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A Moment of Opportunity?

*The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding
in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict*

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During our lifetime, religion has been anything but invisible. Predictions that it would become privatized, removed from the sphere of politics, economic development, warfare, and education, have proven false. In the 1960s, millions of Catholics joined their fellow U.S. citizens gawking in disbelief at the sight of priests and nuns marching with the civil rights movement in the streets of Selma and Chicago. Buddhist monks immolated themselves in protest of the war in Southeast Asia, while yeshiva-trained Jewish messianists brazenly moved their families into the Palestinian-populated territories occupied by Israel after the Six-Day War. During the 1970s and 1980s, religion manifested itself repeatedly in the public realm, often to the surprise, delight, or consternation of onlookers. The Shi'ite-led revolution in Iran was the most prominent example of the resurgence of political Islam; Sunni-based movements also swept across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Sudan and Afghanistan joined the ranks of Islamist-governed nations, while powerful Islamist parties fomented revolution or threatened political stability in Algeria, Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, and Indonesia. In the United States a majority-claiming minority of Protestant evangelicals and fundamentalists laid the groundwork for the emergence of “the

Christian Right,” a coterie of congregation-based sociopolitical movements, public action committees, think tanks, and lobbyists led by preachers who pledged to take back Congress and the Supreme Court from the secular humanists. The Indian subcontinent during these decades saw the rise of Sikh extremism, Hindu nationalism, and Muslim communalism. Sinhala Buddhists fought Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka, Israeli Jews squared off against Palestinian Muslims in the Holy Land, Catholic nationalists attacked and were attacked by Protestant unionists in Belfast.

These and countless other expressions of “public religion” tended to put religion in bad odor among many educators, students, journalists, policy makers, and public officials. Others, however, looked beyond the headlines to appreciate the multiple constructive dimensions of religion in its publicness; some of these observers even recognized that the genius of religiously inspired social welfare and peacemaking activism is rooted in the same zeal for holiness powering the holy wars and religiopolitical crusades. Indeed, one of our central themes in what follows is “the ambivalence of the sacred”—the ability of religion to promote what might be called militancy on behalf of the other, as well as militancy aimed against the other. Religion promotes both intolerance and hatred, that is, as well as tolerance of the strongest type—the willingness to live with, explore, and honor difference. Whether upholding universal human rights or denying them to “heretics” or “infidels,” religious actors, of course, always believe that they are doing God’s will and thus serving the common good of humanity, properly understood. It is, however, the obligation of scholars and educators to discriminate between the zeal that compels true believers to violate the rights of others, and the zeal that compels them to defend those rights at any cost.

Recognition that religion also promotes the latter kind of activism has led in recent years to some striking reversals for religion’s public image. In August 1996, President Clinton signed into law a bill overhauling the U.S. welfare system that contained a provision allowing states to contract with houses of worship “without impairing the religious character of such organizations.” This “charitable choice” provision permits tax funds to be directed to religious organizations on the condition that the funds not be used to subsidize acts of worship or evangelizing. In 2001, newly elected president George W. Bush sought to expand this program by channeling funds to faith-based organizations that were permitted to use religious identity as a criterion for employment by the organization.¹

Internationally, the celebration of the millennium provided opportunities for religious leaders to present their credentials as proponents of

nonviolent social change and reconciliation. One of the world's largest, truly "global" religious bodies, the Roman Catholic Church, celebrated a biblical "year of jubilee" by asking forgiveness for a host of "sins"—evils occasioned not by individual Catholics but, as Pope John Paul II confessed, by the body called "the Catholic Church." Theological terms—repentance, forgiveness, contrition, and reconciliation—found their way into international headlines when the pope carried this message to the Holy Land. There, it must be acknowledged, few Jewish, Christian, or Muslim leaders echoed John Paul's message by adopting a similar stance toward their own community's "sins." Yet the papal apology was but one among several, unprecedented acts of public repentance performed by Christian communities at the turn of the century.²

In August 2000, more than 1,000 representatives of transnational as well as indigenous religious traditions gathered at the United Nations for a Millennium Summit of World Religious Leaders. Notwithstanding the prospect that the summit might lead to the creation of a U.N. advisory council of religious leaders, the importance of the event was largely symbolic. It heralded the world community's unprecedented recognition of religious peacebuilding as a viable option, as well as a new willingness among religious leaders and organizations to play a defined role in an integrated, multilayered approach to peacebuilding.

The summit also betokened a greater critical appreciation of the relationship between religion's contributions to public life and the building or sustaining of a robust civil society. Having established a reputation for integrity and service through constant and direct contact with the masses, a long record of charitable work among people in need, and the moral example of its core members, a religious community commands a privileged status among segments of the population. It has also been the case, in settings where religion enjoys a measure of independence from the state, and where government institutions are widely viewed as illegitimate, that civic organizations and government officials have turned to religious leaders to mediate conflicts, reconcile opponents, and assume a larger share of responsibility for social welfare and the common good. Religious actors, after all, are long-term players who live among and often belong to the peoples and groups involved in conflict. In some failed states, where centralized authority has broken down altogether, organized religion has remained intact as "the only institution possessing a measure of credibility, trust, and moral authority among the population at large."³

The picture is hardly rosy, however. Not least among the problems facing advocates of religious peacebuilding is the uncertainty and even confusion religious actors experience when confronted with the opportunity to

play an unfamiliar role in the transformation of deeply rooted ethnic or religious conflicts. Often religious leaders, especially officials with an institution or tradition they are ordained or commissioned to “protect,” are unwilling and psychologically unprepared for the personal conversion that is necessary if they are to embrace genuine dialogue, healing, and reconciliation.

The authors of chapters on specific religious traditions discuss the often formidable obstacles to nonviolent conflict transformation found within sacred texts and living traditions. Assessing Hindu resources for peacebuilding, for example, Rajmohan Gandhi laments Hinduism’s promotion of religious nationalism, caste conflict, and the revenge motifs lionized in epics such as the *Mahabharata*. While peacebuilding is an important duty in the Islamic tradition, Frederick Denny notes that it has been focused principally on intra-Muslim relations rather than on Muslim attitudes and behaviors toward non-Muslims. In the same vein, Marc Gopin acknowledges that the Orthodox Jewish community, which includes those rabbis most capable of retrieving and developing legal and spiritual warrants for peacebuilding within the halakhic texts, has turned its attention, instead, to “those rituals and laws of Judaism that would buttress cultural and physical survival.”

Nor do the authors fail to acknowledge the unsettling presence of ethnoreligious or “fundamentalist” extremists within contemporary religious communities. We define extremism as a hostile and often violent reaction to pluralism, that most modern of social conditions. Under conditions of duress, religious actors fall into this pattern when they legitimate violence as a religious obligation or sacred duty. Religious extremists expand the cast of threatening outsiders, the targets of the violence, to include lukewarm, compromising, or liberal co-religionists, as well as people or institutions of another or no religious faith. Foreign troops stationed on sacred ground, missionaries, Western business executives, their own government officials, sectarian preachers, educational and social service volunteers, relief workers, and professional peacekeepers—any or all of these might qualify at one time or another. Fundamentalists perceive these “interlopers” as intentional or inadvertent agents of secularization, which they understand to be a ruthless, but by no means inevitable process by which traditional religions and religious concerns are gradually relegated to the remote margins of society where they can die a harmless death—eliminated by what the Iranian intellectual Jalal Al-e Ahmad called the “sweet, lethal poison” of “Westoxication.” “True believers” acting in this extremist mode are seldom willing to devote energies and resources to peacebuilding that would involve recognition and even empowerment of the other.

Accordingly, those non-extremist believers who *are* willing, who see peacemaking and dialogue as central to their religious identity, face daunting challenges. To gain a hearing, they may be required to confront combatants and legitimators of violence who propose to speak in the name of, and with the authority of, the religious tradition. This requires not only courage, but cunning. It is always more difficult to evoke forgiveness or tolerance from people who have been oppressed or otherwise injured by the religious or ethnic enemy. The extremist has the psychological edge in such instances. Tolerance and a deeply rooted respect for pluralism must be recovered and restored to the top of the religious community's agenda, if the peacemaker is to stand a chance of building consensus for nonviolent conflict transformation and indiscriminate respect for human rights.

In addition to the need for personal conversion to peacemaking, and the need to build the social and religious capital necessary to counter the appeal of the religious extremist, the religious peacemaker must become a *peacebuilder*. Even the prophet of peace, the religious leader accomplished in the art of moral persuasion, may be ill-prepared to take leadership in the complex process of nonviolent social change. Peacebuilding, as the chapters in this volume indicate, requires something more than a charismatic religious leader who inspires followers and/or sets a moral example of nonviolent resistance to evil.

RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING: TRANSFORMING CONFLICT AND RESTRUCTURING SOCIETY

In this book we use the term *religious peacebuilding* to describe the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of *resolving and transforming deadly conflict*, with the goal of *building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence*. Thus religious peacebuilding includes not only conflict management and resolution efforts on the ground, but also the efforts of people working at a distance from actual sites of deadly conflict, such as legal advocates of religious human rights, scholars conducting research relevant to crosscultural and interreligious dialogue, and theologians and ethicists within the religious communities who are probing and strengthening their traditions of nonviolence.

According to our definition, peacebuilding entails conflict transformation, the replacement of violent with nonviolent means of settling disputes. This occurs through overlapping processes of conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict management entails the *prevention* of

conflict from becoming violent or expanding to other arenas. Accordingly, it includes the *enforcement* of existing treaties and peace accords. Within these categories religious actors have played several major roles in recent decades, serving as *heralds*, *observers*, and *peacekeepers*. *Conflict resolution*, or peacemaking, entails removing, to the extent possible, the inequalities between the disputants, by means of mediation, negotiation, and/or advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict. Religious actors have served as *advocates*, *observers*, and *mediators*, among other roles, in this phase of conflict transformation.

These processes of conflict transformation, when successful, result in ceasefires and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in lieu of (and, ideally, in anticipation of) an essential element of peacebuilding, namely *structural reform*—efforts to build institutions and foster civic leadership that will address the root causes of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society. In this post-deadly-conflict phase of the process, religious actors have served, among other roles, as *educators* and *institution builders*.⁴

Conflict Management (Prevention, Enforcement, Peacekeeping)

At the heart of conflict prevention is diagnosis. As *heralds* religious actors have been harbingers of widening rifts in the social fabric. The prophetic dimension of religion nurtures a heightened sensitivity to subtle as well as open forms of social discrimination, political oppression, and other forms of injustice. Indeed, consciousness-raising among their co-religionists and fellow citizens is the *raison d'être* of such “prophets.”

Marc Gopin, for example, writes of the “empathic listening” required of the Jewish peacemaker and commanded in the Hebrew bible and in the rabbinical literature. Catherine Morris, writing of Cambodia, underscores the capacity of the sangha to anticipate and prevent violent conflict within Khmer society. Striking illustrations of this point were the annual Buddhist “peace marches” across Cambodia. In the spring of 1993, the sixty-eight-year-old Buddhist patriarch Maha Ghosananda led hundreds of Buddhist monks, nuns, and laity on a dramatic month-long march from Siam Reap in the northwest section of Cambodia throughout the central regions to the capital, Phnom Penh. Held on the eve of the United Nations–sponsored elections of a new national assembly and government, the Peace March, known as Dhammayietra (“Pilgrimage of Truth”) II, traversed dangerous territory marked by land mines and firefights. The marchers hoped to build popular confidence in the elections and overcome the fear that had been

aroused by Khmer Rouge threats of violence and disruption. By the time Ghosananda and his supporters reached Phnom Penh, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians had encouraged the marchers along their path, and more than 10,000 people had joined their ranks. Ninety percent of the Cambodian electorate voted in the ensuing free and fair elections, the first in the country's history. While the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia [UNTAC] had created the conditions necessary for the holding of the elections, many Cambodians and NGO workers attributed the extraordinary level of popular participation in part to the success of the Dhammayietra.⁵

When they act as heralds, religious actors keep their ear to the ground, recording and interpreting the shifts in religious practice, religious opinion, government policy, public sentiment, and racial, ethnic, and/or religious relations. Often they are positioned as guardians of orthodoxy or prophets pointing to erosions of community identity and boundaries. Yet these local religious and cultural players are often the first to notice the signs of incipient conflict and so their reports may and should figure in the early stages of a conflict resolution process as a kind of early warning system. In the Philippines, for example, religious leaders in Zamboanga City, Jolo, and other sites on the southern islands provided an early warning of the religious tensions developing between Muslims and Christians following the arrival in the 1980s of the Tablighi Jamaat, the worldwide Islamic revival group, and the subsequent formation of the Abu Sayyaf, the fundamentalist Islamic movement, which made kidnapping and ransom a staple of their fundraising and recruiting operations in the late 1990s. Through religious periodicals such as *Silsilah (Chain)*, a newsletter of a Catholic-Muslim dialogue group in Mindanao, and through the massive propaganda campaign for and against Christian evangelists conducted across the radio airwaves, the national and foreign press were made aware of the ethnic and religious hostilities brewing in the region.⁶

When conflict erupts between an aggrieved minority and an ethnoreligious majority, or between religious or ethnic forces and the state itself, religiously motivated *advocates* may play a pivotal role. Agitating for the reform of government and the strengthening of civil society, religious advocates have pressed for higher standards of education, improved labor conditions and race relations, and the implementation of constitutional or legal protections of religious freedoms. Moral leadership, up to and including sacrificing resources and possibly lives in a protest action against a military-backed government, was a striking dimension of religious advocacy in East Timor, for example, during the Roman Catholic-led movement for independence from Indonesia, culminating in the bloody attempted genocide of 1998.

In preventing or containing conflict, religious actors may combine the roles of herald and advocate. During the administration of Hosni Mubarak, various levels of the Islamist movement, most notably the moderate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, have played this role in Egypt. Adil Hussein, editor of *al-Sha'b* (*The People*) and an outspoken critic of the regime, has seen his newspaper shut down on several occasions and his political party manipulated by a shifting policy of so-called liberalization. When the IMF and the United States conduct reviews of their international aid policies, Hussein complains, the Labor Party and other expressions of political “pluralism” are allowed to flourish—temporarily. In “ordinary time,” however, repression and restrictions are the norm. The radical wings of the Islamist movement will not die Hussein warns, “until and unless there exists an atmosphere of democracy that allows freedom and debate.” *Al-Sha'b* is one of dozens of underground Egyptian newspapers that have kept alive a steady pulse of dissent and social criticism in an otherwise closed society.⁷

The Society of Engaged Buddhists, to take a different example, numbers among its members several courageous advocates of nonviolent social change. Buddhist liberationists include figures like Sulak Sivaraksa, the Thai monk who was jailed in 1984 after he criticized what he termed the monarchy’s cultural abdication to the West. After a group of military leaders took power in Thailand as the National Peace Keeping Council in 1991, Sivaraksa attacked the coup leaders in interviews published in the international press, and delivered a widely publicized pro-democracy lecture at Bangkok’s Thammasat University. “Since the first coup in 1947, the military in Siam has not had one new idea,” he declared, “and it used every means possible—including the schools, universities and mass media—to undermine pro-democracy movements. Those who resisted, such as leaders of the farmers’ movements and labor unions, were arrested and sometimes killed.”⁸ As a result of the Thammasat University speech, which was embraced by pro-democracy dissidents across the region, Sivaraksa was forced into exile on charges of *lése majesté*—insulting royalty, in the person of King Bhumiphol—and defaming the coup’s leader, General Suchinda Kraprayoon.

In acting as advocates for an oppressed group, it is also true that religious actors may seek primarily to protect their own privileges. (They may also honestly believe that their religion offers the best cultural conditions for social and economic progress.) In addition, the social disruptions associated with various forms of strife, from low-intensity conflict to outright civil war, provide an opening for religious entrepreneurs intent on increasing their “market share” within a society. These religious actors may take advantage of a conflict situation, as did the hordes

of invading fundamentalist and Pentecostal evangelists who established a significant missionary presence in the Philippines during the Marcos era. In such cases conflict leads to a new realignment of social and religious forces, with political implications for the post-conflict period.⁹

Conflict management also involves enforcement and peacekeeping operations. Religious actors are underutilized in these roles, to the detriment of peace processes. Several authors in this volume lament the “missed opportunities” of this kind. In the Middle East, Gopin and Denny might agree, well-chosen religious actors must be included in any potentially successful implementation of a peace plan calling for joint administration of sacred sites located in and around Jerusalem. And in Northern Ireland, which boasts more self-identified “peacemakers” per capita than any other place on Earth, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, most experts agree, will not be effective on the structural-political level until and unless grassroots, cross-community peace practitioners are involved. A significant percentage of the latter are drawn from the churches or are otherwise religiously motivated to build new local Catholic-Protestant institutions and networks and to strengthen the ones put in place since the most recent Troubles began in the 1960s.

Recent studies of U.N. peacekeeping operations point to the necessity of cultural and religious sensitivity on the part of the peacekeeping forces.¹⁰ *Observers* offer themselves as a physical and moral presence, intended to discourage violence, corruption, human rights violations, or other behavior deemed threatening and undesirable. Far from a passive role, religiously based observers have actively monitored, verified, and in some cases even ensured the legitimacy of elections. Civilian peacekeeping individuals or teams have risked their lives by placing themselves in active conflict situations. In situations where violence is primarily perpetrated by one party against another, these actors have accompanied individuals or groups believed to be in danger, and have maintained a presence in threatened communities. Witness for Peace, an international ecumenical organization founded in the early 1980s, is known for its work documenting human rights violations and providing nonviolence training in Nicaragua between 1983 and 1991. Likewise, the Christian Peacemaker Teams sponsored by the Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren have been active in documenting human rights abuses and providing a protective presence for besieged communities in Haiti (primarily) and in Iraq, Palestine, Israel, the United States, and Canada. Religious volunteers acted as observers of the election of members of the Palestinian National Assembly in 1996, for example, and the Christian churches of Zambia recruited, trained, and deployed monitors for three thousand polling sites in the 1991 election in Zambia.¹¹

Finally, religious *educators* lay the groundwork for conflict transformation through long-term service in the classroom, the training seminar, or the institute. They blend experiential as well as theoretical knowledge in imparting to their students and disciples the skills of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. “Educators and training have a role to play during each of the stages of conflict transformation, whether it be to sensitize a society to inequities in the system; to foster the understanding and build the skills of advocacy, conflict resolution, democracy, or living with diversity; or to promote healing and reconciliation,” Cynthia Sampson writes, “The key to activity in this category is the dimension of preparation—of teaching or in some way providing a learning experience for others from a position one step removed from direct involvement in conflict intervention.”¹²

Religious groups have been particularly active in the area of nonviolence training. In India the Gandhi Peace Foundation, from its headquarters in Delhi and in thirty-three field centers across the nation, conducted research and training programs in nonviolent conflict resolution; in Israel and Palestine, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nonviolence International, and other NGOs provided legal supports to activists; and in South Africa, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and numerous other sites of deadly violence, religious actors conducted seminars in conflict resolution techniques and in the theory and methods of peacemaking. In Cambodia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Bolivia, religious actors joined other humanitarian educators in raising popular awareness of citizens’ legal rights and democratic procedures.

In developing strategies for opposing social and political injustice nonviolently, religious peacemakers are able to draw upon and refine the religious tradition’s ethical warrants for resistance against unjust conditions, using explicit constraints on the use of violence in preventing, ameliorating, or resolving conflicts. Indeed, an important aspect of religious education for peace is the research and writing, conferences, and dialogues dedicated to clarifying religious attitudes toward human rights, in particular the extent and kind of *religious* human rights deserving protection in pluralist societies. Who participates in the rights-defining process? Whose criteria govern the interpretation and practice of human rights? The most intense and conflict-ridden debates—and perhaps, ultimately, the most consequential—are currently being conducted within the religious traditions themselves, as they interact more and more frequently and rapidly with secular actors, with other religions—and with their own diverse and ideologically plural membership. Islam’s internal struggle regarding human rights, democracy, the ethics of war and peace, and religious identity is likely the most consequential debate unfolding at present.¹³

Conflict Resolution (Peacemaking)

There are several decisive moments in conflict transformation, but few would doubt that negotiations between the warring parties is one of them. In this crucial phase of the process, religious communities and individuals, as well as religious officialdom (hierarchies, bureaucracies, religiously sponsored relief agencies, and other multinational religious institutions), have intervened with a frequency and level of success that is not widely recognized. Whether or not the conflict involves religious elements, the evidence provided in this book and in other literature strongly suggests that “unofficial” religious communities and individuals have been more successful in bringing disputants together and mediating productive negotiations.

Andrea Bartoli, whose chapter in this volume broadly surveys the peacemaking resources within Christianity, is the vice-president of a religious community that has enjoyed considerable success in mediating and transforming violent conflict. Sant’Egidio, the Roman Catholic lay movement headquartered in Rome, is known internationally for its key role in mediating the negotiations that led to the end of the civil war in Mozambique, for hosting the talks between Muslim and secular parties that led to a yet-to-be-implemented platform for peace in Algeria; and for more modest but nonetheless constructive interventions in Kosovo, Burundi, and Guatemala. What Bartoli says of Christian peacemakers in general may be said resoundingly of his own community: Religious mediators are successful because (and to the extent that) they: (1) exhibit an intimate knowledge of the language and culture of the peoples in conflict; (2) enjoy access to firsthand information about the conflict as it evolves; (3) possess or draw upon political expertise; and, (4) help to develop and embrace a long-term vision of peace for the conflicted society.

These four characteristics of effective religious peacebuilders, Bartoli writes, “may help religious leaders to bridge the gap that is frequently the most relevant obstacle to a peace process: the hermeneutical gap.” Conflicts, Bartoli continues, must be “seen” and “read” accurately. Religious actors from within the society who excel in this interpretive task can be especially effective in conflicts that have major cultural, ethnic, and religious components. “Because they are closer to the scene of events, at ease with many actors, and familiar with the language and the issues at stake,” Bartoli writes, “religious leaders may offer important interpretative frameworks. This was certainly the case in Mozambique where Christians such as the Community of Sant’Egidio and Archbishop Jaime Goncalves played a significant role. Religious actors were consistently able to contribute to the peace process through

their interpretation of events, issues, and possibilities and to orient the debate towards a positive solution.”

Religious *mediators* such as Sant’Egidio succeed, in other words, because they build trustworthy relationships, as far as possible, with people on every side of the conflict. Building trust requires, in turn, a willingness to suspend judgment or at least to maintain a principled neutrality. It requires, in short, a certain kind of religious or philosophical sensibility that puts people, their suffering, and their struggles above principle, if and when necessary.

In his chapter “Northern Ireland: Religion and the Peace Process,” for example, Patrick Grant alludes briefly to the constructive peace-making efforts of individuals within the churches. More could and should be said, however, in acknowledgment of individual religious actors such as Friar Alec Reid and Reverend Roy Magee, each of whom made the difficult and fateful decision to continue to minister to, respectively, members of the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Volunteer Force, even after higher-ranking officials of their churches had banned Reid (Roman Catholic) and Magee (Presbyterian) from associating with the extremists. Reid and Magee, each in his own way, decided to remain present to the people and the congregation standing defiantly at the center of the conflict. As Magee later recalled: “I never condoned the violence, and they knew it. I continued to preach the Ten Commandments, including ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill.’ They wanted me there with them, even on those terms. And when an opening for dialogue came, they also trusted me to be their go-between.”

This kind of good-faith mediation, warranted by the proven integrity and trustworthiness of certain kinds of religious actors, can be critical to the success of the delicate approach-and-avoidance dance that often precedes formal negotiations. Thus, Father Reid was instrumental in bringing together Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and the moderate John Hume, who eventually collaborated in bringing the nationalists to the peace talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement.¹⁴

In contrast to religious communities and individuals, official religious establishments seem to fare better as peacebuilders in the post-conflict phase of the process, when structural reform gets under way and the society at large has to come to terms (through truth commissions and the like) with the role of institutions (including the churches) in the conflict. Thus, for example, Roman Catholic bishops were instrumental in investigating human rights atrocities and calling perpetrators to account in Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina; and the Anglican Church, other churches, and religious communities participated centrally in the social reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa.

There are notable exceptions. In 1972, representatives of a transnational religious organization, the World Council of Churches (WCC), mediated the peace talks that brought a decade-long respite in the Sudanese civil war between the Islamic government in the north and the Christian and animist Southern Sudan Liberation Movement. The WCC mediators were able to draw upon the religious sensibilities of the two sides, producing statements of remorse by Muslims and Christians alike, which led to a negotiated settlement. "Religious leaders who come from outside the combat zone provide space to discuss problems and a voice for those who do not have one," one WCC diplomat said. "Furthermore, religious people can hear people of all social levels. They have credibility; they can talk to all sides. They not only listen to leadership, but to the people." Some religious leaders "may hesitate to speak out because they fear it will jeopardize their good works," he noted. "They might be imprisoned or expelled and not be able to continue their ministry." But there are always courageous religious leaders who resist the temptation to assume political power in times of social change, or to unfairly advance the interests of their particular religious body. Thus, they retain the distance that permits them to be critical of all political leaders and serve as honest mediators.¹⁵

Structural Reform (Institution Building, Civic Leadership)

As we mentioned, structural reform addresses the institutional causes of conflict, including both religious institutions and political and civic institutions insofar as they bear on or are affected by religion. The general objective, of course, is to replace institutions that engender ethnoreligious hostility and violence with those that encourage nonviolence and peace, and, to that end, to cultivate leadership in the religious as well as in the political and civic sectors. In this regard, religious actors can serve as social critics, educators, and institution builders, among other roles. It is clear that the constructive potential of religion in circumstances of severe hostility or violent conflict typically involves the need to reverse or reform intolerant or discriminatory institutional patterns that religious leaders and groups have, with harmful consequences, confirmed and reinforced.

When, for example, the military seized power in most major Latin American countries in the 1960s and 1970s, the Roman Catholic Church, as the dominant religious body on the continent, radically reversed a traditional pattern of complicity with the political-military oligarchy and stepped up their public denunciations of the abuses of power. The bishops of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina issued pastoral letters condemning state-sponsored murder, torture, and the denial of

habeas corpus and fair trial; the letters traced the root causes of these violations to the patterns of economic and social exploitation of the poor and dispossessed, often including the indigenous populations, and to an ideology of national security that subordinated the rights of individuals and groups to state expediency. In the 1970s, the churches of Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina sponsored human rights commissions designed to bring the atrocities to light and advance reform of political structures.

In such cases, religious communities were often prepared to assume the leadership of social reconstruction after violence ended both as an act of repentance for their own earlier cooperation with injustice and oppression, and because they had eventually taken a stand in favor of ending the conflict and overturning the patterns of economic inequality and political domination that fueled the violence in the first place.

Several of the chapters in this volume make the same point. For example, Russel Botman, in his chapter on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC), shows how the SATRC, established to supplement the institutions of justice in bringing to account those who committed acts of abuse and oppression under the apartheid regime, was in part a means whereby the South African church might express contrition for its own extensive culpability. "Although violators," he says, "must indeed be held politically and individually responsible for their dastardly acts, the faith communities that formed the perpetrators' mind must also come to terms with the reality of their part in the offences." Botman goes on to argue that the contribution of religious leadership and religious sensibility to the formation and implementation of the SATRC is both central and defensible. It is futile, he says, to try to divorce such an institution from the Judeo-Christian theology of reconciliation that has so profoundly shaped it. Moreover, he considers efforts like the SATRC to be indispensable in post-conflict settings. Despite criticisms, institutions of this sort are "a necessary element of modern peacebuilding" because they offer an effective way of confronting and mitigating the poisonous effects of gross and systematic human rights violations such as those that took place in South Africa during the apartheid era.

It may be added that TRCs, even where they are culturally appropriate, are hardly the only way in which religions and religious actors promote reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of deadly conflict. Religious ethics, rituals, and disciplines can promote humility, compassion, and discernment in their practitioners, and these nonviolent religious militants often display the patience, timing, and judgment required of diplomats and agents of reconciliation alike. Agents of reconciliation,

to be effective, must demonstrate empathy for victims on all sides, a profound commitment to the nonviolent management of differences, political insight, and extraordinary quantities of “grace”—forbearance, patience, dedication, and the sacrifice of ego. In addition, they must be able to speak a second-order language that transcends religious and ethnic boundaries and fosters collaboration with secular and governmental agencies and representatives. Discernment—a spiritual discipline as well as a political skill—is perhaps the most crucial quality in this arena of conflict transformation, for it is not difficult to miscalculate the situation and to seek or promise the wrong things at the wrong time. The tactical decisions are exceedingly delicate: Under what conditions should repentance be required or forgiveness sought? How and when should the perpetrator of violence and the victim be brought together?

A process leading to genuine reconciliation also demands leaders whose moral authority commands the respect of both sides. The process can be derailed at the outset if led by those who stand outside the cycle of violence and suffering or, worse, those who have been the oppressors and the perpetrators of violence. Depending on the situation, official religious leaders may or may not possess such authority. Yet other religious actors identify with or even stand among those who have suffered victimization, and this experience itself adds to their legitimacy as guides to reconciliation.¹⁶ Religious actors formed in a religious culture of peacemaking are among those least vulnerable to the error of treating reconciliation as a “efficient,” “managed,” and expeditious means to a predetermined end. They are also among those least likely to trivialize or ignore the community’s history of suffering, the memory of individual victims, or the complex causes of the suffering.

Johnston and Eastvold provide a second example in their chapter on the Bosnian conflict regarding the ambivalent effect of religion on leaders and institutions. While arguing that religion was anything but a “root cause” of the Balkan war, Johnston and Eastvold leave no doubt that religion served in various ways and in varying degrees to reinforce the nationalist fervor that divided the warring parties, Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian. Against that background, the authors welcome postwar efforts to overcome ethnoreligious hostility by developing new multifaith institutions like the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and cooperative projects, like the multifaith workshops throughout the Former Yugoslavia that are supported by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

The Inter-Religious Council brings together the four major religious communities in the Balkans, the Serbian Orthodox, the Croatian Catholics, the Bosnian Muslims, and the Jews, and provides a forum for

confronting a range of institutional issues crucial to creating a multiethnic society in Bosnia. These include the reconstruction of religious monuments in ethnically cleansed areas and the restitution of expropriated property; the return of minorities and their clerical leaders to places from which they were displaced during the war; and the development of new laws protecting religious freedom and equality throughout the country. Though the authors do not mention it, the Inter-Religious Council has also strongly supported the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The interfaith workshops, supported by CSIS, and directed by David Steele, are designed to help overcome resentment and political impotence, develop interethnic contacts, and inculcate peacemaking skills. Efforts are now being made to establish a new indigenous, faith-based peacemaking NGO in each of the three republics.

Rajmohan Gandhi writes along the same lines in his chapter on Hinduism. He offers a forthright discussion of the chauvinist tendencies in the contemporary Hindutva movement, and its political analogue, the Bharatiya Janata Party. Gandhi singles out, in particular, two tendencies in the movement that make for division and friction within Indian society, Hindu nationalism and calls for revenge in response to resentment for past injustice. The fusion of religion and country that lies at the heart of the Hindutva movement “defines good Indians as those to whom India is both their homeland and their holy land, a criterion that makes Muslims and Christians unpatriotic by definition.” He points out that even those Hindus who are skeptical of such talk “nonetheless think of Hinduism (and Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism) as Indian religions, and of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism as foreign.” Such attitudes are premised, according to Gandhi, on deep feelings of resentment for past mistreatment—destruction of temples, forcible conversions, mass killings—believed to have been perpetrated by these “foreign” elements. Sacred texts, from the Gita and elsewhere, are invoked in favor of retaliatory violence. Gandhi cites a 1999 study that speaks of Hindutva, as a movement “based on a toxic, belligerent, paranoid, and sectarian nationalism” that sees Hindus as “victims of invasion and conquest.” It calls for the creation of an “awe-inspiring Hindu state,” capable of settling scores by violence if necessary.

Gandhi points to his grandfather, Mohandas K. Gandhi, as a leader who resolutely opposed such themes and sought to move Indian society away from violence and chauvinism toward multireligious inclusiveness, equality, and tolerance. He drew on alternative sacred sources in his effort to reverse and reform Indian institutions, including, in particular, the caste system. Whether he went far enough, “India’s constitutional

commitment to equality irrespective of religion or caste would probably not have come about but for Gandhi's political leadership[.]” Moreover, on this account, Gandhi succeeded in “winning much of Hindu society to his version of Hinduism,” which included repudiating untouchability and embracing Hindu-Muslim coexistence. The fundamental challenge, implicit throughout Rajmohan Gandhi's chapter, is which of these competing social visions will prevail in contemporary India.

The chapter by Eva Neumaier on Buddhism and ethnic strife in Sri Lanka and Tibet provides yet another description of the ambivalent contribution of religion to building institutions that make for peace. Though she is careful to distinguish the two cases, Neumaier's argument in favor of important similarities between them is surprising and no doubt controversial. Sri Lanka and Tibet are usually depicted in sharply contrasting terms. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that her analysis of “missed opportunities” as regards the social and political influence of Buddhism in both cases is provocative and arresting.

The central claim is that “Buddhist ethics and the practice of mindfulness, if made into a guideline for interacting with the world, could provide effective ways of building peace between individuals, social groups, and nations.” However, as demonstrated by the cases of Sri Lanka and Tibet, “[m]uch of Buddhist history is a history of missed opportunities to build peace. Buddhists are like people who hold in their hands the tools to their liberation from imprisonment but who have forgotten how to use them.”

Neumaier singles out two obstacles of special importance. One is a consistent disposition to interpret the concepts of peace, harmony, and tranquility, which are undoubtedly basic to classical Buddhism, in an individualistic, inward way, rather than in relation to social and political experience. The second is a frequent tendency in Buddhist cultures “to adopt a mytho-historic narrative as the script of national identity” that encourages ethnic exclusivism and religious nationalism. The implication is that the two obstacles work together. By inwardizing the idea of peace, Buddhist teaching is prevented from helping to shape social and political policies and institutions, and is available instead for manipulation in the name of social division and enmity rather than peace and nonviolence.

The analysis in Patrick Grant's chapter on Northern Ireland further expands understanding of the connections among religion, leadership, and institutional peacebuilding. Although Grant admits that those who minimize the connection of religion to the conflict in Northern Ireland are not altogether mistaken, he provides strong evidence in favor of the salience of “religious sectarianism” in fueling the conflict

and in retarding the prospects and arrangements for peace. In this account, sectarianism denotes a strong sense at the grassroots level of ethnic identity, an identity that is distinctly shaped and colored by a religious narrative, both for the Protestants and the Catholics. Questions of faith, church attendance, and spirituality are interwoven with allegiance to the community of one's birth. This creates attitudes and an outlook that are "deeply resistant to the kinds of freedom in and through which the Spirit by which Christians hope to find themselves liberated from the impersonal demands and mechanisms of a tribal or herd morality."

Specifically, such an embedded form of ethnoreligious identity stands in the way of and often works to undermine the much lauded and much publicized efforts of both Protestant and Catholic leaders to advocate and support peace and the building of multireligious and multiethnic political and civic institutions in Northern Ireland. Grant offers interesting evidence to the effect that militant and exclusivist views are much more widespread and fervently held within both the Protestant and Catholic communities than is usually publicly admitted. It would appear that both religious institutions are as internally divided as the top leadership and the rest of the community. The implication is that unified, tolerant religious institutions are a significant part of building unified, tolerant, civic, and political institutions.

Beyond these and other suggestive insights regarding religion and structural reform that are contained within the chapters of this book, there is new, relevant, if somewhat indirect, evidence of broader significance that bears mentioning here. The evidence is contained in Ted Robert Gurr's recent book, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Though Gurr pays insufficient attention to the role of religion or says some inconsistent things about it, his study, properly adjusted, has important implications for the place of religion in peace-related institution building.

On the basis of a careful statistical survey of the status of ethnic minorities—275 of them—and the kind of treatment they receive at the hands of states around the world, Gurr contends, rather unexpectedly, that since 1995, ethnopolitical conflict, globally considered, is sharply on the wane. "The breakup of the international system into warring ethnic statelets, which many feared in the early 1990s, has been checked by more effective international and domestic strategies for managing ethnopolitical conflict." "Relations between [ethnic groups] and states in heterogeneous societies changed in the 1990s in ways that suggest that a new regime governing minority-majority relations is under construction."¹⁷

Gurr documents a global shift from ethnic warfare to the politics of accommodation. In the late 1990s, the most common political strategy was not rebellion, but political participation, and the number of groups using armed violence has now declined after years of steady growth. "By mid-decade a worldwide shift in strategies of ethno-political action was taking place." An examination of fifty-nine armed ethnic conflicts under way in 1998 shows that de-escalating conflicts outnumbered escalating ones by 23 to 7, and the remaining twenty-nine have no short-term trend; moreover, two-thirds of all new campaigns of protest and new armed rebellions began in the five years from 1989 to 1993. "Few new ethno-political conflicts began after 1994," whether protest movements or rebellions.¹⁸ Moreover, secessionist wars are in especially steep decline. Between 1991 and 1999, sixteen were settled and eleven others were checked by cease-fires and negotiations. It is not only ethnic conflict that spreads by example, but, as Gurr argues, "the successes of conflict management also are contagious."

Perhaps most encouraging of all, Gurr shows that the implementation of international human rights standards has lowered the potential for conflict by reducing cultural and political discrimination, a key reason, apparently, for minority protest and rebellion. Such discrimination eased for more than one-third of the 275 groups reviewed between 1990 and 1998, mainly because of shifts in public policies and practices that lifted restrictions on their political and cultural rights. Groups gained most in the new democracies of Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

Gurr identifies three principles of what he calls "the emerging regime of managed heterogeneity." The "first and most basic" principle is the recognition and active protection of the rights of minority peoples: freedom from discrimination based on race, national origin, language, or religion, complemented by institutional means to protect and promote collective interests. This principle implies the right of national peoples to exercise some degree of autonomy and self-governance within existing states. Armed rebellion in a large number of cases has been mitigated or pacified by autonomy agreements, mainly concluded in the nineties (as, e.g., in Northern Ireland, Moldova, Nicaragua, Burma, Bosnia, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh).

The second principle is that, among political systems, democracy is the most reliable guarantee of minority rights, and, consequently, of ethnic coexistence.¹⁹ Autocracies manifest severe discrimination toward minorities, especially in cultural and political terms.²⁰ The use of "repression without accommodation," typical of autocracies like Burma, China, Indonesia (before the recent change of government

there), and the Sudan, “leads with some regularity to renewed resistance and rebellion.” Gurr is also clear that the established democracies have a comparatively good record in dealing peacefully and constructively with minorities.

The third principle holds that disputes between [ethnic] groups and states are best settled by negotiation and mutual accommodation. Since 1990, settlements have ended or led to deescalation of sixteen wars. This remarkable post-Cold War shift toward reliance on negotiations to settle separatist conflicts is consistent with other researchers’ findings that ever-larger numbers of civil wars of all kinds are being terminated at the negotiating table.²¹ By a ratio of 20 to 7, democratic governments have been particularly successful in working out negotiated settlements.

One of the most interesting features of the growing attraction of negotiated settlements is, according to Gurr, the international connection. The findings indicate that major powers, as well as international and regional organizations, by employing various combinations of diplomacy, mediation, inducements, and threats, have contributed significantly to the resolution or management of ethnic conflict. International actors also make an important contribution to strengthening the other two principles, the protection of collective rights and the promotion of political democracy.²²

Though Gurr himself overlooks or confuses the role of religion in this process, the overall decrease in the incidence of ethnopolitical conflict, and the general explanations Gurr gives for that decrease, are of the greatest importance in regard to the subject of religion and structural reform.

Observers, such as those represented in this book, face an empirical and interpretive challenge. With this volume they bring readers to the point of plunging deeper into particular cases in order to determine how religious leaders and groups stand in regard to the trends Gurr reports. Is he correct in identifying these trends and are his explanations valid? If so, are religious actors helping or hindering the cause? Are they serving the spread of the norms of tolerance, nondiscrimination, and minority protection? Are they helping to improve the emergence of democratic institutions, and working with international agencies to mitigate conflict and build just and stable settlements? Or, on the contrary, are they standing in the way?

Though some of the authors in this book have begun to advance understanding on religion and structural reform, there remains much further work to be done. The present volume provides an important foundation for that long-term project.