholic at least, consists
in the fact that the principle extra ecclesia nulla salus—
or, there is “salvation only through Jesus Christ”—would
exclude perhaps as much as 90 percent of humanity from
God’s plans of salvation. This remains a mystery of faith
and no easy rationalization; not even the Catholic doc-
trines of natural law and human moral reason can explain
the mystery away.

Once one confronts this mystery, theologically, one must
acknowledge in full humility that we cannot be sure we
understand the ways of God, and that we should be care-
ful in appropriating for ourselves the plans of God for
humanity or for creation, even when we affirm our faith
in God’s particular historical revelation through Jesus of
Nazareth.

2) Legal-Juridical Rationales: I accept and defend the
right to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion
as inalienable individual rights. I am willing to concede
gladly that this is the first basic modern individual right
and the foundation of every other right. Paradoxically,
it emerged precisely out of the wars of religion in early
modern Europe, and against the Westphalian principle
of cuius regio, eius religio.
The right to exit—to emigrate—then became fundamental. No monarch could coerce his subjects into any particular religion. They had no right to stay in his realm, but they had the right to emigrate. That’s the way Europe solved the problem of religious pluralism—by the ethnoreligious cleansing and territorialization of religion. This is the fundamental inalienable right of every individual: the right to exit, the right to conversion, the right to be born again, which the religious sects brought to the American colonies.

But this individual right cannot be translated into another equally inalienable right—that is, my right to proselytize and to convert others. Individuals may have a right to conversion, which should be legally protected by every state that has signed any of the modern universal declarations of human rights. But this does not necessarily imply a parallel, juridically enforceable right to proselytize. The individual’s right to exit his or her religious community does not necessarily entail the right of outsiders to enter that community in order to encourage others to exit.

I have a right to the free exercise of my religion, but this right will inevitably clash with the right of others to the free exercise of their religion(s).

Here I think it is necessary to introduce a distinction between the national legal context, where I would be more reluctant to set clear limits to the right to proselytize, and the global international context of multiple legal-constitutional jurisdictions, in which the right to proselytize would need to be translated into the right to go anywhere in the world and preach my gospel, which bumps into the right of states to control their borders, to control entry and exit.

Indeed, I am not sure that the most adamant defenders of the right to proselytism are willing to defend the right of anybody to enter the U.S. and settle here, and therefore the need to demolish the wall we are erecting on our Southern border. Here we enter into all the difficulties and contradictions of an international human rights regime enforced by sovereign states.

I am adamantly opposed to the principle cuius regio, eius religio: that sovereign states have the right to determine the religion or religions of their subjects. But there is inevitably a need for state regulation of religious pluralism, which, however, will take many different socio-cultural and constitutional forms.

3) Socio-cultural Rationales: The working definition of proselytism we were given—“the effort to win adherents for one’s religious community through persuasion”—itself illustrates the problems internal to the concept of proselytism. A world of religious communities in which proselytism is a zero sum game—in which my win is your loss—is a recipe for inter-religious conflict on a global scale. The very definition is based on three problematic presuppositions:

a) That individuals can change religious communities at will, that religious communities are nothing but voluntary associations, confessions, or denominations. Against
such a notion, one must remember Hannah Arendt’s dis-
cussion of what she called “natal religions,” that is, those
religious communities that one enters into through birth.
Judaism and Hinduism are such religions.

It is not only that such religions are hardly reconcilable
with the right to exit, but that they do not acknowledge
the right to enter, to conversion, and therefore have no
urge to win adherents, other than through high levels of
fertility.

In a similar group of reli-
gions one must recognize
all those linked to ances-
tor cults, such as the Asian
Confucian religions and
Chinese folk religions,
but also many African
religions, in which kin-
ship obligations binding
the living and the dead
across generations are
central. Here, to exit
means to abandon one’s
kinship obligations and
solidarity for egoistic individualism.

Even if one acknowledges the individual pursuit of hap-
piness as one of the fundamental modern rights, one of
those truths that we may hold as self-evident, and in this
context, the search for salvation, for eternal individual
happiness, could be understood as an expression of this
fundamental right, we should be weary of defining this
right in strictly egoistic individualist terms that would be
opposed to the duties to my community.

b) That individuals need to choose, to belong to one par-
ticular religious community rather than another, rather
than being able to belong simultaneously to multiple re-
ligious communities or to none at all. It is like our old
binary racial categories: you were either black or white,
until the census introduced a monkey wrench into the
system by letting people pick “all of the above.”

This is not the way Chinese, for instance, tend to think
of religion, which is not as a community to which one
belongs exclusively. When asked by surveys whether they
are Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, etc., Chinese
could as easily reply, “All of the above,” as they could,
“None.” Both responses, however, would be, strictly
speaking, wrong.

The very notion of belonging to a religious community is
not necessarily self-evident.

And this brings into fo-
cus the tension between
two forms of religious
belonging, which, fol-
lowing Max Weber,
could be distinguished
as: a) Community cults,
to which individuals be-
long by virtue of their
belonging to some terri-
torial, kinship, cultural,
or national community;
b) Religious commu-
nities, which individuals
qua individuals enter in search of salvation or of specifi-
cally religious fellowship.

If all of the religious communities in the world were of
the second type—that is, voluntary associational com-
nunities made up of individuals qua individuals—then
the principle of proselytism would present no problem
and could easily be generalized. But the principle of
proselytism clearly clashes and is in profound tension
with the first type of religious community cults, in which
the religious community is coextensive with other, non-
religious communitarian principles.

c) That conversion happens through “persuasion,” as a
kind of cognitive rational choice process through which
individuals weigh the pros and cons of the various alter-
natives and settle for the one which makes most sense to
them. This is a very problematic definition of the way
in which religious conversion, affirmation, or submis-
sion (in Islam) phenomenologically happen. Religious

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José Casanova, Berkley Center for
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discourses in many traditions often acknowledge such a phenomenological experience in such concepts as those of calling or grace, according to which we do not so much choose as we may be chosen, we do not grasp so much as we may be grasped by faith and grace.

In any case, the experience of religious conversion is often in tension with the utilitarian, liberal, individualist notion of rational choice, as much as with a Habermasian conception of a world of undistorted communication, in which the better—and more rational—argument ought to prevail.

The sociological reality is one of irremediable embeddedness of both individuals and communities, one of the particulate historicity of religious communities, inevitably tied to particular cultures and conceptions of the world. Moreover, the histories of colonialism, of civilizational conflicts, of imperialism, are not easily erasable, and these form the context within which today’s practices of proselytism take place.

In our global context, we need to come to terms with the irremediable plurality of world religions and human cultures. We ought to develop a respect for this plurality, especially for the most endangered species, rather than aspiring through proselytism to a single universal religion or culture.

Ultimately, it all depends on how we define “persuasion.” If one could envision a form of persuasion that would be devoid of any force, of any unequal relation or power, of any subjection, of any seduction, of any non-rational factor… Of course, such a persuasion is unreal.

I can embrace the proselytism of Mother Teresa, the one who bears witness to one’s faith by serving the most disprivileged. But, without any ulterior motives?

We could aspire to a system of global denomination-alism, in which everybody is ready to affirm with Mother Teresa: “I love all religions, but I am in love with my own.” I could embrace a proselytism which is compatible with such an attitude.
Panel 3:
The Legal and Social Dimensions of Proselytism

What does your work reveal about the legal, social, economic, political or other effects of proselytism?

Angela Wu, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty
First, we have to define what proselytism is: “The effort to win adherents for one’s religious community through persuasion.” In that conception, it’s simply another form of expression, but about an incredibly personal and controversial subject—faith. Michael Gerson observed that proselytism is really just a pejorative term for the more acceptable “persuasion.”

We can’t ignore, however, that religious faith is so often exercised in community. Challenges to commonly held religious beliefs, just like challenges to any norms, especially by outsiders, is regarded with suspicion. (In a sense, I would say justly so—questioning what people consider to be “true” is necessarily subversive.) Sometimes, a challenge to a religious belief has the effect of challenging not just thinking, but a community’s entire construct of the world. So for some, “proselytism” has also come to mean “cultural imperialism” through religious speech. Because of this, proselytism is probably the most contentious aspect of religious freedom today. People will more readily accept or defend acts such as reading religious texts; performing sacrament in a house of worship; or preaching at the pulpit to an already convinced audience, than they would the right to proselytism.

Robert Woodberry, University of Texas
Political, economic, and religious elites have tended to try to keep resources to themselves and accentuate distinctions between themselves and others. Thus historically, they have tended to keep education, access to texts, control of organizations, and other resources to themselves and pass control of these resources to their children. When societies have a state religion and restrict proselytism, this pattern tends to continue through time with major political and economic consequences. However, conversionary Protestantism undermined these patterns. Protestants believed everyone needed to be able to read the Bible for themselves, be able to switch religious traditions, and have religious organizations with “converted clergy.” Thus, they promoted mass education, mass printing, the spread of organizations outside state/elite control, and helped create conditions that mitigated abuses by political and economic elites. Other religious groups behaved similarly when they competed with Protestants, but not when they did not. This has had major political and economic consequences. For example, the historic prevalence of Protestant missionaries strongly predicts current educational enrollments, longer life expectancies, greater economic development, and higher levels of political democracy (even when we do quite sophisticated statistical techniques to remove the influence of alternative explanations). The historic prevalence of other types of missionaries does not.

By the mid-twentieth century most states had begun to provide at least some form of state education, allow some form of mass printing, etc., but societies that started this process earlier have had large economics and other advantages. Moreover, whenever a religious group is able to restrict religious competition it allows them to ignore the needs of non-elites (e.g., the poor and ethnic minorities). But any group that is neglected or abused in a give religious, economic, and political system is more likely
to defect. Thus, when religious competition is opened and marginalized groups begin to defect, local elites are forced to transfer resources to these marginalized groups, or risk losing them. Thus, economic and political elites and elite members of the dominant religious tradition tend to resent religious competition, but in the long-run it tends to be good for the poor and marginalized.

Roger Finke, Pennsylvania State University

A collective outcome of defending proselytism and other religious freedoms is a practical one: religious freedoms contribute to a more peaceful and civil society. In the eighteenth century, many of the most prominent scholars recognized the importance of allowing freedoms for multiple religions. Voltaire wrote: “If there were only one religion ... there would be danger of despotism, if there were two, they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty, they live in peace and happiness.” David Hume and others offered similar arguments. Adam Smith echoed this thesis and explained that “if the government was perfectly decided both to let them all alone . . . they would . . . subdivide themselves fast enough, so as soon to become sufficiently numerous.” What these scholars often failed to recognize, however, was that it wasn’t the plurality of religions alone that resulted in civility; it was the freedoms that allowed these groups to exist that defused many of the potential conflicts.

When using data coded from the 2005 International Religious Freedom Reports, we found that religiously motivated violence was reported as widespread in 44 percent of the countries where proselytizing was “limited or restricted.” But in countries where there were no reported limitations or restrictions on proselytism, only 14 percent of the countries reported such violence. The differences were even more striking when we looked at social, religious, and cultural pressures against proselytism. One half of the countries with “traditional attitudes” or “clerical edicts” discouraging proselytism had high levels of religiously motivated violence compared to only 16 percent without such edicts and reported attitudes. Obviously our research has gone well beyond these basic statistics, but even in our complex models the relationship between denying freedoms and higher levels of persecution and violence remain.

Let me offer a handful of propositions on why this relationship is so robust. First, to the extent that a religious group achieves a monopoly and holds access to the temporal power and privileges of the state, the ever-present temptation is to openly persecute religious competitors. Second, to the extent that religious freedoms are granted to all religions, the state will have less authority and incentive to persecute religion. Having less authority is important, because supporting any freedom involving speech can be a nuisance or even a threat. But the two propositions just stated only address why religious freedoms serve to reduce violence and persecution promoted by the state. These same freedoms also serve to defuse the religious and social disputes that go beyond the state’s actions. Not only do the freedoms reduce the grievances and social isolation of minority religions, they also reduce the ability of other groups to take action against them. For example, the vigilante “policing actions” of religious
and social movements are less tolerated when religious freedoms are protected.

**In your view, should there be either national or international regulation of proselytism?**

**Robert Woodberry, University of Texas**
No.

**Angela Wu, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty**

Proselytism is essentially banned in many countries in several different forms, through blasphemy laws, anti-conversion laws, and “religious defamation” laws. The word “proselytism” is not normally used in the wording of those laws, but they share the aim of restricting religious speech. Anti-proselytism laws are rarely, if ever, enforced against the aggressive speech of someone in the majority faith in a community. The application of such laws almost always restricts religious minorities and unpopular viewpoints. This particular fact mitigates against regulation of proselytism—it becomes essentially a way of silencing dissent.

Of course, there are acceptable regulations on proselytism, just as there are necessary limits to any freedom, including free speech. All the international law instruments protecting religious freedom, such as the ICCPR, already name limitations on free speech that they consider legitimate—for the maintenance of public order, for example. And it’s impossible and unwise, of course, to ignore the sociological defenses of restrictions on proselytism—protection against forced conversion or fraud. So it’s important to examine the actual effects of restrictions on proselytism. Anti-proselytism laws don’t actually add anything to protect a community from danger—except the danger of having its settled beliefs challenged. Almost all jurisdictions already have laws against assault, bribery, blackmail, duress, fraud, and any number of other actions that people everywhere agree are illegitimate actions in themselves, and certainly illegitimate in the service of religious conversion. Those laws should be enforced.

**Roger Finke, Pennsylvania State University**

Ensuring the right to proselytize relies on protection from the state. In particular, a judiciary that is independent from religious and political authorities has been critical. Historian William McLoughlin explained that during Colonial times in America the Baptists seldom appealed their cases to the courts because they had no representation “on the bench, none at the bar, and seldom any on the juries.” The United States has a strong record of supporting religious freedoms, but even here minor changes can have significant outcomes. Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s controversial ruling on Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith in 1990, John Wybraniec and I found that minority religions were less likely to take cases to the courts and were less likely to receive favorable rulings than before the ruling. Once again, cross-national research strongly supports this finding.

**Should the US government actively defend the rights of missionary groups to proselytize overseas?**

**Robert Woodberry, University of Texas**

Yes, but carefully and thoughtfully. Anti-American feelings in many societies are very strong and associating religious liberty too closely with American power can provide excuses for repressing religious minorities. Thus, direct pressure may backfire. However, religious liberty is enshrined in United Nations declarations (which most nations that restrict religious liberty have signed). Moreover, many religious traditions are highly hypocritical on this issue: they want freedom of religion in other countries (including public expression, proselytism, and...
conversion) and want violence and hate speech against their religious groups restricted in other countries, but do not want to provide the same rights and protections for other religious groups in their society. The US State Departments systematic documentation of abuses in every country is important, but it would be enhanced by also collecting information on protests made either by governments or by activists inside the country about religious “abuses” in other countries (e.g., Saudis protesting cartoons about the Prophet Mohammed in Denmark) and the existence and prevalence of conversionary activity around the world (e.g., Muslim and Buddhist conversionary religious work in Europe, North America, and Africa). Putting carefully collected information in the same document about how people expect others to treat them and how they treat other religious traditions in their own society, or how they restrict missions in their own country, but fund it elsewhere, highlights internal hypocrisy and creates internal pressure for change. Publicizing double standards is important for people to realize that religious liberty is not just something imposed from outside, but something they want extended to themselves as well. Moreover, it is important for people of good will in all religious traditions to have religious and social arguments to counter those who advocate repression.

Angela Wu, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty

This question is posed in an environment in which, justly or unjustly, America is having to defend itself from the charge of military, cultural, and yes, religious imperialism.

The United States has a reputation as a “Christian nation,” which could mean a host of things. It can be questioned whether the many self-identified Christians who crowd into church pews on Sunday have any idea of the basic tenets of Christianity, or whether the invocation of a creator and of principles based on Christian notions of the human person in our founding documents imply a “Christian nation” or simply a nation governed by principles informed by Christian thinking. Nonetheless, the US government has to deal with that “charge,” as well.

Christianity is not the only religion that both requires and celebrates proselytism, and in fact within every truth claim one could argue there lays an implicit moral imperative to proselytize. But a question about American missionary groups proselytizing overseas has to implicate Christian history. And let’s be honest—Christian history is littered with missionaries who imposed cultural hegemony, sometimes in brutal fashion, rather than shared what they believed was God’s Word in a loving way. Christianity also has roots and a long history of being philosophical and celebratory of culture in the best sense—witness Jesus’ long dialogues with the many that challenged him, and the many missionaries who have served the needs of strangers and communities with humility, self-sacrifice, and great sensitivity. But man has always sinned in the name of God. What’s happened in reaction is that the dominant political establishment in many countries has taken those sins and cast free exercise of conscience—and proselytism—as a product of the imperial West.

So first I would say the US government should have as a priority debunking that myth. We have to decide
whether we believe in universal human rights that inhere to persons regardless of country, political system, and culture. If we do, in principle, we have to defend those rights. Perhaps it’s just a matter of semantics, but it costs a lot of political capital to fight that battle in particular for missionaries in foreign countries.

What are the implications of proselytism, and efforts to restrict it, for international relations, human rights, economic development and democratic governance?

Robert Woodberry, University of Texas
There is very strong historical and statistical evidence that restricting religious liberty has major negative social consequences for education, health, economic development, and political democracy. For example, in statistical analysis controlling for the historic prevalence of Protestant missionaries explains about half the variation in democracy outside Europe. Moreover, restricting religious liberty can actually radicalize religious minorities and lead to greater religious violence and instability, whereas religious liberty tends to undermine violent expressions of religion (in the long-term). However, to convince religious elites, it is important to also make religious arguments (not just “materialist” arguments). For example, there is evidence that in the long-term state financing of religion and restriction of competition actually leads to the secularization of societies, the spread of nominalism and syncretism, and the decrease of religious participation. In contexts of religious competition, some adherents may be lost, but those that remain are typically more devout. Moreover, one must ask whether “faith” that is practiced for external reasons (to avoid persecution or social pressure) is actually pleasing to God or gods or actually helps people escape the cycle of rebirths. If externally forced faith or practice does not actually create religious benefits, why do it?

Roger Finke, Pennsylvania State University
There are a few very clear findings. First, minority religions face the brunt of the restrictions on religious freedoms. From my work on colonial America with Rodney Stark to my more recent work with John Wybraniec, we have found that minority religions are the first to be denied the right to proselytize. I should add that the targeting of minority religions is not limited to America. Brian Grim and I find that this holds in our cross-national work and Jonathan Fox’s work has provided a strong confirmation of our findings.

A second consistent finding is that even when the right to proselytize is officially granted to individuals and organizations, it is often denied in practice. Even though 83 percent of the countries with a population of over two million offer promises of religious freedom in their constitutions, 86 percent of these countries promising such freedoms have at least one law denying a religious freedom and 41 percent or more place restrictions on proselytism. Moreover, moving beyond the state there are often strong social pressures that try to deny groups their freedom to proselytize, and this pressure is especially strong for minority religions.
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José Casanova is one of the world’s leading scholars in the sociology of religion. He is Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University and Director of the Globalization, Religion, and the Secular program at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. He has published works on a broad range of subjects, including
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Reverend Leah D. Daughtry is the pastor of The House of the Lord Church in Washington, DC. She previously served as Chief of Staff of the Democratic National Committee for six years. While at the DNC, Daughtry created Faith In Action, the Party’s outreach to communities of faith, and was named by Religion News Service as one of the 12 most influential Democrats in the nation on faith and values politics and issues. Daughtry also served as Chief Executive Officer of the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Most recently, Daughtry was a Resident Fellow at Harvard University’s Institute of Politics at the JFK School of Government, where she led a weekly discussion entitled, “Faith, Values, Politics,” which explored the role of faith and values in American politics. Rev. Daughtry is a member of the Board of Visitors of The Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College, as well as the Boards of Directors of American Values Network and WorldofMoney.org.

Thomas F. Farr, a former American diplomat, is Visiting Associate Professor of Religion and International Affairs at Georgetown’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. He is also Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, where he directs the Religion and US Foreign Policy Program. A leading authority on international religious freedom, Farr has published widely, including "Diplomacy in an Age of Faith" in *Foreign Affairs*, and *World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty is Vital to American National Security*. Farr received his Ph.D. in modern British and European history from the University of North Carolina.

Roger Finke is Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University and is Director of the Association of Religion Data Archives. His work has been published in numerous social science journals; he has co-authored two award-winning books with Rodney Stark: *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* and *The Churching of America, 1776-2005*. His forthcoming book, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the 21st Century*, is co-authored with Brian Grim.

Allen Hertzke, an internationally recognized expert on religion and politics, is Presidential Professor of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma, where he has taught for two decades. Among his books are *Representing God in Washington*, an award-winning analysis of religious lobbies, which has been issued in a Chinese-language translation, and *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Global Human Rights*. He is co-author of *Religion and Politics in America*, now in its fourth edition. A winner of numerous teaching awards, Dr. Hertzke has lectured at the National Press Club, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, and before numerous audiences in China.

Dr. Richard Land, educated at Princeton and Oxford, has served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission since 1988. During his tenure as a representative of the largest non-Catholic denomination in the country, Dr. Land has represented Southern Baptist and Evangelical concerns inside the halls of Congress, before U.S. presidents, and the media. In 2005, Land was featured in *Time Magazine* as one of “The Twenty-five Most Influential Evangelicals in America.” As host of *For Faith & Family* and *Richard Land Live!*, both nationally syndicated radio programs, Dr. Land speaks on the social, ethical, and public policy issues facing our country on over 600 radio stations across the country. Dr. Land’s latest book, *The Divided States of America? What Liberals and Conservatives are Missing in the God-and-Country Shouting Match!* was published by Thomas Nelson.

Imam Mohamed Magid currently serves as the Vice President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and as a member of the National Interfaith Planning Committee for Domestic Violence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Muslim, Sikh, and Arab Advisory Board. Very active in both the interfaith and Islamic communi-
ties, Imam Magid is the Imam and Executive Director of All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Sterling, Virginia. Under his direction, the Center has grown to be one of the largest Muslim community organizations in the Washington metropolitan area. He also occupies the Chairmanship of Fairfax County Faith Communities in Action, is a board member of the Fairfax County Partnership for Youth, and a member of the George Mason University Campus Ministry.

Eric Patterson, Ph.D., is Assistant Director of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs and has a visiting appointment in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. His research and teaching focuses on religion and politics, ethics and international affairs, and just war theory in the context of contemporary conflict. He is the author or editor of six books, including most recently *Debating the War of Ideas* (with John Gallagher) and *Just War Thinking: Morality and Pragmatism in the Struggle Against Contemporary Threats*.

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Matthew K. Richards is a shareholder at the law firm of Kirton & McConkie and a fellow of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University. He graduated magna cum laude from the J. Reuben Clark Law School and clerked for the Utah Supreme Court. Mr. Richards has extensive experience in appeals and First Amendment litigation nationwide. He advises religious organizations and others on such diverse issues as constitutional rights, regulatory compliance, data management, and governmental affairs. He has authored or co-authored articles on religious land use, Supreme Court voting, and tort reform.

Timothy Samuel Shah is Senior Research Scholar with Boston University’s Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs and a 2010 Joseph R. Crapa Fellow with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. He recently served as Research Director for a Pew Charitable Trusts-funded Project on Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South. His work on religion, democracy, and global politics has also appeared in several edited volumes, including, most recently, *Church, State and Citizen: Christian Approaches to Political Engagement and Religion in an Expanding Europe* as well as in journals such as *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, the Journal of Democracy*, and the *Review of Politics*. His current projects include a book in progress on evangelical Protestantism and American intellectual life; a handbook on religion and international affairs co-edited with Monica Duffy Toft and Alfred Stepan; and *God’s Cen-
tury: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics, a monograph on religion and global politics co-authored with Daniel Philpott and Monica Duffy Toft.

Robert D. Woodberry is director of the Project on Religion and Economic Change and Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. His research examines the long-term impact of missionaries and colonial government on education, economic development and democracy in post-colonial societies. His other research interests include the spread of religious liberty, religious influences on political institutions and the economy, religious attitudes of elites, conservative Protestants, and measuring religious groups on surveys. Woodberry's “The Measure of American Religion” won the Outstanding Published Article Award from the Sociology of Religion Section of the American Sociological Association (2001). He is constructing a dataset of all Protestant and Catholic missionary activity from 1813 to 1968, and collecting data on missionary death rates to determine how life expectancies of Europeans in the colonies influenced investment patterns and levels of colonial abuses. Woodberry grew up in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia, and has worked in China and Japan.

Angela C. Wu is the International Law Director at The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. She has testified, lectured, and taught on religious freedom issues affecting people of all faiths, and briefed cases before United Nations tribunals, the US Supreme Court, the European Court of Human Rights, and domestic courts around the world. A graduate of Harvard Law School and a Fulbright Scholar, her words have appeared in NPR, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Maclean’s Magazine, and the Council on Foreign Relations. She serves on the governing bureau of the United Nations NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief. In 2006 Relevant Magazine named Angela one of nine young people "out to change the world." Her research interests include hybrid legal systems and how regulation of religion externalizes the conscience.
Symposium Faculty Leader Thomas F. Farr, Ph.D.

Thomas F. Farr, a former American diplomat, is a Visiting Associate Professor of Religion and International Affairs in the school of Foreign Service and Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, where he directs the Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy program. Farr served as the first director of the State Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom from 1999-2003. He is widely published, including “Diplomacy in an Age of Faith,” in Foreign Affairs (March/April 2008), and World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty is Vital to American National Security (Oxford, 2008).

Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy Program

Both the practice and analysis of U.S. foreign policy have traditionally marginalized religious questions. With the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, the Center explores the role of religion in U.S. policy, with special attention to issues of human rights and international religious freedom. The Religion and and U.S. Foreign Policy Program encompasses a number of projects, including: The International Religious Freedom Act: Ten Years Later; Proselytism as a Policy Challenge; and Religion, Democracy, and U.S. Diplomacy.
Founded in 1789, the same year the U.S. Constitution took effect, Georgetown University is the nation’s oldest Catholic and Jesuit university. Today, Georgetown is a major international research university that embodies its founding principles in the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff, our commitment to justice and the common good, our intellectual openness, and our international character.

The Berkley Center is at the heart of a campus-wide effort to build knowledge about the role of religion in world affairs and to promote interreligious understanding.

The Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service

Founded in 1919 to educate students and prepare them for leadership roles in international affairs, the School of Foreign Service conducts an undergraduate program for over 1,300 students and graduate programs at the Master’s level for more than 700 students. Under the leadership of Dean Carol Lancaster, the School houses more than a dozen regional and functional programs that offer courses, conduct research, host events, and contribute to the intellectual development of the field of international affairs. In 2007, a survey of faculty published in Foreign Policy ranked Georgetown university as #1 in Master’s degree programs in international relations.

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