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# *Shalom, Salaam, Peace*

# PEACE SERVICES IN THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS

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# Introduction

Mary Evelyn Jegen

Global Peace Services and Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, jointly held a symposium in 2004 on sources of peace service in the Abrahamic traditions. The university venue was most appropriate, because Global Peace Services USA (GPS) was established to promote education for a profession in peace service rooted in the spiritual dimension of human life.

The symposium, co-chaired by former GPS board members Irfan Omar and Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND, brought together university scholars, teachers and practitioners from the, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious traditions. A member of each of the traditions delivered a paper to which someone from within the same tradition gave a response. We are pleased to present here the papers and responses, along with questions for reflection and discussion.

Sherry Blumberg explains that in the Jewish tradition, peace is more than an ideal; rather, it represents wholeness. At the same time, the understanding of peace is developmental, with a high point in the recognition that peace is attained when peoples beat their swords into plowshares, an idea that is recognized as seminal far beyond Jewish culture. Amy Shapiro discusses the central place of pluralism as both a challenge to peace service and a central component of that service.

Michael Duffey discusses peace in the Christian tradition as the fruit of justice seen as right relationship, first with God and consequently with all God's children. Noting the strong emphasis on love of enemies in the teaching of Jesus, Duffey attends both to contradictions between declared beliefs and practice among Christians, and also to the many efforts by individuals and organized movements to practise active nonviolence as expressed by Jesus in the way he lived and taught. Carol Frances Jegen shows the close connection between the teaching of Jesus and the prophet Isaiah. She calls attention to the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a splendid exemplar of nonviolence rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Rashied Omar explains how an Islamic understanding of peace involves a struggle for justice within an ethos of compassion. Within the creative tension between compassion and justice, compassion trumps justice. He concludes with a number of proposals for Muslim peace service. Rabia Terri Harris, writing from a Sufi perspective within the Islamic tradition, illuminates how compassion is the primary value, and that justice is based on service to true needs.

Our hope is that this small booklet will contribute to a deeper understanding of the positive energy for peace that is inherent in each of the traditions, and that it will be widely used by adults as an educational resource in their own congregations. We further hope that this booklet will be a modest source for work in interreligious dialogue and that it will contribute to a growing recognition that within the three Abrahamic faith communities there are rich resources for peace service that have never been more sorely needed than they are today. In this spirit we wish our readers *Shalom*, salaam, peace.



# Jewish Peace Service

Sherry H. Blumberg

## Introduction

Jewish tradition began when Abraham followed God's command to leave his homeland, his father's house, his place of birth and to go where God would show him. Abraham and Sarah and all of the "souls that they had made" [1] (i.e., converts and servants) settled in the areas that God promised. In those early days, when the Israelites were primarily farmers and shepherds, fighting was usually a struggle for water and land. Abraham was forced into being a warrior only once when he had to rescue Lot from the conquering kings in the War of The Four over the Five.[2] Being a great warrior was not considered a high value, but defending oneself and one's own family was important.

After the Hebrews had gone down and settled in Egypt to escape from the drought and famine, the need for fighting to regain their former land became a reality. In order to return to Israel, the tribes, first under the leadership of Moses, and then under Joshua, would have to fight to dwell in the lands that they had left, since well over 200 years had passed. These were wars that were called "obligatory wars"—wars that were, according to the biblical text, commanded by God. In several of these wars, the tribes' greatest weapons were cunning and depending upon God.

The first "seeds" of peace service can be found in the way the Israelite people were to fight those wars. The Torah states that God commanded that the people had to offer peace before either laying siege to a city or doing battle with it. Later commentators would build this idea into a major tenet of Judaism—to seek peace and pursue it.

During the period of the two kingdoms, Israel of the North and Judea of the South, wars were fought by one king against another, usually for the expansion of territory. It was during this time that being strong in battle became prized. It seems that the Israelite people adopted many of the values of the people around them.

The Israelites were first exiled to Babylonia. Later, after the Roman conquests, they were scattered among many nations. After the Israelites were sent into exile, the wars they fought were mostly wars of words. The Jewish people were minority people with little or no military power. They were often dependent upon the good will of the princes or lords of the regions in which they lived and worked, as well as upon that of the bishops of the churches. Fighting was for self defense only, and references to "war" devolved to references to "battles" or "struggles." Usually, the battles Jews fought were ones that used arguments and defense of their sacred or scholarly texts. Torah Commentary and Midrash are replete with small pieces that exhorted the Jew *not* to fight. Medieval commentators encouraged piety by stating that Jews should neither answer insults nor respond to those who would fight.[3]

There are, of course, recorded historical incidents when Jews did fight, and bravely, for self-defense. In the Warsaw Ghetto, the self-defense groups in Russia, and periodically in armies for their home country, Jews fought either to survive, or to allow some members of the community to survive. These were called "compulsory" wars, because they were seen as self-defense. Some members of the Jewish community chose to die rather than fight, but all segments of the community prayed for peace. Those who fought spiritually and with words were, until the establishment of the State of Israel, in the majority.



Thus, from this very short historical review, one can understand that Jewish tradition is not pacifist, since it includes texts that speak of when and how a war is to be fought. It is a tradition that recognizes the reality of war but that prays for and also works for peace. This essay is both an examination of the textual foundations of that search for peace and a proposal for a "Peace Service," as it might look from the Jewish perspective.

## From Jewish Sources: Foundations of a Peace Service

First, a definition: *Shalom* (peace), from a Jewish perspective, is vital for human life. *Shalom* comes from the Hebrew root *Shin*, *Lamed*, *Mem*. This root conveys the meaning, "complete, whole." Thus, peace or *Shalom* goes far beyond just a lack of fighting or absence of war. It is, rather a state in which the nation, individual and world are "whole." Peace is not just an ideal; it is a state of wholeness and completeness in context. The experience of *shlaymut*, that is, peacefulness, being whole or complete, is one of the primary Jewish religious experiences.[4]

Second, is an understanding of how Jewish thought and values grow and change. Building upon the biblical texts, Jews interpret the sacred words of Torah in each generation. Interpretations become meaningful when the interpreter holds in tension what the words might have meant and the spirit of the meaning. Thus, the Jewish tradition has changed as it has been applied in the modern world (whatever age is currently modern.). Thus, although the Torah prescribed harsh, even draconian, punishments for some transgressions, the rabbis of the Talmud interpreted those injunctions in ways that almost always made them very nearly impossible to impose in actual practice. The strict punishments were seen as possibly appropriate for the biblical times, but they were adapted and changed as the community matured and moved from one of shepherds to farmers, farmers to urban dwellers and craftsmen, and finally to traders, scholars, and business persons.[5]

Thus, Jewish thought developed a new understanding of the importance of peace in the same way that the harsh punishments were tempered. From the time of the early biblical period, the prophets and then the rabbis interpreted the biblical texts to capture the spirit of the Law, rather than its literal applications. By the medieval period, seeking and pursuing peace both in the home, community and future were fervent prayers and guides for action.

Third, major texts and resources about peace are found in Jewish Sources.

The dreams of the prophet Isaiah and Micah are that people will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war." These dreams are translated into solid action in the statement in Psalms that Israel was to be a leader for peace. Psalm 34:15 says: "Seek peace, and pursue it." It was not enough to wait for peace; the Jew had to seek it actively. [6]

This seeking for peace was a mandate, before any resort to war would be allowed—even if the war were seen as one commanded by God. "When you draw near a town to attack it, you shall offer terms of peace." (Deuteronomy 20:10). Indeed, nowhere in the Bible do we see that wars were to be fought to achieve peace. Peace would not be gained through war. In Zechariah 4:6, it says: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, said the Lord of Hosts."

These Biblical statements were discussed thoroughly in the Talmud and Midrash (texts of the Oral Torah), which, while built upon the biblical statements, take the arguments into new directions. For example: Rabbi Eleazar said that *Shalom* is the most important lesson that we are taught by the prophets. Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta said that blessings are of no purpose unless *Shalom* goes with them. Rabbi Meir said that God created no better attribute than *Shalom*, and that *Shalom* is given to the righteous.

Other stories about peace in the legendary materials (Midrash) tell that God so wanted peace in a home, that if a woman was accused of adultery, she may swallow the name of God in order to prove her innocence (Numbers



Rabbah), and that Rabbi Meir so wanted peace between a man and woman that he allowed himself to be humiliated in order to bring that peace about.

In the Siddur (the prayer book), peace is the last thing we ask of God in the set of prayers that is central to every Jewish worship service. *Sim Shalom* (give peace), *Shalom Rav* (great peace), or *Oseh Shalom* (make peace) ends this central set of prayers. Indeed, even on the Sabbath, when all other petitionary prayers are omitted from the service and we recite almost only prayers of praise, the prayers for peace are retained. Thus, this solitary retention stresses that we must *always* keep the need for peace in mind, and recognize that its importance is not overshadowed by some higher value.

A later scholar, a Hassidic rabbi named Rabbi Nachman,who lived in the 1700s, moved the ideas of peace a little further away from violence when he said that inner-peace gives us the security and ability to make peace with others. He built upon the mystics' idea that peace, or *Shalom*, is one of the names of God, and so even the angels need peace. A 20th Century Israeli Rabbi, Rav Kook, wrote: "There are those who mistakenly think that world peace can come only when there is a unity of opinions and character traits. Therefore, when scholars and students of the Torah disagree and develop many approaches and methods, they think that they are causing strife. In truth, it is not so because true *Shalom* is impossible without appreciating the value of pluralism intrinsic in *Shalom*." [7]

## From Jewish Practice: A Foundation of Peace Service

One of the most dramatic arguments for a Peace Service alternative to military service is the practice of *Shabbat* itself. Once a week, on the seventh day—Friday night through Saturday—Jews are supposed to cease their work, cease their everyday activities and devote themselves to rest, reflection, worship, community and study. *Shabbat*, in its finest practice, changes our ways of being. On *Shabbat*, we do not *use* people or things; we appreciate them. We spend time considering our actions of the past week and making amends if necessary. We can spend the time with family, friends, our community and ourselves. The *Shabbat* activities directly connect to the inner peace that is fundamental to reaching out and creating a wider context for peace.

*Shabbat* can teach us to seek *Shalom bayit*, peace in our home, *Shalom* in our community, and *Shalom* with nature. *Shabbat* gives us a little vision of a messianic time, when the world will be whole and at peace. From this practice we can help to shape a Peace Service.

## Profile of the Peace Service

A Jewish peace service would include components of study, working for justice in the community, prayer, reflection, repentance, and doing deeds of loving kindness. While different individuals might shape their own service differently, each of the components would be necessary. The peace service would need to be a two to three year commitment in order to really allow for the efforts to be effective.

Study is not only a way of deepening knowledge of Jewish texts and values, but study can be a way of trying to understand what God wants of human beings. And learning how to study, ask questions, really listen to another's opinion, and argue both with the text and with a study partner (called a Hevruta partner or friend partner) is part of the process of learning to communicate. Jewish classical study encouraged arguing the fine points, "*L'shem Shamayim"*, (for the sake of heaven). Just as the Talmud carefully preserved all dissenting views on every point, this kind of 'agreement to disagree,' to retain and respect all the arguments, and then to come to consensus or agreement is one way of modeling peace.

In addition to the Jewish texts, the individual participant should study the texts and religions of the community in which his or her peace service is to be performed. This kind of study will help the service participant to appreciate the depth of the other culture and religious tradition. I suggest that in the initial training a course on World Religions given by different practitioners might well be a requirement.

Working for justice would be the bulk of the work in a peace service. Justice may take many forms such as economic, spiritual, legal, and political. For that reason, a Peace Service should offer a participant ways of helping to



develop an economy that works for all the people, allows each member of the community in which the individual is placed to grow to the best of their potential, provides the basics of shelter, food, clothing and education in addition to allowing for freedom of choice about their own lives and the life of the community. To fulfill this requirement, we need not begin from nothing. Rather, coalitions should be made with organizations already involved in justice work. These might include The Religious Action Center in Washington, DC; Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, Red Cross, CARE, Habitat for Humanity, American Friends Service Committee, and many others.

Prayer, reflection and repentance should be done daily in a minyan (prayer group of ten) if possible. In addition, reflection can take a written form, such as in daily or weekly journals. All individuals need to include time for serious questioning of self with spiritual/psychological/emotional counseling. This ongoing work can be with a professional and with the hevruta partner. One goal of these sessions would be to help the Peace Service participant advance in both his or her personal abilities and in his or her communal abilities towards growth and understanding. These sessions could be and perhaps should be conducted on *Shabbat* (Friday evening thru Saturday). However, if that is not possible, then there still should be at least one day for rest and reflection.

The last requirement, the doing of deeds of loving kindness, should be an individual project that the person takes on in addition, or after a specific time in the term of his/her peace service. Here, the individual can find that which is most meaningful to him or her while helping others. Since Jewish texts speak of the covenant of peace, an individual has the opportunity to enter into this covenant of peace in a way that speaks uniquely to the person. Some of the ideas come from the prayer *Aylu D'vareem* (These are the things)"[8] and include: visiting the sick, providing burial and support for the grieving, providing dowries, welcoming strangers or helping with immigration issues. One of the main suggestions of this passage is that it is an obligation to "make peace where there is strife,"[9] or, translated more literally, "bring peace between man and his fellow man."[10]

## Conclusion

How to conclude when we have not yet begun? I have only scratched the surface with this short historical overview, limited selection of textual references and a sketch of what a Peace Service could be. Our tradition says that "upon three things the world depends: on truth, on judgment (Justice) and peace."[11] These three things are the parallel of three others: Torah, Worship and doing deeds of loving kindness. A Peace Service alternative to military service would insure that young people worked for all of these six fundamental values. And perhaps, the survival of the world depends upon it.

Jews greet others with "*Shalom*" for hello, and end a meeting with "*Shalom*", go in peace. Perhaps this dream of a Peace Service is what we need between the beginning and end of our encounters.



CHAPTER ENDNOTES

1 Genesis 12:1
2 Genesis 14:1-24
3 These can be found in the Hanhagot, a kind of ethical list of pious behavior, such as Orchot Chayim.
4 Blumberg, Sherry H., Educating for Religious Experience. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1991. D.A.I. No. 9210472) pp. 9-19 and Chap. 7. Also, Goodman, Roberta Louis and Blumberg, Sherry H., Eds., Teaching About God and Spirituality, Denver, Colo., A.R.E. Press, 2002, at p. 52 (Blumberg's chapter "Paths to Jewish Spirituality") and p. 169 (Blumberg's chapter "Education for Self-Transcendence").
5 See, for example, the case of the Wayward Son who is to be brought before the court and put to death. The talmudic Rabbis made this rule almost impossible to implement, by ruling that in enforcing the mandate, the parents must be the same height, walk in exactly the same way, have warned the child, etc.
6 This statement directly relates to Sister Mary Evelyn Jegen's point about action.
7 Rav Kook's statement is the basis for how the study component in the peace service should be designed.
8 This prayer is a text from Mishna Peah 1:1.
9 Gates of Prayer for *Shabbat* and Weekdays, New York, CCAR Press, 1994, p. 13 (Reform Movement prayer book.)
10 The Traditional Prayer Book for Sabbath and Festivals, De Sola Pool, David, Ed., New York, Behrman House, 1960; p. 108
11 Pirke Avot.

## *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 Dr. Blumberg introduces her essay with a short historical review showing that "[Jewish] tradition. . . recognizes. . .the reality of war but that prays for and also works for peace." (p.2) If you are not Jewish, do you see both similarities and differences between the Jewish tradition as described by Blumberg your own understanding of your own tradition? Do you see ways in which your tradition might develop?

2 Compare the Jewish understanding of shalom in this essay with a current understanding of peace as commonly understood in your ordinary contacts.

3 What does "Seek peace and pursue it" (p.4) mean to you here and now? Describe someone you know who actively seeks peace and pursues it.

4 "One of the most dramatic arguments for a peace service alternative to military service is the practice of Shabbat itself." (p.5) Discuss Blumberg's development of this idea of Shabbat/Sabbath with someone. Do you see possibilities for action in this idea?

5 Using the author's "profile of a peace service" (p.6), can you design a personal peace service tailored to your own situation? Do you agree that "the peace service would need to be a two to three year commitment?



# Peace Service in the Jewish Tradition

Amy H. Shapiro

As I approached the task of responding to Dr. Blumberg's paper, *Jewish Peace Service*, I found myself wondering why she had asked me, in particular, to respond to her paper. As a secular Jew I was certainly not prepared to respond from a theological perspective. Was I to respond as a philosopher? A Holocaust educator? A teacher? A feminist? A college professor? I am a secular Jew who spends very little time with formal Jewish religious traditions. So I determined that I would read Dr, Blumberg's paper with the expectation that through the process of understanding what she had to say I would understand how I was to identify myself in the context of this conference.

In addition to my concern about what role I was to assume when responding to the paper, I also found myself a bit confused about what was meant by the concept of service. Were we to discuss the issue of how to create a Peace Service as in a "ceremony?" Or was service being used as in a practice, that is, "to serve, repair, or assist?" In asking these questions I began to reflect on what might be the connection between the two kinds of service and that too became a lens with which I examined Dr. Blumberg's essay. I hoped I would find an answer to my questions, and I did.

There are three main ideas in Dr. Blumberg's essay that together helped me form an answer to the questions I noted above. All of them reflect the paper's heart, which can be summarized by the passage Dr. Blumberg quotes from Rav Kook: "True *Shalom* is impossible without appreciating the value of pluralism intrinsic in *Shalom*." This concept of pluralism is a dominant theme in the paper. It is the theme that embraces all the other issues and is one that is truly worthy of our attention.

The concept of pluralism in relationship to the theme of true peace is an interesting and complex one. I do believe that Dr. Blumberg's reference to Rav Kook's statement is based on both a traditional notion of pluralism and one that is less specific than a definition that most sociologists or theologians use. The idea of pluralism in relationship to religion often means the acceptance of the idea that distinct religions representing widely different ideas and beliefs can coexist. Rav Kook's statement suggests that true peace can only be attained when adherents of different religious faiths appreciate the value of the coexistence of different religious faiths. The Interfaith Peace Symposium in the Abrahamic Traditions for which these essays were written is an example of religious pluralism, for with the exception of the idea that what unites all three religions is a shared starting point in Abraham, the three religions represented at the conference hold separate identities, beliefs, and values. At the same time, the representatives of the three faiths have come together to articulate how they <u>differently</u> articulate the meaning of peace service in some respects while they also share some perceptions and beliefs.

I also propose that one can look at pluralism less systematically and put forward a definition that might be more congenial to the purposes of this essay. My working definition of pluralism for the purposes of this essay, and based on Dr. Blumberg's essay is, "a gathering of multiple values and multiple perspectives among, and perhaps within, individuals."

I reiterate here one of the questions with which I began this response. What do we mean by "peace service?" Given that the phrase can be understood in two different ways, the following are two assumptions I want to make explicit before I turn to the main ideas of Dr. Blumberg's essay.



Assumption 1: Peace service, whatever it means, is significant only when it occurs in circumstances where peace is absent or potentially absent.

Assumption 2: Peace service, whatever it means, is insignificant if it includes only like-minded individuals, that is, those who share the same beliefs and/or ideologies.

Each of Dr. Blumberg's main ideas rely on these two assumptions and bring out the implications of peace service, whether an act or a ceremony, in the context of pluralism as I defined it. Dr. Blumberg first explores the issues of peace in the context of wars and what she perceives are the Talmudic requirements regarding the choice to wage war. Much of this discussion also considers Jews in the Diaspora. In her discussion of the role of war in Jewish tradition she suggests that Jewish tradition recognizes the reality of war, Jewish beliefs stress the necessity of offering peace, and wars were not to be fought to achieve peace. It seems to me that there are a number of interesting implications here especially in light of the two assumptions identified above. What happens when we consider what the Jewish Diaspora teaches us about peace and pluralism? How might we better understand the ideas about war that Dr. Blumberg puts forth?

In reflecting on the Jewish Diaspora, we ask about peace in a context where one is not "at home." This could be understood in the context of living in a circumstance that is non-inclusive or in an environment that is non-hospitable. Because peace can only be offered when it is needed then it is being offered when it is either absent or potentially so. If it is absent or potentially absent in an environment that is non-inclusive or non-hospitable there will be more than likely a pluralism of different voices, values, and perspectives, so it may be difficult to know what peace might mean. If one is to offer peace, this means that one will need to consider the potentially different experiences of the other, that is, the definition of peace or the terms under which it prevails may differ among peoples. If this is the case, then to determine what peace is one must begin with an offer in the context of a pluralistic society.

Jewish tradition recognizes the reality of war. What is it that makes war a reality? What is it that feeds the conditions of war? Though one can touch on countless different possibilities, one might say that a constant is either a real or perceived set of differences among people, whether they are the dominant or the marginal group, and a lack of acceptance of pluralism. What is interesting is how pluralism plays out in each aspect of this first idea in Dr. Blumberg's paper. If Jewish tradition recognizes the reality of war and part of the reality of war is the condition of perceived difference on account of a pluralistic society, then pluralism is one of the circumstances about which one must be realistic. To determine the conditions of peace one must take into consideration the implications of the experiences of the other.

One of the purposes of stressing the theme of pluralism in the Diaspora is to emphasize the context of peace service in light of how one group of individuals (in this case, Jews) finds themselves attempting to survive physically and culturally in contexts where they are not "at home." Not being "at home" may have its advantages in that it is a reminder that the worlds we live in are pluralistic and peace service must be engaged with this knowledge as its foundation.

The second aspect related to this idea of what the Diaspora teaches us about pluralism is the notion that Jewish beliefs stress the necessity of offering peace. To engage in war without offering peace is an indulgence that cannot be morally defended according to Dr.Blumberg's reading of the texts. She stresses that wars were not to be fought to achieve peace. To fight war for the sole purpose of attaining peace would suggest that peace is achieved by conquering another. In light of Rav Kook's notion of pluralism I take this to imply that peace would be achieved by means of removing the pluralism that Rav Kook stresses and, ultimately, this is no peace at all.

I take it that Dr. Blumberg's statement that war is a reality is meant to emphasize the notion of a group's right to protect and defend. But whether Jews were in a position to wage war against a mighty enemy or an impoverished foe, the role of pluralism implies some interesting notions about peace.



Offering peace is an intriguing notion. In order to offer it one must not assume one knows what it is before one meets it. In this regard, those who participate in it must define peace. This brings to mind an essay by the philosopher Maria Lugones (1990), *Playfulness, "World"-Traveling, and Loving Perception*, in which she describes the position of an outsider/traveler, someone who is seen differently depending upon the 'worlds' one is in. She uses this notion of traveling to construct a game where there are no rules and there is no agonistic play. The idea is that the significance of the game is completely determined by the 'play' that is created by the participants in the game, and those participants are considered equal players. Without rules, the game leads to the imagining of possibilities beyond that of conquering and controlling. From the perspective of the present essay, the game leads to peace through pluralism, i.e., the imagining of possibilities, the non-competitive action of soliciting peace by imagining the experience/the existence of the other.

The second idea that I wish to emphasize in Dr. Blumberg's essay is that peace in Judaism is "a state of wholeness and completeness in context." This idea stresses the internal dimension of peace. But its emphasis on wholeness and completeness also implies an internal pluralism, one where we contend with our own conflicts, for instance, the question of which role I am to assume in responding to Dr. Blumberg's paper and what it suggests about my identity. "In context" can suggest many things. But, perhaps more importantly, this notion of peace provides another dimension to the first idea Dr. Blumberg stressed in her paper. That idea stressed the external context for peace service while this one reflects on the internal dimensions of peace. She states, "Peace or *Shalom* goes far beyond just a lack of fighting or absence of war." One way to understand this statement is to reflect on the internal peace that the individual may strive for, though it is important to note that in Judaism the individual is never really separate from the community. This internal peace seems to be one we strive for in the various contexts in which we live. Dr. Blumberg discusses this form of peace in the context of the application of the Law in response to a changing world. To achieve "wholeness and completeness" in response to a world that presents conflict, and challenges our understanding, may be unsettling to say the least. This

notion of a changing world may also include the encounters we have with the misery around us, the presence of horrors that most challenge a concept of peace as "the state of wholeness and completeness in context."

Recalling the first assumption I noted above, one might say that we live in a world where peace either is absent or is potentially absent all the time. In her essay, *God Suspends the Earth over a Void*, (Rittner and Roth, 1993) Deborah Lipstadt picks up this notion when she suggests that there are limits to what we can control, and also, as humans, we seem to be pulled in two directions at the same time. On the one hand, we have a desire to be self-empowered. On the other, we have to contend with the idea that "the earth is suspended over a void." Perhaps another way to understand the notion that "the earth is suspended over a void" could be to recognize that the conditions of our lives imply a world where there is either an absence or a potential absence of peace. Lipstadt suggests that "knowledge of the void reminds us that our life is a gift; it is precious but it is also tenuous and transitory" (p. 354). While we have a desire to be self-empowered, we also encounter this "void" or absence of peace; we are faced with choices about how to live our lives. To live with the knowledge that "the earth is suspended over a void" gives direction to our lives and challenges us to think about how we live life. Peace service in the face of such knowledge takes on a particular look.

Dr. Blumberg emphasizes *Shabbat* as a way to teach peace in the home, community, and with nature. It is through *Shabbat* that we access the wholeness. The emphasis here is on wholeness rather than oneness. In this regard the notion of completeness suggests a compilation or a pluralism that takes us back to the passage Dr. Blumberg quoted from Rav Kook: "True *Shalom* is impossible without appreciating the value of pluralism intrinsic in *Shalom*." Through study, through interpretation of text, through examination of the world and the individuals and communities within it, we can engage in peace service. Lipstadt says "How we control the things that are in our hands, how we live our lives, how we relate to one another, the good deeds we do, how we practise repentance, prayer, and charity in their broadest manifestation help determine how we face that which is out of our control" (p 353).



This brings us to the third idea I wish to stress in Dr. Blumberg's paper—the need to keep peace in mind. In this section of her paper, Dr. Blumberg points to Rabbi Nachman who suggests that peace is one of the names of God. This is also where she quotes the passage from Rav Kook. Dr. Blumberg states, "We must always keep the need for peace in mind and recognize that its importance is not overshadowed by some higher value." Does this suggest that peace is a higher value? I would suggest that the idea of "wholeness and completeness in context" (the second idea) is ultimately associated with God. So if true peace is impossible without appreciating the value of pluralism intrinsic within it, then this notion of pluralism is necessarily associated with this higher value of peace. Here pluralism is not only pluralism of beliefs but also a pluralism of spiritual practices. Dr. Blumberg suggests that prayer, study, reflection, repentance, deeds of loving-kindness are all part of peace service. She emphasizes deeds of loving-kindness as a way for the individual to find out what is most meaningful to him or her. I suggest that this emphasis comes about because pluralism necessitates ways in which we can contribute as individuals to the definitions and perceptions of the group as we have done in this symposium. We also need opportunities to encounter the other. Deeds of loving-kindness are genuine only when one understands what is needed by those for whom such deeds are performed.

A peace service where everyone is in agreement and there is no recognition of the absence or potential absence of peace makes peace incidental. Part of the reason that Jews say "*Shalom*" or "peace" as greeting, as do many other peoples, is the recognition of what needs to happen between people and between peoples. I contend that Dr. Blumberg's paper implies that peace is premised on the idea that pluralism is both the greatest challenge to peace and that pluralism must be embedded in peace service for true peace service actually to happen.

In this regard, peace service is both a ceremony and a practice. Perhaps both need to be invoked in order truly to practise peace service. I mean that ceremony allows us to reflect on peace, to engage with others in creating peace as a focus, and will have real meaning only when it is premised on a pluralism of ideas. The practice allows for what we call in Judaism *tikkun olam*, that is, repair of the world. The notion of *tikkun olam* is premised on

the idea that "God suspends the earth over a void," in that it recognizes that peace service or "repair" is a practice, something ongoing that results as a response to living in a complex, pluralistic world. Facing the fact that peace is always either absent or potentially absent and understanding that there are layers of complexity and pluralism in ourselves and our communities results in a call to peace service, represented in Dr. Blumberg's notion of Jewish peace service. Peace service is insignificant if it includes only like-minded individuals and if it is employed as if peace has already been attained.

### Conclusion

The three ideas that I found most compelling in Dr. Blumberg's essay all revolve around our understanding that peace service is founded on appreciation of pluralism. Jews in the Diaspora were/are confronted with the differences of those around them and among them. Offering peace must then involve imagining the other. To experience a "wholeness and completeness in context" is a challenge in the context of the world and the horrors contained within it. Keeping peace in mind as a higher value is a way for us to engage actively in peace service and to respond to the absence or potential absence of peace. Dr. Blumberg has provided us with a form of Jewish peace service that can be accessed by all and so entails the kind of service that is appreciative of pluralism.

Peace as a ceremony calls us to the service that we might engage once we have allowed ourselves to encounter the other and make peace an offering. Dr. Blumberg has shown me how I, though not an observant Jew, can actively engage in a Jewish peace service by embracing the process she suggests. Her invitation to me to respond to her paper was in itself a form of peace service and allowed me to see myself reflected in her offering. I am deeply grateful she has given me this opportunity.



## *Suggestions for Further Reading*

D. Lipstadt, *Facing the Void*, in Rittner and Roth, Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust, Paragon House, 1993.

M. Lugones, Playfulness, *"World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception*, in G.Anzaldua, ed., Making Face, Making Soul, Aunt Lute Books, 1990.

## *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 This essay explores pluralism as essential to peace service. What insights do you derive from this emphasis? What application to actual or potential peace service?

2 Do you agree with the author's assumptions that "peace service . . . is significant only when it occurs in circumstances where peace is absent or potentially absent"? (p.2) Give reasons for your position.

3 What possibilities do you see in the essay's treatment of peace in the context of Maria Lugones' work on playfulness, traveling, and loving perception? (p.5)

4 Dr. Shapiro sees an important relationship between service as ceremony, whether religious or secular, and service as constructive work for peace. Do you see this insight as significant after reading this essay?

# Peace Service in the Christian Tradition

Michael Duffey

## Introduction

We are convened to discuss ideas about peace service within our Abrahamic religious traditions. What are peace services and how can they be promoted? And behind these questions are the foundational questions of the visions of peace and nonviolence in our faith traditions. How can we collaborate more effectively in promoting peace and nonviolence, to the achievement of cultures of peace? Promoting peace, together, through peace services is new territory. But we take heart by A.J. Muste's reminder that there is no well-traveled road to peace; peace is found step by step, here and now. Peace is the way!

## Christian faith, nonviolence and peace

Christians pray for peace often. In liturgy we offer one another the "peace of Christ" and ask him for peace. We look to him for a peace the world cannot give, but a divinely willed and given peace in the world. If Jesus is the bringer of peace, it is peace by way of a sword of controversy and willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the reign of God. Peace is found in care for the poor, justice for the oppressed, repentance of our own idolatry; trust in God rather than in some illusion of security.

In their 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops spoke of peace as the fruit of a "right relationship" with God and with all of God's children.[1] The Jewish and Christian story of creation is seamlessly woven to a story of restoration of human beings who became alienated from God and were wandering hopelessly throughout the world. God made a covenant with those people, pledging loving kindness and enjoining fidelity and compassion for the neighbor. The history of the Israelites' consciousness of God is in part a movement from the law of retaliation to an ethic of turning the other cheek. The image of God as a warrior in the Israelites' earlier imagination was gradually replaced with God who is merciful, loving, kind, and compassionate. The love commandments are found in both Testaments: love of God and love of neighbor by means of forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and restitution. Jesus announces the reign of God and offers his own life as an example of how it is to be made real. The New Testament proclaims a messiah with the disarming commands to love one's enemy and to pray for one's persecutors. Jesus' example of nonretaliation challenges the presumption that violence is necessary to establish justice and preserve peace. Heinrich Spaemann writes: "Nonviolence, just as much as poverty belongs to the mystery of the Redeemer and redemption."[2] Jesus' promise of peace is often interpreted eschatologically; that is, peace will be a future state of affairs associated with His Second Coming, final judgment and the fullness of the reign of God. But if Jesus' references to peace are correlated with the Gospel stories about him and with the words of St. Paul, we can see a this-worldly call for peace that includes repentance for harm done to others, reparations offered, self-sacrifice for others, and forgiveness.

Jesus' world was very limited, comprising Galilee and Jerusalem. He did not resist or collaborate with political authorities, but gave qualified acceptance to them: "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's." But Jesus was attuned to the political issues of first century Palestine. His arrest, accusation before the Sanhedrin, presentation before Pilate, followed by his passion and death all are described in very political ways. Jesus did not "take up the sword" to defend himself. Nor did he permit his followers to defend him with the sword. *His way* involved nonresistance to evil. Jesus' teaching, activities, his arrest and his execution reveal ultimately divine



power at work in what looked to be powerlessness. Jesus' logic turns the world's wisdom upside down. The New Testament connects the "suffering servant" of Yahweh described by Isaiah with Jesus' overcoming of sin and death.

## The Early Church

St. Paul made many converts among the Gentiles, some of whom were Roman citizens. The earliest Christian communities did not serve as soldiers of the Roman Empire. Some early Christians were martyred for refusing to serve in the Roman army. But that gradually changed as the political environment changed from hostility to acceptance of Christians. After Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity and St. Augustine offered theological justification for defending the Empire, Christians were in the mainstream and in the military.

Historically, Christianity became associated with the empire, that is, with imperialism. What became of Jesus' refusal of violence? It was never lost but receded to the status of an unrealizable ideal, a counsel of perfection that only some Christians could ever hope to observe. Categories of Christians did reject violence: mostly members of monastic orders and the later mendicant orders founded by St. Francis and St. Dominic.

## The Just War tradition

The Just War tradition arose and developed as a means for the Christian churches to judge the morality of war making. Christian moralists and pastors appealed to the just war criteria to limit the outbreak and destructive consequences of war. The Just War ethic held that defending the innocent from unjust attack was within the meaning of love of neighbor, although it should be remembered that such defense did not originally extend to defending oneself against unjust attack. In response to the feudal wars bringing destruction and suffering into medieval Europe, the Church did develop church laws designed to discourage war making and limit its destructiveness. These restrictions were known as the "truce of God" and the "peace of God." But the cry for "holy war" periodically won the hearts and

minds of Christians. At times it was war on heretics. For several hundred years it was war against Islam.

## The Radical Reformation

After the Reformation religious wars between the subjects of Catholic and Protestant monarchs erupted. But some of the Protestant Reformers, called the "Radical Reformers" sought to recover the ethic of the early church and insisted that Christians could not engage in war but must live as nonviolent witnesses to Jesus. This 16th century branch of Protestantism, called the Radical Reformation because it sought a return to the ethos of the earliest witnesses of Jesus flowered into the great Peace Churches: Mennonites, Quakers, Brethren, Amish, remain influential within the Christian world today. Until well into the 20th century religious sociologists characterized these churches as "sectarian," meaning withdrawn from politics and not influencing the wider society. In other words, their pacifism was regarded as principled but not practical. But that evaluation has been critiqued. Indeed, 20th century Peace Churches played an important role in offering alternatives to violence and assisting the victims of the awful conflicts of that century. They have constituted a small but courageous and effective peace service in many places of conflict.

## 20th Century Christians and peacemaking

### The Mainline Churches

The leadership of many Christian churches has grown more critical of militarism and the effect of war on civilians and on the poor. Catholic just war analysis has increasingly led to the conclusion that methods of modern warfare violate the principle of proportionality. During the nuclear arms race, the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council expressed their "unequivocal condemnation" of the use of weapons of mass destruction "aimed indiscriminately at cities." The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church reflects this preferential option for nonviolence.



In 1983 the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference condemned the use of nuclear weapons and gave only provisional acceptance to deterrence strategies.

The Japanese, German, Belgian, Dutch, and Irish national conferences of Catholic bishops followed suit. The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches also issued statements critical of modern war making and appreciative of nonviolent stances by Christians. All mainline Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church have spoken out against the immorality of the arms race and acknowledged the primacy of the nonviolent witness of Jesus. When the first Gulf War was on the horizon many church governing bodies exhorted the avoidance of military force to correct injustices, given the potency of modern firepower. The Churches have also urged nations to grant citizens the legal right of conscientious objection, that is, the right to refuse to kill.

## Peace Organizations

Two international Christian organizations committed to peace and reconciliation between nations arose in the 20th century. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) was founded in 1915 and continues to actively assist in nonviolent conflict resolution around the world. Pax Christi was founded after WWII by French Catholics to foster reconciliation between France and Germany. It now has 30 national chapters. Its U.S. chapters include more than two dozen bishops. Pax Christi seeks to engage more Catholics in active peacemaking. Other groups continue to offer active peace witness. Most widely known is the Catholic Worker Movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin 70 years ago. In response to the nuclear buildup two activist communities arose. Ploughshares and the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action engage in direct actions of civil disobedience to protest nuclear weapons. All these organizations have played a prophetic role in the wider Christian communities as well as educating and training many Church members.

## Nonviolent Freedom struggles

In the midst of popular struggles for freedom from communism and dictatorship, the churches supported the struggle and pleaded for nonviolent means of struggle for more just societies. With the assistance of the churches nonviolent revolutions succeeded in Poland, East Germany, the Soviet Union,

and the Philippines. The World Council of Churches helped to promote nonviolence among the churches in South Africa in their struggle against apartheid.

Consider for a moment the very successful methods of the nonviolent U.S. civil rights struggles in the 1950s and 1960s. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference which was founded by Martin Luther King, Jr. and other southern ministers led the struggle for racial equality from the churches. They met in churches to energize and organize church members and students to march in Montgomery, Birmingham, Albany, Nashville, Memphis, and elsewhere. They trained people in the tactics and self-discipline of nonviolence. They were assisted by the FOR in training rank and file members of their congregations in the skills of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. These nonviolent armies changed race relations and attitudes in the U.S. These were some types of peace service seen in the last fifty years.

## Christian theologians

Appreciation for the biblical roots of nonviolence has been growing among Catholic and Mainline Protestant theologians in the second half of the 20th century until at this juncture all are moving in the direction of being peace churches. Let me mention some theologians in the vanguard of this movement. In the Catholic tradition we find Bernard Häring, a prominent German Catholic moral theologian, who published a book entitled *The Healing Power of Peace and Nonviolence* (1986) which places peacemaking at the center of the Christian vocation. Fr. Häring's study offers a rich exploration of biblical scholarship and creative methods for peacemaking. New Testament scholar Rudolf Schnackenburg correlates Jesus' announcement of the reign of God with an urgent appeal to work for peace and healing. Other scripture scholars note the themes of peacemaking at the heart of the response to God and to Jesus. Lisa Cahill concludes her study of the Christian tradition's teaching on war and peace by noting that pacifism is "an outgrowth of discipleship" that is concerned with "the quality of a communal life grounded in Christ and the reign of God, a life that turns out to make violence incomprehensible."[3]



John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite scholar who presented the nonviolent ethos of the early Church in his very influential book *The Politics of Jesus* (1971) has influenced many other Christian theologians. Walter Wink has made a strong case for the redemptive power of nonviolence. He demonstrates that Jesus provided a "third way" between violence and withdrawal, the assertion of the truth of human dignity. Wink's books have impacted Christian peace movements from South Africa to the Philippines.[4]

## Christian peace services in the 21st Century

The Catholic Worker movement is remembered for its programs aimed at "clarification of thought." The clarification we need is less regarding whether the just war position or pacifism should be followed, but over how we should respond to terrorism, religious and cultural alienation, human rights violations, economic disparities between the "haves and have nots," and what Pope John Paul referred to as the "culture of death." Violence is the school in which many have been formed. Nonviolence is the alternative school that Christian churches in cooperation with others must establish. In the late 1980s the U.S. Catholic bishops called on the Catholic Church "to become a peacemaking church, to 'form a people capable of being true artisans of peace' in the words of Pope John Paul II."[5] The Catholic bishops describe the marks of the peacemaking church: continuous prayer for peace, education of its members in the Gospel of peace, and pastoral support of church members "to become bearers of peace in their own situations."[6]

The bishops recognized the need for ongoing advocacy and education in nonviolence if constructive, nonviolent responses to crises are to be possible. How can all the churches be, in fact, "peace churches"? How might churches more effectively send forth their members to proclaim the Gospel of Peace? How can we institutionalize peace service in Christian communities to prevent conflicts, to intervene in conflicts, and work to remove unjust conditions that lead to violence?

Official church pronouncements about justice and peace must produce a deeper and broader response from local congregations than they typically do. The spirituality of peacemaking and nonviolence requires constant nurture. Peace education and committed service will not flourish in the garden of an occasional sermon and educational program.

## A lesson from the past

The witness of a community of Protestant Christians in southern France 60 years ago has lessons to teach. Pastor Andre Trocme took up the pastorate of the Huguenot parish in Le Chambon in 1934. As Nazi aggression expanded in the late 1930s, Pastor Trocme preached nonviolent action to resist Nazi ideology. To that end the church of Le Chambon began an international school that stressed internationalism, human rights, and nonviolence. When Germany defeated France in 1940 the school became a haven for Jews fleeing Poland, Germany, and Paris and Le Chambon became a center of nonviolent resistance to the Nazis, a well organized community assisting Jews, systematically violating every anti-Semitic law of the pro-Nazi Vichy regime in the so-called "Free Zone." With efficiency and great discipline the citizens of Le Chambon put into practice the command to love their neighbor as themselves and did so without ever killing a German. 5,000 Jews were rescued in the process. Very few other French communities were able to mount effective resistance to the German occupation. Why were they so successful? The Church of Le Chambon schooled its members over several years in nonviolent resistance. They developed a network of communication and intelligence to support their dangerous work of protecting the hundreds of Jews who came to Le Chambon as their last refuge. After the liberation of France in 1945 assistant pastor Edward Theis was asked if he thought Russia might have used nonviolence to successfully defend itself from Nazism. "No,' he replied, "they had to use violence then …nonviolence involves preparation and organization, methods patiently and unswervingly employed—the Russians knew nothing of this. Nonviolence must have deep roots and strong branches before it can bear the fruit it bore in Le Chambon."[7] That lesson is also illustrated elsewhere. Consider the role of the contribution of Eastern European churches in the nonviolent revolutions of the 1980s. The Catholic Church in Poland and the Lutheran Church of East Germany worked for many years laying the foundation for the largely nonviolent overthrow of communism. In East Germany there was an annual 10 days for peace in which the churches sponsored dialogues on how to promote a more just society and offered workshops on peacemaking. It concluded with a prayerful national day of reconciliation/repentance.

## Peace Services

Global Peace Services envisions "peace service professionals full-time and part-time, serving at home and worldwide according to need and training" who are supported by thousands of people in their congregations. Peace service as an alternative to military service is an intriguing idea. But it can be a faith-based initiative that permits citizens to contribute creatively to a more just and peaceful world. If its effectiveness in reducing conflict can be demonstrated, it can win public support.

In "Displacing War by Peace Service" Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND describes peace as the quality of relationships, committed to the welfare of others, to healing, to nonviolent alternatives. Peace service is a viable alternative to war service to provide for defense and security, for the common good; peace service requires training in specific skills as well as a continuous rhythm of action and reflection. We can point to such peace services already at work.

Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS) based in Coventry, England, "works through teams of Christians living and praying together and undertaking practical projects, with all sides from the conflict, to serve their needs, foster positive interaction and reduce enmity." CHIPS encourages positive interaction between opposing sides through mutually beneficial practical projects, works to reduce enmity by helping to alleviate the suffering and poverty caused by conflict, and shares "the love of Christ who has reconciled man to God and man to man."

EIRENE International Christian Service for Peace, founded in Germany in 1957 by Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation and supported also by churches in Switzerland and Holland,

currently involves about 100 volunteers in development and conflict resolution projects. It is approved as an international alternative to required domestic civil service or to the obligatory military service in Germany.

Christian Peacemaker Teams were founded in 1986 in Canada and the U.S. and are supported by the Mennonite, Brethren, Quaker, and Methodist churches. Their teams have been invited to work in Hebron, Haiti, and Columbia, and on U.S. Native American reservations.

Caritas International is a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations working with the poor and oppressed, in over 200 countries and territories. For the past five years it has been developing a peace and reconciliation program that trains volunteers in peace building.

Catholic Peacebuilding Network is a new initiative undertaken by the U.S. Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Service, Pax Christi, and several Catholic colleges and universities.

Nonviolent Peaceforce conducts nonviolent training and places volunteers to assist in peacebuilding and reconciliation. It is not church based but draws heavily on religious communities from around the world.

Many regional Christian churches sponsor volunteers to work with the poor, some in development, some on evangelical work. But there are few peace service programs that train peacebuilders in language, culture, history, and skills of mediation and other methods of dispute resolution. The challenge to recruit and support peace servants belongs to the churches. To do so successfully churches must see peace at the core of their calling. These sorts of initiatives will always be politically tinged, but should not be painted in any political hue.

A recent writer called for peace practices that are "church-wide and parish-deep." To support individual peace makers we need church based institutions



that will help us be "hands on" builders of a more peaceful world.[8] What can we imagine in terms of diocesan and parish level peace service participation? A natural institutional setting within the Catholic Church for establishing and expanding peace services are the lay volunteer apostolates of religious orders. Within the framework of existing programs for formation of Secular Franciscans and the Dominican Laity and other religious lay groups such as Maryknoll Missioners and the International Jesuit Volunteer Corps, volunteers could be taught peace building skills.[9] These peace building groups would be supported spiritually and materially by the Bishops Conferences, Religious Orders, and local parishes with which volunteers or their families are affiliated. Volunteer training might take place on Catholic college and university campuses, just as military training now does.[10]

## Conclusion

I have noted Jesus' gift of peace and its impact on the early period of Christianity. I have noted that it became a minority witness, but that nonviolence is periodically reaffirmed within the tradition. We have seen the witness of 20th century Christian peace groups and the growing support for nonviolence among churches and theologians. We have pointed to the effectiveness of nonviolence and raised the question of how it can become part of the fabric of Christian communities. Examples of peace services have been noted, with the recognition that they are a beginning.

In Christian liturgy we ponder scripture and participate in Jesus' great act of self-giving. Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy, a U.S. Orthodox priest suggests this addition to the Eucharistic prayer recalling Jesus' sacrifice: "On the night before Jesus *rejected violence* and died, he broke bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my Body.'" When he said afterwards, "Do this in memory of me" what did Jesus mean? Was it not to eat this meal in his memory, to imitate his sacrifice, and to announce his nonviolent peace? Don't the Christian virtues all presume nonviolence? Can we be people of faith and also live by violence? Of hope and also of violence? Of love and patience and humility and also of violence?

The epistle to the Ephesians uses the metaphor of battle preparation—common in religious and philosophical writing of the day--to prescribe the response of Jesus' disciples to evil and injustice. It offers us this vision:

> *"Find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power; put on the whole armor which God provide to resist the devices of the devil; our fight is not against blood and flesh but is against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens; fasten on the belt of truth, for coat of mail put on integrity, let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing[11]; and with all these take up the great shield of faith, take salvation for helmet, for sword take that which the spirit gives you—the words which come from God; pray on every occasion ...keep watch and persevere, always interceding for all God's people; and pray for me that I may be granted the right words...to freely make know his hidden purpose."[12] (Ephesians 6:10-19)*

Peace-building must have an expansive dynamic, always desiring to be more ecumenical and more interreligious. For peace is a vision of all the children of Abraham.



CHAPTER ENDNOTES

1 The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (1983).
2 Geist und Leben 57 (1984), 84.
3 Lisa Sowle Cahill, Love Your Enemies, 1994, 229.
4 Walter Wink summarizes his earlier works in The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium, 1998.
5 Building Peace, USCC, 1988, par 12.
6 Building Peace, par 13-14.
7 Philip Hallie, Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed, 34-35.
8 Gerald Schlabach, "Just Policing, Not War," America (July 7-14, 2003, 189:1), 19-21.
9 For a description of the Dominican Laity see www.op.org/international/english/Laity/index.htm. The Secular Franciscans are described in www.nafra-sfo.org. An Anglican-Episcopalian "Third Order of the Society of St. Francis" also exists; see www.tssf.org.For Maryknoll Lay Missioners see www.maryknoll.org and for the Jesuits see www.jesuitvolunteercorps.org.
10 ROTC units on Catholic college and university campuses has been perennially controversial but for a variety of reasons is not likely to be discouraged at the institutional level of the church or the academy.
11 See Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful the feet of the messenger who preaches the Gospel of peace."
12 The hidden purpose is the mysterion, the gospel of peace and salvation, for which Paul says he is "an ambassador--in chains." See Margaret Y. MacDonald Colossians and Ephesians, (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2000)

### *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 Michael Duffey writes, "If Jesus is the bringer of peace, it is peace by way of a sword of controversy and willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the reign of God." (p.1) Do you agree? If so, what are some examples? Some implications for action today?

2 "Peace is found in care for the poor, justice for the oppressed, repentance of our own idolatry; trust in God rather than in some illusion of security." (p.1) What do you understand as "repentance of our own idolatry"?

3 "The history of the Israelites' consciousness of God is in part a movement from the law of retaliation to an ethic of turning th other cheek." (p.2) Discuss.

4 See the websites of the Fellowship of Reconciliation www.forusa.com, Pax Christi www.paxchristi.org, and The Catholic Worker www.catholicworker.org, and discuss your findings with others who may not know of these movements.

5 Learn more abut the organized peace services described on pp. 10-12. What are their similarities? Their differences?

6 Duffey concludes that "peace-building must have an expansive dynamic, always desiring to be more ecumenical and more interreligious."(p.14) What ways do you see for promoting ecumenical and interreligious peace-building? What avenues for peace education do you see already in place? What new avenues need to be constructed?



# Peace Service in the Christian Tradition

Carol Frances Jegen, BVM

Michael Duffey has blessed us with a most helpful account of Peace Service in the Christian Tradition. He reminded me often of other peace efforts in the twentieth century, including the establishment of the National Peace Studies Association in relation to the many initiatives in service learning that have become an integral part of undergraduate programs in many colleges and universities. In this context I enjoyed working with several members of the historic peace churches: Mennonites, Society of Friends, and Church of the Brethren, who have been and continue to be crucial in the development of peace service.

Professor Duffey effectively highlights Jesus' life and teaching n the opening section of his essay, particularly in two summary statements: "Jesus' example of non-retaliation challenges the presumption that violence is necessary to establish justice and preserve peace" and "Jesus' teaching, activities, his arrest and his execution reveal ultimately divine power at work in what looked to be powerlessness. Jesus' logic turns the world's wisdom upside down."

The concluding sentence of the section on Jesus refers to the relation of Jesus' overcoming sin and death to Isaiah's suffering servant. It can be very helpful for us to ponder prayerfully the nonviolent peacemaking imagery in those biblical texts which are proclaimed each year in the eucharistic liturgies of Holy Week in many Christian churches. In considering these scriptures it is important to remember that the servant is Yahweh's special prophet, speaking and witnessing to God's compassionate, life-giving love. It is also helpful to recall that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council identifies the Church as a servant church with the introductory words, "light of all nations" (Is. 42:6; 49:6) applied to Christ and the Church.

The first song (Is.42:1-7) proclaims God's gifting this chosen servant with God's own spirit to bring justice and light to the nations in nonviolent, healing ways. "A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench." (Is. 42:3).

The second song proclaims that the prophet-servant's life and words involve the transformation of military weapons. As a sharp-edged sword, this servant's words will cut through the confusion of disagreements and misunderstanding; as a polished arrow, this servant's words will get right to the heart of the divisive problem. All this healing will take place because the prophet-servant has learned to rest prayerfully in the heart of God (Is.49:1-6).

The third song proclaims the wondrous ways God speaks to this prophet, "morning after morning", enabling this servant to speak to the weary and even endure resistance and suffering (Is. 50: 4-7). In the fourth and final song (Is. 52:13-53:12) we are invited to "see", to contemplate the almost unbelievably cruel sufferings of resistance and rejection that the prophet-servant suffers, and through which come new life and peace.

As we consider Jesus' Jewish heritage, it is important to be aware of the gradual transformation of "warrior god" imagery. I remember one of my



Rabbi friends explaining how significant it was that the Hebrew Scriptures include the Song of Songs. In the deliberations concerning the selection of writings that must be included in their Bible, several Rabbis insisted on the Song of Songs because of the extraordinary and delightful ways this book highlights God as a passionate loving God.

Dr. Duffey's very helpful summary of Christians at war and peace reminds us of the drastic change that took place when Christians became part of the Roman Empire, and began to fight in that empire's wars. In that historical context, criteria for justifying participation in war, commonly known as "the just war theory" were developed. The question raised is "What became of Jesus' refusal of violence?" Today's scholarly research indicates that through the centuries of Christian involvement in wars, the just war criteria have never been applied completely. Today's killing power seems to make the just war criteria impossible to carry out, and therefore impractical, or meaningless.

Some Christian resistance to violence intrinsic to war has always continued. There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis of Assisi that needs to be highlighted in our own day. Francis was totally opposed to war-making and suffered greatly over the Crusades. He decided to go unarmed to the Sultan in order to mitigate the violence in some way. At first, the Sultan was completely puzzled that this unarmed, strange-looking little man was really a Christian. But as a result of that visit, the followers of Francis were given jurisdiction of the most special sites in the Holy Land, a jurisdiction that remains to this very day.

The development of nonviolence in many Christian churches witnesses to the continual urgings of the Holy Spirit. The peace teachings of the Second Vatican Council are crucial to this development within the Roman Catholic Church. It is helpful to recall that Pope John XXIII claimed that his initiative in calling for an ecumenical council was prompted by a sudden inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In the initial planning of the council, three major documents were proposed: Constitutions on Scripture, on Liturgy, and on the Church. After the Council began, bishops from the "third world," where two-thirds of

the world's people live, proposed a fourth major document, one addressing the response of the Church to the critical human needs of our times. This document is often referred to as *The Church in the Modern World*. How prophetic is its opening statement: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

When Michael Duffey highlighted Bernard Haring as an outstanding theologian of peacemaking, a very memorable experience came to mind. Between the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, Father Haring and other experts found ways to visit the United States to share their experiences as theologians at the Council. Several times Father Haring visited Mundelein College where I was teaching. During one visit I asked him if he would be returning to Chicago the following year. His immediate answer was, "If the doctor lets me come, Sister. Every one of us who struggled for Vatican II is a sick man today."

Father Haring's response made a great impression on me. He reminded me that the Beatitude, "Blessed are peacemakers" is followed in the Gospel by the prediction of struggle, of suffering, even of persecution. Today as we face the tremendous challenges of becoming a peacemaking church, a peacemaking people, we will experience struggle and suffering in union with Jesus, our suffering servant.

This fourth major Council document includes an entire chapter entitled, "The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations." It is significant that Dorothy Day, co-founder of The Catholic Worker movement, and Eileen Egan, later to become co-founder of Pax Christi USA, both well-known peace activists committed to active nonviolence, were present in Rome, along with other women, praying and fasting during the debate on the peace issues. They were praying for the inclusion of a strong statement on the urgency of peacemaking especially in light of nuclear weapons that



had been used twice on August 6 and 9, 1945. Some of the women managed to talk to bishops at coffee breaks during the council sessions. Eileen Egan prepared and distributed leaflets highlighting key issues for deliberation and discussion.

Besides The Catholic Worker and Pax Christi, other twentieth century peace organizations Michael Duffey notes include Ploughshares and Ground Zero. I am reminded of three others, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom organized by Jane Addams and other women after World War I, and the United Farm Workers, organized by Cesar Chavez, primarily for migrant farm workers, some of the poorest of our poor. In the earlier days of the United Farm Workers' nonviolent struggle I was privileged to be jailed in California's Fresno County prison farm with many farm workers and supporters for almost two weeks. Dorothy Day was in the next barracks. Paul Elie, in his book, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, relates the great difficulties Dorothy Day experienced when some members of the Catholic Worker could not accept her commitment to nonviolence. Cesar Chavez suffered also when he discovered some of the volunteers in The United Farm Workers were not committed to nonviolence. I remember a very difficult time when Cesar Chavez told some of his volunteers that if they refused the United Farm Workers' way of nonviolence, it would be better if they discontinued their work with the movement.

Recalling these experiences of Dorothy Day and Cesar Chavez reminded me of an experience of my own in listening to a lecture by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, first president of Pax Christi USA. Speaking to religious educators he stated quite emphatically that adopting a nonviolent way of living demands a conversion experience. At the time, I did not take his words too seriously. Now, some thirty years later, I realize how wise and realistic he was about the challenge of nonviolence in our culture.

In 1998, on behalf of Pax Christi International, Eileen Egan and Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND developed a statement on conscientious objection that

was presented at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. They designated the right to conscientious objection as *the right to refuse to kill* in an effort to highlight precisely the action which conscientious objectors refuse to perform.

It is important to highlight nonviolent freedom struggles, as an expression of peacemaking, especially the civil rights movement prophetically led by Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2004, at a Call to Action Meeting in Milwaukee, James Lawson, who had worked with Dr. King, spoke these hope-filled words: "Unprecedented in human history, in the year 2003… millions of people in 150 countries around the world took to the streets and cried, NO TO WAR. Voices rang with the pathos of a profound human awareness that life means more than hatred or violence… This march of millions is a phenomenon unmatched in either ancient or modern history."[1]

The final section of Dr. Duffey's comprehensive essay focusing on peace services is especially challenging. He reminds us of peace service organizations in Europe as well as in Canada and in the United States. Actual peace service programs, so direly needed in our times, are in early stages of development. These very small beginnings hold great promise but their development will need the sustaining strength that comes only through a maturing prayerfulness. Father Emmanuel McCarthy, a priest who has developed educational programs on nonviolence, suggests the following as prayer to be used by many Christians in their Sunday liturgy: "On the night before Jesus rejected violence and died, he broke bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, "'this is my body.'" We can only surmise the effect such prayer could play in contributing to a culture of peace that would support widespread peace service.



## CHAPTER ENDNOTES

1 "Justice and Nonviolence in the Global Community", Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr., Call to Action Spirituality Justice Reprint November-December 2003.

### *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 Learn more about the three historic peace churches mentioned in the opening paragrah of this essay: www.quaker.org, www.mennoniteusa.org, www.brethren.org.

2 This essay says that the killing power of today's hi-tech weaponry requires greater efforts to prevent wars. Do you see this as an important development? Do you see the repudiation and elimination of nuclear weapons as essential to efforts to prevent wars?

3 How do you understand a) the difference between *fighting* and *struggle* in the search for ways of peace service? b) the relationship of suffering to active nonviolence?

4 This essay concludes with a suggestion for a prayer to be included in Christian Sunday worship. How do you react to this suggestion?



# Towards a Peace Service in Islam

A. Rashied Omar

The dramatic turn of world events at the dawn of the twenty-first century, including the September 2004 killing of over 300 hostages, most of them school children by Chechen rebels in Beslan, Russia, has caused religion and violence to gravitate to the center of international affairs. More distressingly, violent events involving religion have all served to reinforce the widespread perception that Islam is in some special way linked to terrorist violence. Never before has the Muslim commitment to a more peaceful and human world been challenged as it is at this time.[1]

Against this backdrop, an examination of the challenges and prospects for "Peace Service" from the perspective of Islam takes on momentous proportions. It is a task I have and continue to undertake with great passion, since it counterbalances the current preoccupation with Islam and violence. Hopefully, in so doing, I can contribute towards creating the conditions for the nurturing of a realistic Muslim peace service in the post Cold -War era.[2]

This essay adopts as its working definition of "peace service" the broad range of nonviolent activities undertaken in relationship with others that contributes towards the common good.[3] I address two interrelated questions:

1) How consonant or disparate is the Islamic concept of peace from that of other leading perspectives? 2) Why has peace become so elusive in many Muslim societies? My main purpose is to identify complex causes of the erosion of peace in Muslim societies. In so doing, I contribute to opening the way for more realistic efforts at Muslim peace service. I conclude with five proposals that may help create conditions for the recovery of the Islamic principles of peace, making them part of the fabric of contemporary Muslim culture.

## Locating an Islamic Definition of Peace

It might be expedient to begin by defining peace. As is the case with almost all key terms, defining them is a perennial problem. Our definitions of key terms provide us with lenses through which we see the world, and are therefore inherently contested. A number of contending interpretations of peace exists in the literature.[4] The disparate definitions of peace can be plotted on a horizontal graph, with one axis called negative peace and the other positive peace. Negative peace has also been described as a minimalist definition of peace and positive peace as a maximalist definition.[5] Negative peace is simply the absence of violence, particularly the absence of war.[6]

An alternative to this conventional understanding of violence is positive peace. Positive peace stresses the importance of recognizing the existence of a more indirect and insidious form of violence, called structural violence. Structural violence is less dramatic and often works slowly, eroding human values and eventually human lives. According to Norwegian peace scholar and activist, Johan Galtung, violence can be built into the very structure of the socio-political, economic and cultural institutions of a society.[7] Structural violence has the effect of denying people important rights such as economic opportunity, social and political equality, and human dignity. When children die of starvation or malnutrition, a kind of violence is taking place. Similarly, when human beings suffer from diseases that are preventable, when they are denied a decent education, housing, and opportunity to raise a family, or to participate in their own governance, a kind of violence is taking place.[8]



An examination of the Islamic concept of peace reveals that it is close to that of positive peace and traverses between two core values in Islam, namely compassion and justice. This is underscored by the strong emphasis the most primary source of Islamic guidance, the Qur'an, places on the principles of compassion and justice. Both of these ethical precepts are employed numerous times in the Qur'an. The word *rahma* (compassion, mercy and tenderness) and its various derivatives occur more than 326 times. According to Imam Raghib al-Isfahani in his famous lexicography, *Mufradat al-Qur'an*, the term *rahma* means "softening of the heart towards one who deserves our mercy and induces us to do good to him/her." It is interesting to note that the womb of mother is also called *rahm*. A mother is always very soft and gentle towards her children (*raqiq*); she showers love and affection on them.[9]

The Qur'an uses two terms to refer to justice: *qist* and *'adl*. These two terms are used interchangeably and basically mean "to give someone his or her full portion."[10] In fact the Qur'an regards "actions for justice as being the closest thing to piety." (5:6) The Qur'anic verses pertaining to justice are often specific about those areas of social affairs wherein lapses are most likely to occur, such as the trusts and legacies of orphans and adopted children (4:3; 33:5), matrimonial relations (4:3; 49:9), contractual and business dealings (2:282), judicial matters (5:42; 4:56), interreligious relations (60:8), economic relations (11:65) and dealing with one's adversaries (5:8). This strong emphasis on justice has led some Muslim jurists, like the renowned Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d.1350 C.E.), to argue that justice is the *raison d'etre* of the establishment of religion: 'God has sent His Messengers and revealed His Books so that people may establish *qist* (justice), upon which the heavens and the earth stand. And when the signs of justice appear in any manner, then that is a reflection of the *shari'ah* and the religion of God."[11] In short therefore, the Islamic concept of peace is integrally related to the struggle for justice. It resonates well with the following exhortation from Pope Paul V1, "If you want peace, work for justice."[12]

In order to balance the picture of the Islamic concept of peace I have sketched thus far, it is necessary to bear in mind that, as important as justice may be in the comprehensive matrix of Islamic values, I argue that it is certainly not

*the* pre-eminent one. This is underscored by the fact that *al-Rahman*, or the Compassionate One, is undoubtedly the most important attribute of God in Islam. It is the equivalent of the Christian preeminent understanding of God as Love. One of the most well-known Qur'anic verses with which Muslims commence every action is *Bismillah ir-rahman ir-rahim*, translated into English as, "In the name of God, Most Compassionate, and Dispenser of Grace." Compassion is so central to God's existence that it embraces all that exists in the universe (40:7). The Qur'an describes the *raison d'etre* of Prophet Muhammad's mission as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, a source of compassion and mercy to the world (21:107). It is this understanding of Islam that has allowed Muslim mystics, Sufis, to develop the doctrine of *sulh-i-kul*, that is, peace with all, which means no violence and no aggressiveness.

I have thus far argued for an Islamic concept of peace that navigates between two core values in Islam, namely, justice and compassion. I have also argued that whenever these two core values of Islam come into tension with each other it should be compassion that trumps. In my view therefore a struggle for justice (*jihad*) that claims Islamic legitimacy has to locate itself within an ethos of compassion. Without compassion, struggles for justice invariably end up mimicking the oppressive orders against which they revolt. Ironically, it is precisely here that the crisis of contemporary Muslims is located and consequently where the challenge of a credible Islamic peace resides. How does one balance between the two critical values of justice and compassion in constructing a viable project of Muslim peace service?

It is my considered view that the numerous struggles for social justice, starting with the anti-colonial wars of the first half of the twentieth century, the watershed Afghan war against the Soviet invasion in the mid-eighties, and the continuing struggles against secular elites in the post colonial period that have engaged many parts of the world with Muslim majority populations, have understandably led justice to be the key interpretive key through which Muslims view Islam. This obsession with justice has in turn led to an erosion of the central Islamic concept of compassion. The kind of wanton violence that many Muslim struggles for justice have degenerated into can in large measure be attributed to this phenomenon, namely justice struggles without compassion.



How, then, can the central Islamic concept of compassion be recovered and reinvigorated so that it once again becomes part of the fabric of contemporary Muslim culture? This is indeed the critical challenge facing contemporary Muslims. One small but significant step in this direction is that of the promotion of interreligious solidarity and cooperation for peace.

I have argued elsewhere[13] that the remarkable interreligious solidarity that many Muslims received from their non-Muslim compatriots in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 represents a renewed opportunity to counteract negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and to foster and deepen interreligious solidarity in the United States and elsewhere. I have been encouraged by the positive manner in which Muslims have utilized this newly found public space in which to bear witness to the compassion of Islam How to sustain and transform this renewed interreligious solidarity and energy into a powerful grassroots interreligious movement for peace and justice remains a critical challenge facing interreligious advocates.

## Proposals for a Credible Muslim Peace Service

Against this background I would like to make a few modest proposals with regard to nurturing the conditions out of which a realistic Muslim peace service initiative could be spawned. My proposals emerge primarily from my own assessment of the current geo-political realities and the corresponding Muslim crisis of extremism. First, Muslims must not become weary from stating unequivocally again and again that acts of wanton violence and barbarism are contrary to the teachings of Islam. In Islamic ethics, the end does not justify the means. Religious extremism has no virtue in Islam and has been unequivocally condemned by the Prophet of Islam. He is reported in a tradition to have declared thrice, "The extremists shall perish."[14] For contemporary Muslims this means to acknowledge, no matter how painful it is, that we do have extremists (*mutatarrifin*) within our ranks. This is, of course, not unique to the Muslim community. What is peculiar to Islam is that extremists appear to have a disproportionate influence within the house of Islam, not least because of the proclivity of the media for sensationalism.

Second, there is dire need for more rigorous academic studies of the potentially fertile sources of nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam and Muslim societies. A search on the Library of Congress subject catalogue for resources on “Islam and Nonviolence” produces fewer than a half a dozen items. A similar search for items on “Islam and Violence,” by contrast, produces a plethora of materials. It is palpable that peace and nonviolence in Islam and Muslim societies is a rather neglected area of peace studies and peace research.

Reflecting on this bias in the current peace research agenda, Mohamed Abu-Nimer, in one of the most pioneering books to be published recently in the field, *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam* (2003) argues that shifting the emphasis from war and violence to peace and conflict transformation in the study of Islam and Muslim societies can contribute significantly to buttressing and reinvigorating courageous peace initiatives already in progress in many different Muslim settings. Abu-Nimer’s ground-breaking book establishes a theoretical framework for peacebuildng and nonviolence in Islam and deals comprehensively with almost all the major academic contributions to this field.[15] Not surprisingly, despite the paucity of publications directly on this topic, the field is rich and includes leading Muslim scholars from diverse countries and cultures, such as Abdul Aziz Sachedina (USA), Jawdat Sa’id (Syria), Mawlana Wahiduddin Khan (Pakistan), Ashgar Ali Engineer (India), Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia), Chiawat Satha-Anand (Thailand), Farid Esack (South Africa) and Rabia Terri Harris (USA).[16] Notwithstanding the sterling efforts of these courageous scholars, the field of Islamic peace studies and conflict transformation remains inchoate and urgently needs much more attention.

Third, there is an urgent need for the nurturing and training of a new critically minded class of *‘ulama* (Muslim religious scholars). The established Muslim religious leadership in many Muslim majority countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, have abandoned their role as the moral conscience of their societies by failing to speak out more coherently on the human rights violations and injustices which permeate their societies. Many of them, while speaking out apologetically against certain forms of



injustices against Muslims, are providing religious legitimacy to despotic and oppressive regimes. Moreover, nonviolent civil resistance campaigns are not tolerated in most Muslim countries and progressive religious leaders are either incarcerated or exiled.

Drawing on the theoretical insights gleaned from the recent deluge of studies on the causes and prevention of religious conflict, the conclusion is unmistakable: religion does not spawn violence independently of predisposing social, economic and political conditions as well as the subjective roles of belligerent leaders.[17] The studies of two historians of religion, Bruce Lincoln and Scott Appleby, have offered similar but independent arguments in support of this theoretical assertion. Appleby has, for example, proposed that because of the ambivalent nature of the sacred (that it can be interpreted in the service of peace as well as violence), the role of religious leaders is decisive.[18] He contends that “corrupt, craven or merely indecisive religious leadership invites interlopers, claimants who would associate the energies and purposes of religion with their own.”[19]

In light of this finding as well as the existing crisis in Muslim religious leadership, it seems to me critical that we contribute urgently towards the emergence of a new generation of religious scholars who are well-versed in *both* the traditional Islamic sciences and the modern social sciences. Peace education and conflict transformation skills grounded within the key Islamic principles of compassion and justice must form an integral and essential part of this formation and training for future Imams. A useful starting point might be to offer training programs and scholarships to enhance the knowledge horizons of existing Imams, especially the younger ones. Fortunately, a few such programs have begun, although their numbers and ranks need great expansion. Another idea is to foster exchange programs between existing students from Muslim, Christian and Jewish seminaries. A few people are already beginning to work on exactly such an initiative.[20]

Fourth, the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the predominantly Muslim population of the Darfur region in Western Sudan provides an ideal opportunity for the deployment of an interreligious peace service to that country led by Muslims. Even if a sustainable peace accord is reached in Darfur the reconstruction and healing process will take many years. Far, too often, peace activists turn their attention away from conflict zones when a peace accord is achieved ignoring the far more critical task of post-conflict peacebuilding. In light of this it makes strategic sense for countries with Muslim majority populations to be leading such a post-conflict peacebuilding initiative since it would be unwise and wholly unhelpful for any humanitarian operation in Darfur to be led the United States or Great Britain given the existing climate.[21] The success of such a Muslim led peace service would no doubt lay the groundwork for the establishment of a more sustainable Muslim peace service in the future.

Fifth, peace scholars need to highlight consistently the fact that the current iniquitous global conditions do not lend themselves well to a credible Muslim or any other peace service initiative for that matter. A number of scholars have already pointed this out. For example, the renowned scholar of Islam, John Esposito, has ominously warned in his most recent book, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (2002) that, "If foreign policy issues are not addressed effectively, they will continue to be breeding ground for hatred and radicalism, the rise of extremist movements, and recruits for the bin Ladens of the world."[22]

In line with this analysis, peace advocates need to support the call for a public debate concerning the most effective means to counteract Muslim and other forms of extremism. Interreligious activists need to join the many voices all over the world who are questioning the wisdom of the current strategy pursued in the "war on terrorism." They also need to back the call for a serious reassessment concerning the controversial United States foreign policy which abets authoritarian Muslim regimes in the Middle East, and elsewhere, as well as its uncritical and too often unilateral support for the present policies of the State of Israel.[23] The belligerent environment that is currently being engendered is not helpful in ameliorating the root causes



that provide a fertile ground on which extremism thrives. On the contrary, it is generating conditions that favor extremism, thus rendering the task of developing Muslim peace service initiatives extremely difficult. More important, an unequivocal call for justice in the Middle East and elsewhere coming from Jewish and Christian institutions and leaders will help rebuild trust and confidence in the beleaguered initiatives of Muslim peacebuilders and their support bases.

## Conclusion

Returning to the initial question of how to account for the elusive nature of peace in many Muslim dominated settings, my simple answer is as follows: the contemporary global order is not by any stretch of the imagination a just one. Islam places a strong emphasis on social justice as an integral part of its concept of peace. The Muslim legitimization of violence does not occur in a socio-historical vacuum, but within concrete human settings in which power dynamics are paramount. Against this backdrop, the Muslim preoccupation with justice has led to an erosion of the core Islamic value of compassion. Extremists have a disproportionate influence within the ranks of Muslims and the global communications media have "inadvertently" become the ally of Muslim extremists.

I have offered five concrete proposals that can make a modest contribution towards creating the conditions necessary for a more positive peace role for Islam to counterbalance the disproportionate yet awesome power of Muslim extremists. There exists a dire need for the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as all other traditions, to retrieve our common humanity and to end the horrific dehumanization that is currently taking place on such a wide scale. The challenge of peace for all three Abrahamic religions in particular is to develop a theology of healing and embrace (*ta'aruf*) so eloquently described in the following verse of the Qur'an; "O Humankind! We have created you into a male and female and fashioned you into nationals and tribes, so that you may come to know each other, not despise one another. The most honored of you in the sight of God, are those who display the best conduct. And God is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (49: 13).

## CHAPTER ENDNOTES

1 The stereotype of a bellicose and inherently violent Islam, so pervasive in the media, has wide currency among Western policymakers. Even conventional academic perspectives regard Islam as having a predilection for violence. For two of the most popular academic accounts that depict Islam as inherently violent see, Bernard Lewis, What Went Wrong?: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). There has also been an alarming amount of anti-Islamic propaganda published in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001. Two particularly sinister works that attempt to demonize all politically active Muslim individuals or organizations are: Steven Emerson, American *Jihad*: The Terrorists Among Us (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); and Daniel Pipes, Militant Islam Reaches America (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2002). Both of these works brand all American Muslims who are critical of Israeli policies as potential terrorist threats, and they incite suspicion against American Muslims by claiming that many of those Muslims are taking part in a secret conspiracy to promote terrorism in America.

2 In August 2000, I temporarily left my post as a full-time Imam of a local mosque in Cape Town, South Africa, and joined the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, at the University of Notre Dame to deepen my own understanding of the causes of religiously-motivated violence, and more importantly to identify resources for peacebuilding within Islam and Muslim societies.

3 Mary Evelyn Jegen, "Displacing War by Peace Service" guideline essay prepared for participants in the inter-religious symposium for which this essay was written.

4 For a useful introduction to the contending definitions of peace in the literature see David Barash, Introduction to Peace Studies, University of Washington, 1991, pp.5-30. For a deeper reflection on the meaning and sources of peace see, Kenneth Boulding, Stable Peace. (University of Texas Press, 1978).



5 I am indebted to a former Peace Studies teacher of mine, Professor Siobhan McEvoy-Levy for first introducing me to the contending definitions of peace in the literature.

6 According to Scott Appleby, negative peace is a condition in which no direct, physical or instrumental violence is perpetrated either by the state or paramilitaries or resistance/rebel movements. See The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation. (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp. 296).

7 Johan Galtung "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," Journal of Peace Research 6:3, 1969

8 For a related idea due to the Galtung distinction between direct violence (children are murdered), structural violence (children die through poverty), and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this or seeks to justify it), see: Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbothan & Tom Woodhouse, "Introduction to Conflict Resolution" in their Contemporary Conflict Resolution. (Cambridge: Polity/ Blackwell, 1999, pp 5-22.1999:15).

9 For a useful discussion of the concept of compassion in Islam see: Ashgar Ali Engineer;http: //newark.rutgers.edu/~rtavakol/engineer/compassion.htm

10 See E. W. Lane, Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon. (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980, q-s-t).

11 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Al-Turuq al-Hakimiyyah fi al-Siyat al-Shar'iyyah. Cairo, 1953, pp. 14-16.

12 Scott Appleby, The Ambivalence of the Sacred, 2000,

13 See my forthcoming article "Interreligious Dialogue is not an Ambulance" in the forthcoming (September/October 2004) issue of the Fellowship Special Issue: "The Muslim Renaissance" edited by Rabia Terri Harris coordinator of the Muslim Peace Fellowship's newsletter, As-Salamu 'Alaykum (ASA). See also, my article "Opportunities and Challenges for Muslim Peacebuilding After September11: From Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivations for Interreligious Dialogue," in Current Dialogue, Issue 41, July 2003, published by the Office on Interreligious Relations, World Council of Churches, Geneva.

14 Related in the compilation of prophetic traditions by Sahih Muslim; translated into English by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui.

15 Mohamed Abu-Nimer, Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice. (University of Florida Press, 2003).

16 For a useful list of publications on Islam and Peacebuilding see, Mohammed Abu-Nimer's bibliography in Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam, pp. 213-228.
An outdated but comprehensive bibliography on Islam-Peace-Nonviolence was also compiled by Karim Douglas Crow and can be found online at: http://www.members.tripod.com/nviusa/islam.htm
17 Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report with Executive Summary, Carnegie Corporation of New York, December 1997.
18 Appleby, op.cit., pp. 54-56.
19 Ibid
20 It was a privilege for me to represent the Kroc Institute at the Global Dialogue Institute's "25th" International Scholars Annual Trialogue in Skopje, Macedonia, from 10-14 May 2002. The trilateral dialogue was co sponsored by a wide range of international organizations including the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and partially funded by the United States Institute of Peace. One of the most exciting dimensions of the trialogue was the sessions held at the Orthodox and Islamic theological seminaries. A bold proposal was made for exploring creative ways of inter-religious collaboration in the theological formation and education of the students at these two seminaries.
21 For a detailed Muslim Response to the Darfur crisis see my sermon published in Current Dialogue Issue 43, July 2004 published by the Office on Interreligious Relations, World Council of Churches, Geneva. Also available online at: http://www.mpfweb.org/omar1.html
22 John Esposito, Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 157).
23 Support for this view is presented in Graham E. Fuller (2002). 'The Future of Political Islam", in Foreign Affairs March/April2002, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 60.



## *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 In this essay Rashied Omar discusses the concept of positive peace in relation to structural violence. How does this contribute to an understanding of wars being fought at the present time? What implications does this have for the idea of peace service?

2 The essay explains a Muslim understanding of *compassion* as the most important attribute of God. What do you consider the most important attribute of God? How does it compare with the Rashied Omar's description of compassion? (p.4)

3 The author explains peace in terms of a creative tension between justice and compassion, and on this basis takes the position that "wherever these two core values of Islam come into tension with each other it should be compassion that trumps." Does this correspond to your understanding of the relationship between love and justice? Is the substitution of *compassion* for *love* for helpful in this context? If so, why?

4 Discuss the book *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam* by Mohamed Abu-Nimer.

# Bismi Llah Ir-Rahman Ir-Rahim

Rabia Harris

Peace be upon you. It is an honor to respond to such a significant paper. But Imam Rashied is mistaken when he includes me in his count of "courageous scholars." While the term certainly applies to the other people in his list, and to himself, who have often had to face down community disapproval of their intellectual and moral audacity, I am something else: a happily marginal scholar. As a convert, I'm one from whom all sorts of embarrassing behaviors are to be expected, and not to be taken too seriously, Worse still, I am a white female convert, unmarried, with a public profile. That makes me into the legendary talking dog. It's amazing that it talks at all. Who cares what it says!

But being marginal, although hard on the ego, conveys a priceless advantage: creative freedom. And I believe it is the business—the spiritual calling—of the marginal to claim that freedom, and make use of it for the benefit of the whole. To carry this off successfully is a matter of what we call *adab*.

It is a key concept of traditional Islam that goes under this name of *adab*. The word means courtesy, or, culture, the attributes that qualify a civilized human being. The notion is that, whatever the situation in which we find

ourselves, there is always a *way to behave* that bestows upon us dignity and grace that beautifies the world and serves the generosity of God. While some Muslims have flattened this concept into a kind of Emily Post compendium of Islamically correct deportment, the core realization is simply that wherever we are, there is always a right thing to do.

The right thing to do, however, is not necessarily the habitual or comfortable thing to do. Doing the right thing generally means that we have to put ourselves out a little. We have to grasp the meaning of our situation, to see where we actually are. And if we find that our situation includes a substantial amount of ingrained pain and deformation, then doing the right thing may mean that we have to put ourselves out a lot.

But this is the overarching situation in which we all find ourselves: this is the human condition. There is ingrained pain and deformation all over the place, the endlessly self-refilling well of violence, particularly the variety known to our discourse here as "structural" or "systemic" violence. Imam Rashied writes that "According to Galtung, violence can be built into the very structure of the sociopolitical, economic and cultural institutions of a society." But we need not cite Galtung in this matter for anything but the modern term. The puzzle of structural violence is one of the great themes of the Qur'an, where the word for it is *zulm*, literally "tyranny," which the classical Arabic lexicographers summarize as *"to force a thing into the wrong place so as to make it suffer loss."* A concise definition of our problem, wouldn't you say? And one that, in the Muslim guiding scripture, offers us a great many opportunities for fruitful contemplation.

Let me call your attention to the *New York Times Magazine* of Sunday, October 17, 2004. There writer Ron Suskind reported a remarkable exchange with an unnamed senior advisor to the President of the United States. It seems the White House was displeased with an article Suskind had written. "The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.'" Suskind reported. But this public



servant dismissed that approach. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he told Suskind. "We're an empire now, and when we act we create our own reality."

For me, this brought immediately to mind a famous exchange in the Qur'an: Abraham, peace be upon him, confronts his antithesis, one of the instructive exemplars of *zulm*, the tyrant Nimrud. "What is this God of yours?" inquires the tyrant. "God grants life and gives death," Abraham tells him. "Ha!" says the tyrant. "I grant life and give death." "God makes the sun rise in the east," Abraham coolly replies. "Why don't you make it rise in the west?" (Surah Baqarah, 258)

When we grasp what the Qur'an means by *zulm*, when we can study how *zulm* works, we find ourselves with a powerful tool. I propose that the original object of the Qur'anic revelation was to bestow upon its hearers a whole series of such tools—tools that are intended for the dissolution of structural violence and the building of a culture of peace. I further propose that the mission of the Prophet of Islam cannot be fully understood apart from our contemporary experience with liberation struggles and social transformation for peace and justice, for he was engaged in *revolution* in a world that provided no context for his enterprise. *So its discourse manifested through him*. We must learn how to hear it.

Of all the Qur'anic concepts, the most revolutionary, the most provocative in its own time, was the concept of *rahma*h, of compassion. It is still the most provocative notion of all. And I believe that Imam Rashied is incisive in diagnosing in our contemporary Muslim community a disconnection between justice and compassion. So if we are looking for community healing and empowerment, if we are looking for the potential of peace service, we must focus our attention on precisely these ideas.

We rarely examine our sense of justice, but it bears examination, for justice means different things to different people. There is an anecdote in the Hadith, in the reports of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) of

a moment during the division of spoils after a battle, a procedure that he governed by exact rules and to which he applied a number of severe ethical strictures. In the course of this procedure, he awarded a cloak that one man had his eye on to another man, instead. The first fellow exploded. “But this is unjust!” he cried. The Prophet looked at him, astonished. “If this is unjust,” he remarked, “where on earth will you find yourself justice?”

The point of the story is that even when decisions are made with the greatest punctiliousness and care, there will always be some people who feel they are unjust. For people like this, “justice” simply means “I get what I want.” (For these same people, “peace” is likely to mean “nobody interferes with my having it.”) The Prophet emphatically warned his community about such a convenient view. Speaking of his work as a civil arbitrator, he told them, “Eloquence varies, and some people may put their cases better than others, and hearing them, I may award to them something that truly belongs to someone else. So if I award you something that should go to someone else, do not take it. “*For in reality I am awarding you a portion of the Fire.”*

If we feel that Fire a little, if the “everything for me” theory of justice seems a little too bald and infantile for us to support with a clear conscience, we may try another proposition: justice means I get what I deserve. Only, consider: do we really dare to ask for what we deserve? God warns us in the Qur’an that if God were to punish people according to what they deserve, there would be no living creature on the face of the planet (a free translation of Surah Fatir, 45). No, those of us whose sense of justice revolves around “deserts” tend to be much more interested in seeing that *you* get what *you* deserve, you rascal you. And it’s clear from this that the call for justice at such a level is still aimed at soothing a wounded sense of self. It still derives from our feeling thwarted, from having been prevented from attaining what we desire, and therefore (or so it seems) alienated by some outside force from our proper destiny.



As our selfhood becomes a little more humble and a little more robust, we start making a distinction between our desires and claims, and our actual needs. And once I begin to have a sense of what my needs are, the reality of your needs also comes into view.

Now we enter the realm of what the Qur’an calls *qist*, or equity: justice as the balance of genuine needs. Simultaneously it becomes evident that *zulm*, tyranny, the forcing of things into wrong places, to their loss, *is another name for the earlier two theories of justice*. Tyrants never think of themselves as tyrants; they think of themselves as champions of the right. But *zulm* is in no way identical to *qist*.

The Qur’an recognizes the vanity and blindness of the me-centered theory of justice in the famous opening verses of Surah al-Baqarah:

> *And when it is said to them, “Do not cause corruption in the earth,” they say, “We are only makers of peace!” But no, they are the causers of corruption, and they do not perceive. And when it is said to them, “Keep faith as the people keep faith,” they say, “Shall we keep faith as the fools keep faith?” But they are the fools, and they do not know (Surah Baqarah, 11-13).*

And indeed today we see this confusion everywhere: “justice” that is injustice; “peace” that is persecution; “democracy” that is government by whim. Not to mention “religion” that is vainglory and superstition. Against all this the Qur’an sets *the intention of God*. And it makes the striking suggestion that the intention of God is *knowable*: that we may learn what we need to know of the intention of God by observing the natural order of the world. For instance:

> *And He it is who spread out the earth and placed therein firm hills and flowing streams, and fruit of every kind He made in pairs; He covers the night with the day. Surely in these things there are signs for those*

*who consider! And in the Earth are neighboring tracts, vineyards and ploughed lands; and date palms, like and unlike, which are watered with one water, yet some of them We make better than others for food. Surely in these things there are signs for those who use their minds (Surah Ra`d, 3-4).*

Such passages abound in the Qur'an. Today we call this vision the ecological balance. And it is with that in mind that we should listen again to the splendid statement of the famous jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah that Imam Rashied has done us the service of bringing before us today:

*"God has sent His Messengers and revealed His Books so that people may establish qist [—the balance of needs—] upon which the heavens and the earth stand. And when the signs of qist appear in any manner, then that is a reflection of the shari`ah and the religion of God."*

When *qist*—equity, the balance of needs, functional interdependence—manifests among human beings so that all of us receive what we need to the loss of no one, we have the opposite of *zulm*, the realization of the intention of God, and that peace on Earth which is the great social vision of Islam.

But this is a tall order. And as a matter of fact, we have no guarantee whatsoever that we will see that dream come true while we are in this life. Get used to it. Hard to hear, isn't it?—especially for those of us who fancy ourselves peacemakers and are deeply committed to justice. Yet necessary to digest because if we do not digest it, we are likely to fall into the trap of utopianism and utopianism is a highly dangerous state of mind.

Among utopians there is very little patience with human weakness. Worse, utopianism inclines us to tell ourselves lies. It may tempt us into endless bloody variations on "the war to end all wars." Or it may seduce us into colluding in the fabrication of fake peace, an eerie uniformity based on repression. In the name of perfect justice "any day now," the baby's cry is stifled, the legitimate need



denied. Things are forced into the wrong place, to their loss. The tyranny we are hoping to destroy, possesses us instead.

The tantalizing grand vision of universal justice is no protection from error, if we are utopians. It can throw us right back into *zulm*. Now, though, our tyranny is not just ordinary selfishness. Now it is a form of madness. Because with utopianism, "what I want" and "what God wants" become utterly confused. *Everything* is wrong: we have to save the world. Worse, we begin to act as if we had to save God! And behind this preposterous grandiosity lurks a deep insecurity and a dark and bitter anger. For the successes of utopias are tenuous and fleeting, while their failures are numerous and concrete. But we *have* to win! So we *must* be winning! And if we're not, it's because there's something wrong with who we are. There have got to be enemies within. We must excise them.

What people in this bind dare not articulate is that, no matter how they try, they can never be good enough. But if we don't get what we want, when we've tried so hard-the insidious logic goes-it means that God has punished us for something we cannot help. God is cruel. God has let us down. I suggest to you that every contemporary fundamentalist movement, in whatever religion—they are all forms of utopianism—has this spiritual pathology at its root. The anger these movements generate is implacable because at base it is a devastating anger at God, an anger that cannot be faced. It is those who feel profoundly deprived of compassion who are unable to manifest it themselves.

We must shun utopianism, if we love justice. We must bear with the imperfections of this world, and of ourselves, if true equity is ever to be disentangled from demonic counterfeits. Eschatology gives us the next life for a reason, and saving the world,or even just the Muslims,is simply not our job. That doesn't mean that there is no job. For Muslims in particular, there is an extraordinary amount of work to do. But our object cannot be *achieving* peace. Our object must be the *work* of peace, for its own sake, without glory, no matter what.

Very well, then. How are we to perform the great task to which Imam Rashied summons us, and begin to establish our "struggle for justice (*jihad*)" in its proper location within "an ethos of compassion" so that it occupies its own true place in the moral ecology and ceases to suffer loss?

I propose that we start our work with a critique of our understanding of God. The Qur'an gives us a number of stories from the life of the great Messenger Abraham, peace be upon him, which ought to give us some sense, as Muslims, of what it means to be Abrahamic. While the word is a modern coinage in English for referring to the common Judaeo-Christian-Islamic religious heritage, the thesis that being like Abraham is an ideal moral orientation has a substantial Qur'anic pedigree. Although traditional interpreters tend to pick out the troubling story of the attempted sacrifice of his son as being the crucial episode in the history of our ancestor, the Qur'an actually gives that tale no special emphasis; there it is merely one story among others. And for our times, a different Abrahamic dimension strikes me as providing a much more useful example for us to follow.

At Surah An`am, 76-79, we are given Abraham's first realization of God. According to that account, Abraham (peace be upon him) first saw a star and, taken by its light, proclaimed it to be his Lord. But the star set; and when it set, Abraham realized that it would not do. Shaken, he let it go. His statement was, *"I love not gods that set."* Then he saw the moon, and again proclaimed it as his Lord. But it too set, and again he let it go. *"I love not gods that set."* Then he fixed triumphantly on the sun—*"This is my Lord! This is greater!"*—but sure enough, even the brilliant sun also disappeared. And *"I love not gods that set."* No graspable, limited thing, even the most glorious, would do: every one of them set. And when the enormity of the implications struck him, Abraham became enlightened.

He called it God, but it would not do, so he let it go. Do we dare to follow his example, look at what we aspire to serve, and ask ourselves the terrifying question, "Is this God worth worshipping?" But we must.



If the religion we follow makes our lives cramped, fearful, resentful, obsessive, then we are not following the religion taught by the Mercy to the Worlds. If the Lord we adore fills us with rage or despair, arrogance or ennui, then we are not adoring the Cherisher and Sustainer of the human being. If the God we serve makes us a burden rather than a blessing, then we are not serving the Revealer of the Generous Qur'an. For *that* God has told us: *"I do not tyrannize them, but they tyrannize themselves."* (Surah Al `Imran, 117)

Once we refuse to worship this false god, God the Tyrant, that lords it over so many of us, then the way is clear. We can start by forgiving ourselves for having loved the shining thing, once at the zenith, that has passed away. It certainly was beautiful, and even Prophet Abraham made our kind of mistake. But the glory that entranced us was never God. That's why it set. The God to love is the God that is here, now; that has chosen compassion for us; and that never fails.

We can let it go. Muslim societies, our great civilizations, may have been abased, but God is never abased. And consequently, as the Prophet said, "a Muslim is not defiled." But this enormous freeing from guilt and shame that lets compassion transform our lives requires a penetrating grasp of Islam that is, in itself, liberation. And to get there, we must have an Abrahamic willingness to ask highly impertinent questions, questions that may be fled as divisive or disallowed. Because *adab*—doing the right thing—sometimes requires disturbing a fraudulent peace.

If you do it, it will make you marginal. But it's a lot of fun out here. We get to try out all this interesting new stuff. So let us turn at last to Imam Rashied's five practical proposals for Islamic peace service, which contain some very interesting new ideas. Here are a few thoughts.

First, *neutralizing extremism through constant restatement of the Islamic impermissibility of violence*. We must disavow violence, certainly. But more importantly, as I have tried to argue, we must strive to break the link between violence and self-respect. The deepest problem for Muslims today, I believe,

is the problem of honor. But this is exactly the same problem that the Prophet had to confront in the people of his own time. And the revolutionary content of his teaching is that honor manifests, not in displays of domination or endless vendettas, but in God-consciousness and compassionate service. We need not defend our self-image, because image is irrelevant: human beings possess a kind of honor that is inalienable, unconditionally bestowed by our creator. God says: *"We have honored the children of Adam."* (Surah Isra, 70) If we come to understand this, we will cease to be bedeviled by a sense of humiliation, and instead rest in the statement that "A Muslim is not defiled."

I believe that it is only when the honor problem is solved that the influence of extremists among us will wane. Because what they offer is the illusion of release from an intense shame that many of us suffer…but that need not even exist.

Second, Imam Rashied proposes that we must address *the need for more research and more accessible materials on nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam and Muslim societies*. This is certainly the case. And I am very pleased to announce that the Muslim Peace Fellowship is presently organizing a scholarly consultation on this very topic, to be held—God willing—at the headquarters of the Fellowship of Reconciliation on March 19, 2005. May ours prove to be only one of a variety of such efforts undertaken in the near future.

Third, Imam Rashied tells us that *a new agenda for the training of ulama'* is of prime importance, since "the role of religious leaders is decisive." I am in no position to speak to this issue directly—I have had scarcely anything to do with the products of the madrasah system, since I have no roots in any of the Islamic Old Countries, and obtained my own religious education courtesy of the Sufis. But I would venture, based on my own experience, that central to any redrafted training for our traditional scholars should be an equally traditional training in self-observation. For if we cannot detect our own egos at work, there is no escaping the interference of God the Tyrant and the so-called "ambivalence of the sacred."



Fourth: *an interreligious peace service, led by Muslims, in Darfur?* Sure! Splendid idea. But it will only come to pass if we can get at least a few of us past the shame game, which is paralyzing. That granted, it seems to me, build it and they will come.

And finally, we must *address "current iniquitous global conditions."* Yes, we must. That is our calling as human beings, which we avoid only to our loss. For to deny our responsibility to one another, and *for* one another, is to leave an empty niche in the ecological balance of the planet. It is to decline being fully human, to choose to be something less than we are created to be, which means to tyrannize *ourselves*. But rest assured, even if we find our nobility and address today's issues successfully, some other iniquitous global condition is sure to arise. The human calling is a permanent job.

"The Muslims' preoccupation with justice has led to an erosion of the core Islamic value of compassion," Imam Rashied has keenly observed. I have tried to show that this process develops when people cannot forgive themselves for having been defeated. But God is not defeated. And so if we are with God, *no matter what happens to us*—and no matter who we are—we can never be defeated either. This is existential, intrinsic: it has nothing to do with turf battles, title claims, or which braggart has the upper hand today. If we feel defeated in our souls, it can only be that we have been worshiping a god that sets. We have lost track of the power of compassion, and we have lost track of the grandeur of compassion. We have forgotten how awe-inspiring true compassion is!

But wherever we are, we have a choice. There is always a right thing to do.

The great option is always present. For as the Prophet related in a sound tradition, *"When God created the creation He inscribed upon the Throne, 'My compassion overpowers My wrath."* This truth is engraved in the nature of things. May we all come to live directly from those great realities "upon which the heavens and the earth stand," as al-Jawziyyah says. May we each learn how to serve divine generosity from the position in which *we* stand. May we dare to look at things with our own eyes, and ask forbidden questions while trusting in the faithfulness of God. May we make the joyful choice to do the right thing.

And God is the best of knowers.



## *Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1 Rabia Harris explains *adab* as "the notion . . . that, whatever the situation in which we find ourselves, there is always a way to behave that bestows upon us dignity and grace, that beautifies the world and serves the generosity of God."(p.1) If you are not a Muslim, do you know a concept comparable to *adab* in in your tradition? If so, how is it transmitted from generation to generation? If you are a Muslim, in your experience how is *adab* fostered among Muslims?

2 Does the essay's explanation of *zulm* provide a meeting place for Islamic, Jewish, and Christian understandings of struggles for justice and peace?

3 How does the essay's explanation of *qist* as " equity, the balance of needs, functional interdependence" (p.5) compare with a) prevailing notions of justice in American culture, b) your own understanding of justice?

4 According to the author, "Our object cannot be *achieving* peace. Our object must be the *work* of peace, for its own sake, without glory, no matter what."(p.6) How do you understand the difference between achieving peace as the object and peace as the work of peace? How important is this difference? Give examples.

5 Rabia Harris says that she is within the Sufi tradition of Islam. Read some material about Sufism and share what you learn.

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