



Interfaith Journeys

An exploration of history,
ideas, and future directions

February 2017



WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE





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DEVELOPMENT
DIALOGUE

About the World Faiths Development Dialogue

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) is a not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of religion and global development. Housed within the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., WFDD documents the work of faith inspired organizations and explores the importance of religious ideas and actors in development contexts. WFDD supports dialogue between religious and development communities and promotes innovative partnerships, at national and international levels, with the goal of contributing to positive and inclusive development outcomes.

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Foreword


Interfaith initiatives respond to the violence and uneasy tensions of our times. Especially where conflicts touch on religious identities or where leaders fuel fires with aspersions of “others,” interfaith efforts aim to confront root causes of tensions, notably those that touch on religious beliefs and practices. Interfaith work looks to solutions in common values and goals that, once recognized, help cross deep social and political divides and bind people together. At their best, with careful, persistent work, interfaith efforts address deep differences and wounded memories in sensitive but effective ways. Interfaith initiatives build on a belief in the distinctive importance of religious teachings and leadership, and on visions, varying along a quite wide spectrum, of the virtues, challenges, and inevitability of diversity and living together in an increasingly plural world. Cherished religious traditions of peace and justice and the belief that religious beliefs call forth the gifts of “blessed peacemakers” to end conflicts and reconcile feuding parties are at the heart of interfaith work.

Many cultures and religious traditions tell some version of the ancient parable of blind or unseeing men trying to describe an elephant. Their different interpretations misunderstand the beast because they grasp only a part. The story calls to mind varying perceptions of what interfaith work is about: the challenge of appreciating the parts but also the whole.

This project set out to understand the many initiatives that involve interfaith dialogue and action and to appreciate their impact and the challenges they face. The task is complicated

by the remarkable diversity of initiatives and the fact that they are multiplying, rapidly. Worries about poor understanding of the interfaith phenomenon are not new. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) from its birth in 1998 encountered a bewildering array of organizations, projects, and ideas centered on multi-faith approaches, yet found repeated instances of overlap or even clashes. It is telling that the World Economic Forum’s Group of 100 Leaders established to bridge divides between “Islam and the West” found that the fragmented nature of interfaith work presented so many obstacles that it launched an effort to document this work in an annual report on the state of dialogue. Various global interfaith organizations strive to order and coordinate the efforts. However, as initiatives multiply the task of tracking and understanding them is more difficult than ever.

This report is thus an introduction to a complex field and a stock-taking. It offers a map of the history, intellectual foundations, and major features and actors involved in interfaith work. It aims at objective analysis, though perhaps a bias towards action creeps in, alongside some impatience with efforts to monopolize or gild an idea. The purpose is to enhance understanding, highlight vital issues, and provoke debate about paths forward at a time when understanding and engagement among communities has rarely been as important. We hope it will spark discussion, leading to a richer appreciation for the diversity of approaches and efforts, greater respect for the courage and imagination of leaders in the field, and new forms of alliance and partnership.



Katherine Marshall

Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue

List of Acronyms

CCs	cooperation circles, of the United Religions Initiative, URI
COP	Conference of Parties, UN meetings on climate change
CVE	countering violent extremism
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
IFAPA	Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa
FIO	faith inspired organization
GHR Foundation	(originally Gerrie and Henrietta Rauenhurst Foundation)
IFYC	Interfaith Youth Core
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
ISF	International Shinto Foundation
KAICIID	King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAIN	North American Interfaith Network
NCCJ	National Conference for Community and Justice
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
RfP/WCRP	Religions for Peace/World Conference of Religions for Peace
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Family Planning Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URI	United Religions Initiative
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue
WFP	World Food Programme

INTRODUCTION

The Landscape

The project and the report

This report reflects research supported by the GHR Foundation, under a grant to WFDD, undertaken during 2015 and 2016. A first objective was to fill gaps in knowledge. Even leaders, activists, and organizations immersed in interfaith dialogue efforts rarely have a comprehensive and robust view of what others are doing and how various efforts fit together. Outside observers tend to be frankly baffled. It contributes to misunderstandings, overlapping and duplicating efforts, missed opportunities to support worthy efforts, and difficulties in forming partnerships or correcting course when efforts flag. At a more granular, practical level, weakness of systematic evaluation and lack of agreement, even as to what constitutes meaningful success indicators, obscure debates about ends and means and discourage financial and other support.

Religious tensions, religious strengths

Religious tensions are an important force in world affairs in the early twenty-first century. Lively debates rage in policy circles, the media, and the academy about their character, causes, and intersections with other social, political, and economic forces. Likewise religious beliefs and institutions have vital importance in people's lives across widely different societies. Government relations with religious bodies and leaders vary widely, from direct opposition to formal association to theocracies, where religious and state institutions are combined. Complex religious dynamics of non-state actors and the unmistakable presence of violent, as well as non-violent, extremism in different world regions add new dimensions to age-old challenges of defining a "proper place" for religious beliefs in international affairs. Meanwhile, people's hunger for meaning and an ethical compass inspire new forms of interest in religious institutions. Many hope that religious beliefs, communities, and leadership can offer answers to deep questions and potential solutions to momentous problems, ranging from conflict resolution to hunger to climate change. The resilience

and ubiquitous presence of religious communities (following decades when the dominant secular paradigm often obscured religious factors) inspire reflections about societies' religious dimensions.

Responses to both tensions and strengths take many forms, keeping with varying diagnoses of those tensions and avenues for solutions. Prominent among them are efforts that focus on what are variously termed interfaith, interreligious, multifaith, or intercultural dialogue.¹ This report focuses on the diverse forms and aims of contemporary interfaith work.

Questions about why religion has been "the missing dimension of statecraft"² and why tensions around religion are so prominent today, especially in international affairs, provided the initial impetus for taking on this topic. Furious debates continue around the 24-year-old paradigm and challenge that Harvard professor Samuel Huntington posed in 1993, when he argued that a new "clash of civilizations" was upon us. Huntington argued that value differences, tied to and embedded in the religious foundations of societies, would dominate future international relations. The ensuing debates shed light on the many very different understandings about the roots of tensions and their significance. The language and metaphors of clash versus dialogue among civilizations (and religions) pervade interfaith discussions.

Many contest Huntington's diagnosis, often fiercely: are tensions really about religious beliefs at any fundamental level? Is conflict inevitable? And is dialogue ("jaw jaw," as Winston Churchill termed it) an adequate, meaningful response? Yet the notion of civilizational clash creeps into wide-ranging discussions about international relations. Dialogue as a basis for bridging such divides echoes Swiss theologian Hans Küng's famous (and often repeated) suggestion that without dialogue among religions there can be no peace. This view (by no means universally held) puts religious beliefs, tensions, and common purpose at the center of basic questions about conflict and peace.

Healthy skepticism veering towards vehement disagreement that any clash exists or that one is in any way, shape,

or manner inevitable or preordained provides an impetus for interfaith efforts; alternative visions look instead to alliance or harmony, and a belief in the capacity to harness energy and richness from diversity. Clash versus dialogue debates link interfaith efforts to the critical contemporary challenges of peacebuilding and development.

This report's essential premises are that dialogue (broadly understood and robustly conducted) can indeed yield tangible results and that religious beliefs and institutions are a vital force in human affairs seen from virtually any angle. Both are critical to realizing the individual and collective human potential embodied in the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The report argues that interfaith activities have a vital role in countless dimensions of international affairs. They are also important at the most local level, in communities and cities and even families. They have a potential for good on topics ranging from social peace to philanthropy to human fulfillment.

Multiple challenges

"Taking stock" of contemporary interfaith work is a large challenge. Dialogue and action among religiously linked actors come in many shapes, sizes, colors, and tones. They range from talk around a dinner table to grand affairs of *convivencia*. The nature of action varies, shaped by available tools and the implicit or explicit theory of change that lies behind the action. Some efforts are tangible and pragmatic (for example joining together to protect religious sites from direct threats or lobbying for specific humanitarian action). Others have a much more general goal of increasing understanding among different communities and faiths and thus helping to build solid community relations, or social cohesion. Some describe the constellation of interfaith efforts as a central twenty-first century social movement. This interpretation sees the aggregate effort as a historic coming together of the world's greatest faith and philosophical traditions in an effort to appreciate "the other or others" (as they are sometimes generically termed), and, beyond that, to work together for worthy common ends of harmony, peace, and a decent life. Less lofty appreciations of interfaith efforts see them as disparate, worthy endeavors with unproven impact.

If interfaith efforts constitute a movement, its shape and form is hard to fathom and define. There is no systematic, agreed upon definition of what constitutes an interfaith

effort or organization, much less a comprehensive listing of such efforts or organizations.³ Links among efforts are weak to non-existent. The impact of individual and collective efforts is enormously difficult to evaluate and few have ventured far into this territory. One observer commented that the interfaith movement was at sea, conjuring up an image of vessels carrying refugees from strife-torn lands, without a clear destination and amidst lingering questions about the basis for their legitimacy.

The disparate tendencies of interfaith actors are aggravated by the absence of agreed upon intellectual frameworks within universities and by a clouded atmosphere as to how interfaith work can and should be financed. Not surprisingly those who are unconvinced by arguments that religion is a central and continuing factor in contemporary life tend to look askance at interfaith work. While there are many devout believers in the thrust, direction, and merits of interfaith work, the doubters are legion.

Dialogue is a strong common theme in interfaith work but some look quizzically at anything called dialogue, seeing it as the opposite of or divorced from direct action and practice. The mostly aging religious leaders who congregate in official gatherings can appear to represent a colorful pageant of the past; interesting but largely irrelevant. The all too often male cast of many official encounters breeds doubts in settings where equality between men and women is seen as fundamental to the goals of human rights. It is often challenging to convince skeptics that dialogue can produce results.

Complex relationships among interfaith institutions and efforts color analysis and debates. The historic 1893 gathering in Chicago of religious leaders, the first "Parliament of the World's Religions," marked a major transnational effort of the kind. After a lull, hundreds if not thousands of interfaith institutions and events took form. Some have faded but many survive to this day. Each crisis involving interreligious tensions and violence sparks some form of interfaith response. In the contemporary setting, where extremism and terrorism are priority concerns in international affairs, religiously linked violence tends to dominate many interfaith approaches, from research to direct action on the ground.

Collaboration and partnerships are another constant theme in interfaith work, and various umbrella organizations have emerged to respond to the need. These efforts reflect a sense that interfaith efforts should and can be part of a global



Doug Thompson, Flickr user: Bahai.us

Speakers at the World Religion Day observance in Campbell, California, listen to others speak on the Golden Rule from their perspective.

institutional architecture (after all, religious institutions are the most ancient of global institutions). At the United Nations level, the Alliance of Civilizations grew from the ideal that it might offer an umbrella for a “dialogue of civilizations.” United Nations agencies, for example UNFPA, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme (WFP) recognize faith and interfaith partnerships as essential to achieving their objectives. Various governments, including notably Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Spain, Austria, and Kosovo, have launched interfaith initiatives. It is telling that the complex global coordinating bodies like the G7, G8, and G20 have inspired a parallel “Faith 20” or “F20.” Religions for Peace (RfP) aspires to link religious leaders and institutions through a global interfaith institution and the United Religions Initiative (URI) puts its faith in grassroots interfaith initiatives. Among civil society organizations, the Alliance for Peacebuilding and the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers work to bring disparate institutions and individuals together.

However, most if not all of the interfaith institutions face existential challenges (turning around their fundamental purposes). Financial support for interfaith work has tended to be tepid and poorly sustained. In many mainstream international relations and philanthropic circles interfaith work attracts yawns from a sizeable number of observers. The rarity

of positive and objective media coverage is a constant lament. Leading organizations speak a language of cooperation and love but snipe across each other’s bows.

More fundamentally the core goals of interfaith actions and organizations are often complex and imperfectly articulated. This is understandable given how hard it is to set monitorable goals in this field. Further, interfaith approaches often abut parallel social movement goals like peace and social justice. It can be argued that none of the major entities has an uncontested and clear future strategy or robust structure and mandate. Many dynamic and innovative local organizations, especially at the city level, combine efforts to build social links and address practical common challenges. However, the colorful mosaic they form is very partial and the cement among them is friable.

These fundamental challenges help to explain why defining interfaith work and an interfaith movement is a continuing challenge. Core objectives of efforts come under constant scrutiny, as do their structures and the ways in which action and results are communicated. Looking ahead, and starkly put, interfaith actors face an undercurrent of questioning about how they can transform a *kumbaya* coming together of religious leaders mouthing soothing sounds of peace and love into meaningful action.

Report structure

The report presents a “map” of the rather bewildering landscape of contemporary interfaith organizations. How have historical events and ideas shaped them and how do they relate to other social and political movements (for example for peace and global climate change)? Interfaith efforts operate on a wide spectrum of global and local engagement, from highly theoretical and academic to grassroots organizing. Some organizations are very loose arrangements dependent cooperation on volunteers and friendships, while others represent elaborate international bodies and networks. Groups exist along a spectrum of engagement from formal to informal and intellectual dialogue to collective action. This rich diversity exacerbates the knowledge challenges. Origins, purpose, and scope vary widely. Some groups were created in direct response to a specific event: the global challenges that September 11, 2001 represented, for example. Others emerged as part of a specific societal invitation or landmark in religious history, like Vatican II. Ideals embodied in the United Nations, of common efforts for peace and social welfare, have encouraged a variety of interfaith responses. The perspective looks beyond interfaith, intrafaith, or interreligious dialogue to related secular approaches and organizations. The report explores both harmony and tensions within the interfaith movement, between engagement models, defined purposes, and end goals. Tensions can be overt and blatant at times, though more often they are quite subtle. An example is a pull between a harmonious and differentiated community or one that is more syncretic. Most organizations do not occupy one extreme but sit along a broad spectrum between seemingly incongruous choices.

Chapters one and two trace the history of interfaith work and highlight some key ideas and intellectual approaches. Ancient traditions but especially the post WWII era and the Cold War shaped religious and thus interfaith developments, as did the social changes of the 1960s and the watershed year of 2000, the UN Millennium summit, and the aftermath of 9/11. Religious studies in various regions shaped the intellectual background of interfaith and interreligious understanding.

Chapters three and four review the current interfaith landscape, identifying trends, gaps, and strengths and highlighting leading organizations. It distinguishes different institutional structures, for example civil society, local/regional efforts, academia, theological education, formal religious institutions and initiatives, transnational and global institutions, and governmental and intergovernmental. Grassroots level organizations are often so hyper local that they have little formal connection with concrete associations or larger networks, except perhaps through membership networks. Nonetheless they often share a common history and trajectory, though strategies and theory of change within each vary, sometimes widely (even wildly).

Short accounts of different organizations and initiatives are included in the appendix. They include major interfaith institutions but the sampling is illustrative, not comprehensive. Various “foundational” documents are presented as a reference.

The report aims both at those involved in interfaith work and to those looking in. It provides a broad portrait of institutions and issues: not a directory, but a narrative and a “map” of the territory. It might help the left and right hands to appreciate better the work of others. More ambitiously, paths that advance interfaith harmony, peace, and development are highlighted. The report does not propound or advocate a specific model or theory of change, though in seeking to “map” the wide-ranging organizations and actors, there is an implicit ordering and assessment of both form and ideas.

Notes

1. Definitions and terminology are problematic and often hotly disputed (see Appendix A). Where feasible the report follows terms used by protagonists, while respecting the subtle and important distinctions that terminology debates reflect. The most commonly used term, interfaith, is the a default.
2. Reflected in the title of *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, eds. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
3. KAICIID has undertaken a peace mapping project, which endeavors to capture basic information about a wide range of interfaith efforts where peace and conflict resolution are a central goal.

CHAPTER 1

An Evolving Interfaith Movement

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue, cooperation, and action span an enormously wide set of activities with roots deep in history.¹ This chapter explores how contemporary institutions and approaches have evolved, situating interfaith activity in the broader historical context. It is schematic, highlighting turning points along the way and links to related historical events and social and political movements. Specific events gave rise to the constellation of efforts that have coalesced into a larger, though still fragmented, contemporary interfaith movement. The discussion complements chapter two, that focuses more specifically on intellectual and theological currents that have shaped interfaith action.

The historical narrative needs to be approached cautiously; as scholars Jose Casanova² and Peter Berger³ emphasize, what we term “interfaith engagement” is very much a modern phenomenon. It is linked to the emergence of increasingly plural societies, to complex (and changing) public roles of religious institutions in contemporary nation states and the international arena, and to freedom in choosing and changing one’s religious adherence that, where it prevails, allows far more people today to elect the religious tradition they follow. Nonetheless, history offers an essential backdrop to understanding the contemporary landscape.

Religious and political authority, early interfaith encounters

The very idea that the proper respective roles and distinctions between state and religion, an important aspect of contemporary interreligious relationships, need to be defined is a modern notion. Arguably, it is one deeply colored by Western European and North American history and beliefs, more than other world regions. The past norm was a close intertwining of religious and political authority, and included deeply ingrained notions of a divine right to rule and divinely determined social hierarchies. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia is taken as marking a new era of the nation state where political and religious authority were separated and distinguished.

Even long thereafter understandings of hierarchy and authority, patterns of trade, land tenure, gender relations, legal principles, and breakthroughs of intellect and invention had religious as well as political and economic dimensions. Before and after Westphalia, many wars were waged and explained in religious terms, as was keeping and building the peace. Many narratives attribute brutality and cultural advances alike to religious inspiration but other factors were obviously in play. The Crusades and the emergence of humanitarian principles are examples of the complex interplay of religious and other forces in key historical developments.

It was in both Europe and America that the points of reference for relationships between political and religious authority took on forms that still shape many contemporary debates. Especially noteworthy were the 1905 French Law of *Laïcité*,⁴ which sharply limited religious authority, and the American notion, one that has evolved over time, of the appropriate “wall of separation” between church and state. Historical trajectories differed widely by region, however, and hence current understandings of norms differ sharply. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century (especially relevant for the Arab world), religious/secular debates around independence struggles of colonized peoples in Africa and Asia, political settlements following conflicts, for example in Central and South America, and Communist approaches to religious beliefs and institutions shaped the complex mosaic of state/religion relationships that today defines how secular and religious institutions relate, especially in nation states. This mosaic (which took place in different eras and places) represents a critical backdrop for interreligious relationships and thus dialogue.⁵

What we might today call interfaith dialogue and cooperation took at least three historical forms. The first was an intellectualized dialogue that took place, generally among religious scholars. The second centered on the practical realities of communal relationships in societies where different religious traditions coexisted and engaged. Two episodes with

somewhat legendary status in interfaith history highlight the ancient origins of interreligious activity and some enduring ideals. During the rule of the Emperor Ashoka Maurya, the Indian, Buddhist emperor during the third century BCE, Hindus, Jains, and Pagans were as welcome as Buddhists, and the emperor held that harming someone else's religion was harming one's own. Ashoka is held up still as an enlightened ruler in his regard for mutual respect, irrespective of religious adherence.⁶ The second example was the Iberian *convivencia*, the period from the eighth through the fifteenth century CE when, at least in memory, Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in harmony. Themes that are highlighted when the *convivencia* is invoked—respect for diversity, harmony, tolerance, and mutual learning—endure as interreligious ideals. There are many other pre-modern instances where leaders and scholars explored the frontiers among religious traditions and empires and sought harmony where there was tension.^{7,8}

The practical, de facto overlapping of religious traditions and practices in places where one took on features of others can also be seen as “interfaith.” There are countless examples of shared traditions and histories: Hinduism and Islam among the Malays and Cham peoples in Southeast Asia; traditional practices and Christianity and Islam in Africa; Christianity, indigenous religions, and African beliefs in South America and the Caribbean; and Sikhs and Sufis in India charted a course of mutual harmony and growth in the time of Guru Nanak (1469–1539).⁹ An important thread linking these different encounters (which include both verifiable history and legend) is the fact that almost every religious tradition emerged in relationships with others, sometimes as offshoots of a central group, as a new interpretation, or with more general mutual learning and growth. These interactions and distinctions influenced each religious community to varying degrees, both in tension and in collaboration. With this in mind, histories of violent or non-violent engagement cannot be viewed simply as linear; historical encounters and intertwined histories figure into current dialogues and encounters.

Interfaith or intrafaith?

Interfaith generally refers to relations among different religious traditions, but intrafaith or ecumenical relationships have complex and important historical roots and are vital today. The splintering of Christian denominations (creating



Madrid, Escorial Library

Convivencia: Muslim and Christian women play chess drawn on parchment, found in *El Libro de los Juegos*, which was commissioned by Alphonse X of Castile in the thirteenth century.

divides between east and west and the Reformation) and efforts to restore communion are perhaps the best documented examples but parallel efforts address tensions and differences within Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and other traditions.

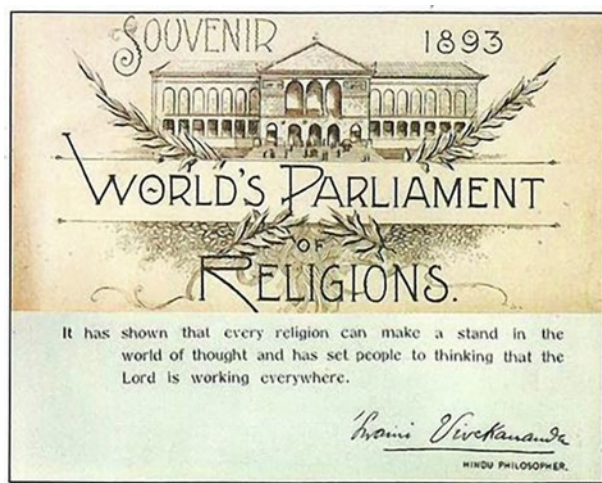
The Anglican Catholic Church dialogue is a contemporary intrafaith example, as are many ventures of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican. Structured ecumenical activities focus on Christian unity and aim toward full communion; they come alongside ecumenical Christian efforts to unify through engaging socially, an approach emphasized now by Pope Francis. Many churches measure unity theologically, and temporary arrangements can dissipate once conditions change. Though church unity is a difficult challenge, various churches have undergone change linked to dialogue efforts and other forces.

Christian ecumenical efforts were especially significant during the late nineteenth century. The world missionary conference movement (marked by the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910) emerged in large part out of recognition of the scandal of competition among missions. Edinburgh is often described as the birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement; the Life and Work Movement focused on the practical activities of the churches, and the Faith and Order Movement on the beliefs and organization of the churches and the problems involved in their possible reunion. A 1920 encyclical from the (Orthodox) Synod of Constantinople suggested a “fellowship of churches” similar to the League of Nations. Leaders representing more than 100 churches voted in 1937–1938 to found the WCC; it was inaugurated only after World War II.

Growing awareness of religious diversity: The 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions

Mass movements of people in different world regions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought people of different religious traditions into closer daily contact. Rapid urbanization, the industrial revolution, and transformations in communications fueled cultural, political, and social upheavals. Traditional religious institutions were part of the turmoil and it gave rise to modern interfaith consciousness, initiatives, and institutions.

The 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions¹⁰ in Chicago is commonly seen as the start of the modern interfaith movement. This ambitious meeting was distinctly American in context and ethos. Waves of mostly poor immigrants from



A Swami Vivekananda signed copy of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions souvenir.

southern Europe, including many Jews fleeing Russia, fueled xenophobia and nativist feelings and laws designed to limit the entry of migrants (the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882 and the Immigration Restriction League was established in 1894). In part to contest nativist politics, a private group of religious leaders organized the interfaith gathering in Chicago (linked to the World's Columbian Exposition) to bring together what they saw as world religious leaders. Tensions between cultural opening and cultural narrowing affected who did and did not attend the Parliament.¹¹ The very idea perturbed some established leaders: Pope Leo XIII censored Catholics who attended such “promiscuous events,”

and the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to bless it. The Parliament itself was Christian-centric with a strong undercurrent of evangelization directed at the other religious leaders. In a male dominated religious setting there were various women speakers. Despite tensions and undercurrents, the Parliament opened new windows to many Americans about the wide array of world religions, and that captured imaginations. Several non-Christian leaders, including Swami Vivekananda, gained stature and propounded their messages of harmony in various forms over the following years.

Various interfaith initiatives came in the immediate aftermath of the 1893 Parliament. Some survived while others vanished. The National Conference of Jews and Christians (that later became the National Conference for Community and Justice—NCCJ) emerged in the U.S. context, where Jews, to assimilate, developed brotherhood committees along with Protestant Churches. In the ensuing decades there was, however, no obvious focal point or sense of direction for interfaith cooperation. It was not a priority of the era.

A turbulent early 20th century for international affairs and religious institutions

The first decades of the twentieth century were a turbulent era—politically, socially, and economically—with two world wars, many regional wars, and revolutionary upheavals including those that brought Communist rule to Russia and China. It was the height of the colonial era but also a time when independence movements emerged. While religious institutions, leaders, and beliefs played a part in these events, religious issues were rarely at the forefront. Interreligious dialogue was a grace note in the era's history, and dueling ideologies seemed far more significant. Even so, there were efforts at rapprochement (large and small)¹² and many organizations and approaches that followed, were grounded in events and ideas of these times.

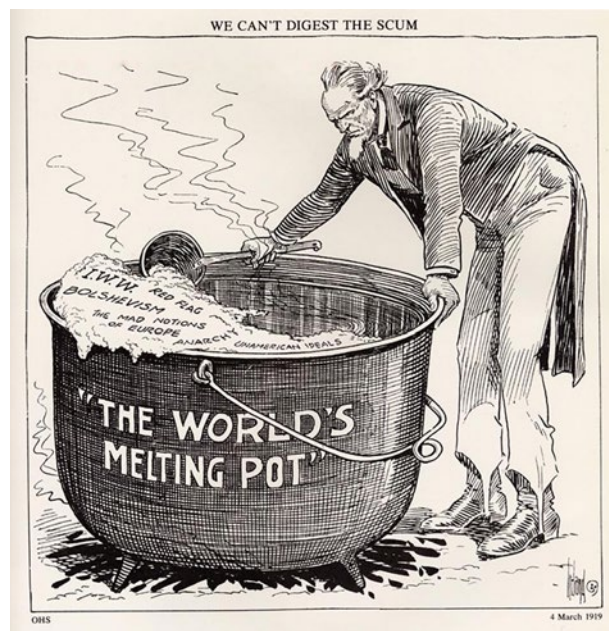
Profound changes were taking place in religious institutions around the world as they engaged and reacted to world events, but still more to the modernity that was sweeping across the globe. Reactions differed widely, with some traditions embracing aspects of social and economic change, while others effectively withdrew or resisted. Important developments (with lasting consequences) included the emergence of evangelical churches and the Social Gospel movement,

religious transformations linked to colonialism, and strong reactions against religious authority, especially in France and in the Communist world. Important changes in the Catholic Church culminated in Vatican II (launched in 1962), reflecting large upheavals in the world's largest and most powerful single religious tradition.

As the twentieth century began political developments shaped the nascent interfaith movement. In both Europe and America, new norms took on forms that still color many contemporary debates. The 1905 French Law of *Laïcité*¹³ established one model that deliberately excluded religious authority from governance, while the evolving American secular approach focused more on notions of non-interference by the state in religious matters. Similar changes in relationships between secular and religious authorities were taking place globally.

Though they were rarely at the forefront, religious forces influenced the era's social and political history in significant ways, as did relationships among different religious communities. The religious currents took distinctive forms in different world regions. Tensions in Ireland and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) involved a complex brew of politics, ideology, and economics and in both cases, religious tensions and religious actors played no small part. Persecution of some religious minorities, notably Jewish communities, had obvious if complex religious roots and consequences. Buddhism and Hinduism were entwined in nationalist movements in Japan and India, drawing on both violent and nonviolent rhetoric within their respective communities.

Regions where Islam was the dominant religion saw turbulent change, starting with reforms in the Ottoman Empire. After the empire collapsed in 1923, a host of different movements emerged, including religious orthodoxy and secular nationalism. Of lasting significance were the consolidation of power relationships between the House of Saud and the Wahhabi movement and the deliberately secular regimes of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey (1923–1938), the Shah of Iran (1941–1979), and Egyptian nationalism. The Iranian revolution of 1979 that overthrew the secular regime was a major watershed (though this was not altogether obvious at the time). Iran's theocratic model and its international outreach continue to shape understandings of (and ferocious debates about) the roles of religious leaders and institutions in contemporary affairs.



The red scare occurred after World War I, when Americans feared that radical immigrants and home-grown revolutionaries threatened the U.S. Cartoon by Billy Ireland, March 1919.

The turbulent Partition in South Asia turned about religious identities and politics.

The emergence of Zionism in the late nineteenth century and the state of Israel in the twentieth had lasting repercussions for world history and for interfaith relations. Zionism was born in Eastern Europe, amidst political upheaval and a historically anti-Semitic ethos. Christian, particularly Catholic rhetoric, through the centuries fed anti-Semitism, including blood libel claims, trials, and mobs, with Jews blamed for many evils. The father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, wrote his pivotal piece, *Der Judenstaat* in 1896, responding to the Dreyfus Affair in France (when a Jewish officer in the French Army was falsely convicted of treason). The atmosphere of distrust combined with centuries of ancient prayers and practices focused on Jerusalem and growing nationalist sentiments in Europe. Various agreements signed during the First World War, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 and the Balfour Declaration in 1917, spoke of a Jewish homeland. Then came the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust. When Israel was created in 1948 seven Arab countries immediately invaded; 700,000 Palestinians were displaced. Links between political Zionism and religious Judaism represent to this day a central,

deeply contentious theme in interfaith relations, far beyond the region directly involved.

Two enduring global interreligious organizations were born during this period: the International Association for Religious Freedom (established in 1900) and the World Congress of Faiths (established in 1936). The WCC emerged from the ecumenical initiatives leading up to World War II.

Most interfaith efforts through the post-World War II period can be seen as individual, highly localized, and focused on educating others about religious diversity. Long-standing, traditional patterns of parochial thinking were challenged, at least among various elites, by more cosmopolitan notions that included tolerance of different worldviews, including religious beliefs. Three threads of the interfaith movement can be traced to this period: protection of religious rights, pragmatic collaboration, and conscious efforts to bridge divides of understanding. Links were forged between peace and interfaith cooperation. Interfaith and interreligious understanding was influenced by academic developments, though collaboration between individual religious leaders and communities, especially around labor rights and emerging social responses to urban poverty, was probably the most robust influence on emerging institutions and ideas.

Ferment in the Post World War II years

The years following the end of World War II saw the extraordinary creation of a new global institutional architecture, centered on the United Nations (established in 1945). Its first assembly was held in a San Francisco church but religious engagement was far from a central issue in the politics of the creation of the UN. Religious beliefs, actors, and tensions were part of the events that forged new global institutions, but generally without formal or explicit roles.¹⁴ This was in part because the Communist Bloc of nations, which took on significant roles as the Cold War began, was aggressively non-religious. The elaboration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) as an expression of common ideals included an effort to distill the essential core of shared religious beliefs. A UNESCO-led consultation in 1948 on the proposed declaration sought inputs from religious leaders, as well as philosophers and other public intellectuals to test and justify the claims to represent universal norms.¹⁵ To this day the UDHR represents both an ultimate vision of interfaith

cooperation and a point of contention on areas of difference and discord.

With the Cold War and awareness that nuclear brinkmanship presented existential threats, a new set of peace efforts took shape. These had complex links to religious and interreligious cooperation. The devastation of the two world wars, including the nuclear bombings at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the Holocaust, and the nonviolent movement in India, galvanized new responses, both separately and often juxtaposed. Nuclear disarmament emerged as an important, global issue. Religious communities played vital roles in contributing to efforts to frame common goals, and world events gave impetus to interfaith action for peace.

Interfaith cooperation for peace in more tangible forms emerged almost simultaneously in different parts of the globe: in Japan, the United States, Turkey, and Europe.¹⁶ These efforts differed from earlier interfaith efforts in the common, activist ideal that a collective movement could lead towards a more peaceful, non-violent world. Two transnational efforts with strong religious roots took form during this period: Pax Christi (established in 1945) and Moral Re-Armament (established formally in 1938 and redubbed Initiatives for Change in 2001). Initially, both focused on reconciliation in Europe. There were also Christian efforts to engage in dialogue in Communist dominated societies with their secular and hostile government counterparts. More broadly, interfaith efforts tended to focus largely on the challenge of reconciling communities and individuals, specifically in resolving individual conflicts and in looking to address the perceived causes of tensions and conflicts.

Various Japanese religious groups have been consistent and active participants in interfaith organizations and have provided both moral and financial support over the years. Japan played significant roles in the international efforts that were taking shape in the post World War II era. Postwar social upheavals and more specific efforts to counter the influence and image of warlike Shinto traditions contributed to the emergence of various religious groups and movements that included Rissho Kosei-kai, Soka Gakkai, and various other organizations that worked for peace and nuclear nonproliferation (for example, Gensuikyō or Japanese Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, established in 1955). However, considerable controversy surrounded religious efforts, both because some sects promoted violent actions and, in the case of

Soka Gakkai, quite aggressive proselytization and contentious political influence was involved.

Secular paradigms and challenges

During the Cold War years (1945–1989), a secular paradigm tended to dominate many approaches to international relations in the United States and parts of Europe and Australia, to a degree that many actors were quite blinded to the enduring power of religion. The common assumption was that, with modernization, religious institutions and practices were less important than in the past; religious matters were to remain in the private sphere with a sharp separation of church and state. The anti-religious ethos of the Communist Bloc clearly muted discussions about religion in international politics and institutions. There were obvious exceptions, prominent among them the religious tensions in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and those that dominated South Asian history, but in general the Cold War years are remembered as a period largely barren of religious focus.

Several important interfaith institutions grew nonetheless, but to a large extent they operated at that time on the fringes of formal international relations. The most significant was the World Conference on Religion and Peace (today known as Religions for Peace—RfP).¹⁷ It was formally created in 1970, but formed over an extended period through smaller gatherings in the 1960s that focused largely on a multireligious call for nuclear disarmament. A repurposing and expansion of Religions for Peace in the early 1990s involved pioneering steps towards cooperation (formal and informal) between interfaith actors and governments and intergovernmental agencies.

Initiatives during this era were often propelled by the passion and financial resources of remarkable individuals. An example was the Temple of Understanding in New York, established by Juliet Hollister; *Life Magazine* described the Temple in 1962 as her “magnificent obsession.” It had the blessing of Eleanor Roosevelt, and envisaged a place and institution that would be a “spiritual United Nations.” The Temple of Understanding, in a different form persists to this day, focused on peace education and advocacy within the United Nations.¹⁸ The North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) was born in 1988 during what was termed a North American Assisi, as many religious groups came together in Wichita, Kansas and a dynamic organization emerged and was formalized. The

United Religions Initiative (URI)¹⁹ was born in 1993, also largely inspired by a dynamic individual, Episcopal Bishop William Swing. Its name was a deliberate parallel to the United Nations (its establishment was tied to the 50th anniversary of the UN’s creation), and its ethos has been influenced by a grassroots notion of organization, participation, and broad inclusion. URI is based today in San Francisco and has evolved into a global organization grounded in cooperation circles (CCs). Its methodology and philosophy were influenced by the appreciative inquiry approach of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva.

The transformation of former colonies into independent states continued through the mid and late twentieth century and religion was often a part of that history, with widespread tensions, positive impetus, and some examples of interfaith cooperation. Religious leaders were active in independence movements in many states. More broadly, religious actors, individually or cooperatively were deeply engaged in global and national efforts to advance civil and human rights. In India and Pakistan nationalist movements were deeply infused with religious approaches and led by remarkable spiritual figures, notably Mahatma Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan, and interreligious tensions deeply colored political settlements around independence. Religious tensions (Muslim/Hindu) drove the tragic history of Partition when independence came, dividing the region along religious lines.²⁰ The conflict over Kashmir and tensions involving the status of the large population of Muslims in India persist to this day. In Latin America, as competing social and economic ideologies dominated political developments, Catholic Liberation theology played pivotal roles in various extended struggles against repressive governments (including the United States). Liberation Theology influenced other religious traditions and major interfaith movements. Interfaith initiatives and inspirational leadership—including for example Vatican initiatives and Pax Christi as well as movements led by women inspired by religious faith—played important roles.

States used religious arguments to fight rebellions in different world regions but religious arguments also inspired resistance movements. Examples include Kenya’s Mau Mau rebellion, bitter ethnic and religious tensions that eventually divided Sudan between north and south, and the extended struggle against Apartheid in South Africa (where religious leaders played vital roles in a complex struggle that often pitted

religious leaders against one another). Religious and secular tensions were central in the war that led to the creation of Bangladesh as an independent nation in 1971 and tensions between secular principles and the deeply held (and conflicted) Muslim faith of the people continue to this day. Bangladesh stands as an example of complex debates in the post-World War II era over the role of religious institutions and identity in relation to newly independent states. The role of Islam, often reflecting intrafaith tensions among Muslims, in emerging nations has been a source of tension and debate in countries ranging from Indonesia to Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Growth of civil society and community organizations, end of the Cold War

The 1960s and 1970s saw the explosive increase of civil society organizations and their growing roles in many sectors and world regions. Many organizations were religious in inspiration (Catholic Relief Services and Islamic Relief among them) and they had a marked influence on the way in which religious contributions to society were viewed. They also engaged in practical ways with different organizations. Another dimension of the civil society revolution was widely varied and increasing interfaith work at local levels, though it is in general poorly mapped in any aggregate form. Civil society and community-based dynamics, together, laid foundations that encouraged or supported religious actors as they took on new forms of engagement and advocacy, notably work for the environment, poverty alleviation, and peace. Many efforts tapped into, or were born out of, tight networks of religious communities and spiritual movements. Many political parties and movements had roots in religious institutions and beliefs.

Interreligious activists during this period tended to be torn between models that implicitly favored top-down approaches (a traditional religious model) and others that were more consciously bottom-up or grassroots in structure. Various influential people-power movements had religious pedigrees, notably liberation theology in Latin America, the civil rights movements in Northern Ireland and the U.S., the Carnation revolution (Portugal 1974), the Singing revolution (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania 1988) and the Velvet revolution (Czechoslovakia 1989). RfP was shaped by these developments as it struggled to find a middle ground between formal religious leadership and a more community grounded approach.²¹

The end of the Cold War was an important historical marker that shaped interfaith institutions and approaches. The collapse of the Soviet Union after 1989 transformed the landscape for religious institutions. A religious resurgence contributed to the opening of the Soviet bloc and its collapse, notably in Poland and East Germany.²² Religious values had taken on political dimensions in the form of protest activities for religious and other human rights.²³ Religious freedom emerged as a goal that, to a degree, brought different traditions together. After 1989, religious groups that had been restricted or banned were suddenly free to operate in public. The religious revivals that followed included Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Buddhists, Jews, and Pentecostals. Globally, the thaw in Cold War tensions opened the way for different forms of cooperation but also for an unleashing of religious tensions that had been stifled and suppressed. This in turn presented new interfaith challenges (notably in the Balkans and parts of Africa) and new forms of response.

The Catholic Church takes on interreligious engagement: Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, and Assisi

The early 1960s saw changes in Catholic Church approaches to relationships with other religious bodies that had profound implications both for Catholic communities and beyond. The Catholic Church engagement with other religious traditions merits exploration far beyond the scope of this reflection, because of its depth, global reach, and elaborate intellectual contributions (see Chapter 3).

The Second Vatican Council, the twenty-first ecumenical council and the second held at the Vatican, opened in 1962 and closed in 1965 with sweeping agreements on change that amounted to a revolutionary opening up of Church thinking and practical approach. Besides changes in liturgical practices, encouragement of lay leadership, and decrees on ecumenism, the Council approved *Nostra Aetate*,²⁴ a declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions. The document, whose 50th anniversary was celebrated in 2015, is credited with stimulating many ecumenical and interfaith studies and gave energy to interfaith initiatives in the 1960s and beyond. Reflecting consultation with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) leaders, it states that the Church accepts some truths inherent in other religions. It also includes a formal resolution to cease

blaming Jews for the death of Jesus, previously enshrined in church liturgy. Follow-up guidelines in 1974 and 1985 further instructed the Church on interfaith relations and teaching about Judaism in Catechism and Sunday school.²⁵ Most important, *Nostra Aetate* set in motion a chain reaction whereby religious communities developed and institutionalized approaches to the religious “other” that had profound structural impacts on the development of interfaith work and institutions.

The 1986 Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Italy, was another landmark. Pope John Paul II gathered 160 religious leaders from many traditions, against some earnest objections within the Church. The gathering was an unprecedented effort to bring leaders together to pray (emphasizing that they were not praying together). Assisi took place at a time of world tension, and its goal was to bring leaders from the world’s leading religions together in the interest of peace. The iconic event marked the start of an annual Pilgrimage for peace organized by the Community of Sant’Egidio on behalf of the Catholic Church, in different European cities. Each event continues the “spirit of Assisi,” described as a commitment to deepening each participant’s faith through prayer in tandem, while actively engaging with the religious other. The 2015 Prayer for Peace took place in Tirana, Albania and the 30th anniversary was marked by a Prayer for Peace in Assisi in 2016, attended by Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomeo of Constantinople, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Pope’s leadership plays important roles both in specific interfaith approaches and in the accompanying tone. The contemporary impact of Pope Francis extends far beyond Catholic circles and his symbolic leadership marks a significant shift in focus. Pope Benedict XVI, who opposed syncretism, took a skeptical approach to interfaith dialogue and specifically Catholic-Muslim dialogue. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, a Missionary of Africa and scholar of Islam, was removed from the presidency of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the range of topics for dialogue was explicitly narrowed to matters of morality as defined by the Decalogue. Beyond reservations about theological dialogue on both sides, discussion of human rights and religious liberty are difficult with many Muslim states holding important reservations on both; the policies of the states varying greatly. When Pope Benedict XVI used a highly negative quote from a Byzantine



Pope Paul VI hands Orthodox Metropolitan Meliton of Heliopolis a decree during the December 1965 session of the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council in Vatican City. The decree cancels excommunications that led to the break between the Roman and Orthodox churches nine centuries before.

emperor about Islam in an academic address at Regensburg, a furor erupted across the Islamic world. After the Muslim response in “A Common Word Between Us,” a formal dialogue resumed between the Holy See and Muslim scholars on a double agenda of theology and human rights.

Towards the turn of the century, more visible interfaith action: 1993 Parliament of World Religions, the Jubilee 2000 movement

The post-Cold War era was transforming international politics swiftly and dramatically as the 100th anniversary of the 1893 Parliament of World Religions approached. Globalization was a much discussed phenomenon but also one that shaped daily lives in tangible ways: development of the Internet and the personal computer, for example, was increasing connectivity in ways few people could have imagined only a few years earlier.

It was in this context that plans took shape to hold a new Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago in 1993. A local Chicago group, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (established in 1985), led and organized the 1993 parliament. They wanted to ensure that the event was widely attended and it was, with some 8,000 participants. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley served as Honorary Chairman, with Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama as distinguished guests. Two public conflicts added drama: three Jewish organizations objected to the participation of the Nation of Islam, and some Orthodox church leaders withdrew as they refused to participate with non-theists.

Debates around the 1993 Parliament and its significance for interreligious relations were colored by religiously inspired violence in different world regions. Six months earlier, a group of self-professed Islamic terrorists detonated a bomb at the World Trade Center in New York City, killing six people. A gamut of events, among them the Iranian revolution and the US hostage crisis, the rise of the Jewish Defense League, the Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland, sectarian violence in Pakistan, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the wars in the Balkans (as the former Yugoslavia disintegrated), vociferous voices of radical Christians in the United States, and extremism in Hindu and Sikh circles in India, all fed concern about religious violence. The 1993 Parliament, nonetheless, symbolized a common and public emphasis on the positive contributions that religious communities could bring and suggested that far more could be achieved together than separately. The Parliament prominently featured a call for a global ethic, promoted by Swiss theologian Hans Küng and others. This ethic emphasized common teachings that united different faith traditions. Several public gatherings at the Parliament centered on signing the aspirational *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic*.²⁶

Interreligious action was also inspired and galvanized by the approaching new millennium. The Jubilee campaign to cancel debts of poor countries, like the Parliament, highlights the confluence of events in the late 1990s, with rising religious activism, mounting awareness of the effects of globalization, and calls for cooperation to advance common goals and norms. The Jubilee groups and actions drew on community organizing around environmental concerns. Civil society activism reflected wide distrust of various international approaches, public and private. The Jubilee movement was inspired and supported above all by the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion. As it advanced, its mobilizing effect drew communities together around social justice issues. As the millennium approached, with the historic Summit of world political leaders at the United Nations, the Jubilee movement helped to give focus to widening concerns around development and peace.²⁷

Global networks for collective action grew as technology made it easier for civil society groups and faith-inspired efforts to organize across world regions. Once isolated in their local actions, many found like-minded groups through emerging

online networks. The Jubilee campaign took advantage of this trend, franchising organizations and local groups that wished to join the effort. Jewish and Christian denominations, international development groups (like the World Council of Churches, Church World Service, and American Jewish World Service), environmental groups, and local unaffiliated groups sought to work within a common framework for action.²⁸ Jewish-Christian cooperation around the Jubilee was led from the WCC in Geneva.²⁹ Sectoral boundaries often broke down, for example engaging leading cultural figures like Bono from the famous music group U2. The impact of the Jubilee movement on global lending practices is still disputed, but there is little doubt that the movement changed the nature of the discourse about world poverty adding ethical, moral dimensions to previously technocratic debates.³⁰ The Jubilee campaign itself continues, although with much less momentum than before. The Jubilee campaign and the 1993 Parliament and its successors demonstrated the potential capacity to harness religious activity and activism to address global issues.

Not all religious and interreligious activities were so directly geared to peace and not all were non-violent. Recent decades have seen the growth of important exclusivist and more fundamentalist currents and in a few instances they have coalesced around intra or even interfaith lines. Different combinations of activists have found each other as Internet access and practical applications have grown and developed. Some groups rallied around opposition to globalization and particularly to global capitalism and U.S. and European hegemony. Many allied themselves with the largely secular World Social Forum and other such efforts. A small part turned towards more extremist religious views and, within that minority, some espoused violence as a means. Author Karen Armstrong highlights the global linkages that were part of this extremist trend, noting that Saudi Arabians who volunteered to fight for Afghanistan and later in Bosnia and Chechnya “were chiefly motivated by a desire to help their Muslim brothers and sisters.”³¹ We may be seeing this motivation persist as the so-called Islamic State (IS) attracts participants from around the world.

In sum, the 1893 Parliament of Religions might be seen in retrospect as largely a response to intellectual and religious curiosity and growing religious diversity. A century later the challenge for the 1993 Parliament was fundamentally different, with far higher stakes. These have risen higher still in

the ensuing decades as religious wars and tensions and the rise of violent extremism have shaken both national and international affairs. The challenges of plural societies and the complex roles of religion in daily lives, in social cohesion of communities, of national politics, and international relations, have taken on new dimensions. Interreligious cooperation has come to be seen in many settings as fundamental to peace, human security, and prosperity in the increasingly complex and often fractious world.

Religious peacebuilding

In reflections about religious roles in international affairs, including interfaith action, one publication is cited repeatedly, *Religion: the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, edited by former diplomat Douglas Johnston and scholar Cynthia Sampson.³² First published in 1995, it remains a seminal text pointing to blind spots in relation to religion in many diplomatic and international affairs circles. It also highlights a sharpening focus on interreligious and religious peacebuilding, both within individual traditions and as an interreligious endeavor.³³ The changing nature of conflicts in many quite different world regions and the often contested role of religious tensions and leaders has spurred rising interest in understanding and engaging religious communities. Religious roles in diplomacy and peacebuilding (whether Track I-associated directly with official peace negotiations, Track II-entirely outside that framework, or Track 1.5-a blend) can be significant and are receiving increasing recognition.³⁴ This reflects experiences showing potential paths where both official and unofficial leaders can engage each other through back channels in working for peace.³⁵ Religious actors may be well positioned to play creative roles in such efforts, even where religious issues were not central in peace thinking and negotiations.

Religious leaders and organizations have worked actively for peace in many specific situations, including through creative and active conflict resolution efforts. Notable examples include negotiations facilitated by the lay Catholic Sant'Egidio Community in Mozambique, Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and other areas; Pope John Paul II and Fidel Castro in the 1990s; and President Mohammad Khatami of Iran's 1997 initiative for a dialogue between the Islamic world and the Christian west.³⁶ Most recently, the Catholic Church has played important roles in overcoming obstacles in the path of US-Cuba relations.

Religion and the United Nations; the Millennium Summit, MDGs, SDGs, and changing religious engagement

The events of the 1990s and the year 2000 marked turning points in reflections about religious roles in society and, more specifically, in the context of the United Nations. Religious engagement within the UN system was rather murky from its beginning. While freedom of belief is a foundational principle (one of the “four freedoms”) and embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, participation of individual leaders and heads of religious communities at the United Nations Secretariat and in different specialized agencies has varied widely, ranging from exclusion to advisory roles to established partnerships. The exception is the distinctive role of the Holy See as an Observer, sitting among nation states. Most religious organizations participate as civil society organizations; an organization of religious NGOs has met since 1972.³⁷

Recent decades have seen significant shifts in religious approaches at the United Nations. Two well-informed practitioners describe the change as follows: “We are now past the wistful and quixotic age of religious structures being postured for the UN. Well-heeled Episcopalians and the like who have tried for so many decades to build a parallel structure, a spiritual UN, have now largely folded their energies into the multi-pronged and more pragmatic approaches.”³⁸ In the nature of the United Nations, ideas and approaches vary, ranging (still) from ideas that formal religious structures should play far larger roles to opposition to virtually any religious voice and, perhaps most commonly, approaches bordering on indifference. Overall, however, there is growing attention to interreligious tensions and peacebuilding potential, with a variety of efforts to engage interreligious organizations within the United Nations context. Many courageous souls have contributed to the change, (for example, Robert Muller and Avon Mattison—Pathways to Peace), struggling to get religion through the doors of the UN.³⁹

In August 2000, shortly before the UN Millennium Summit, one of the largest ever gatherings of religious leaders was held at the UN in New York. The gathering was designed initially to help shape the millennium agenda that would emerge from the General Assembly discussions in September 2000. In practice it represented a rather haphazard event, characterized by its poor management, visible interreligious tensions, and

last minute changes that included a furor around a dis-invitation to the Dalai Lama. The discussions had little influence on the actions of world leaders and the shaping of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was nonetheless a landmark happening with inspirational images and momentous sound bytes. After the Summit, as the MDGs took form, interest grew among various faith-inspired groups, including RfP and the Micah Challenge. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), established initially within the World Bank, also sought to engage religious organizations more actively in the MDG framework. The challenge was difficult and, as the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs approached, it was fair to conclude that the potential for any systematic religious engagement had barely been scratched.^{40,41}

In the 2015 formulation of the successor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are to frame the scaffold for international cooperation through the year 2030, religious voices were not engaged systematically or specifically but there was considerable engagement and quite keen interest in partnerships. Pope Francis spoke to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, on the eve of approval of the SDGs, a focal point that symbolized the more active role of religious voices on the global stage.⁴²

Various factors explain a lingering distrust of religious leaders and organizations within the UN system. These include prominently concerns about religiously inspired violence, experiences with conservative faith-based lobbying on family planning issues and religious liberty, avowedly anti-religious ideologies (Communism), and fears that religious institutions were irrevocably involved in proselytization as a central motive for action. Together, these factors have limited religious engagement in the UN setting. A further complication is the tricky interrelationships between religion and culture; these tend to be blurred, despite significant differences.⁴³

Several governments (notably Turkey, Spain, Russia, Jordan, and the Philippines) have sponsored efforts to engage religious organizations formally at the United Nations. Some coalitions have specifically promoted interreligious dialogue. The Committee of Religious NGOs, a spiritual caucus of NGO's with UN consultative status, first met in 2004 and has acted as a coordinating and information body since then. Among the results of multiple efforts are the UN Alliance of Civilizations (established in 2007), the proposed UN Decade of Interreligious and

Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace (2006), and the annual World Interfaith Harmony Week (2011). Various governments and individual political leaders have led these efforts. For example, King Abdullah II of Jordan led the effort to establish the annual World Interfaith Harmony Week which is the occasion for worldwide events highlighting and celebrating interfaith work.

The increasing focus on religion at the United Nations reflects to a significant degree international concern about religious roles in violent conflict and security. It is also part of the rapid multiplication of civil society organizations and their efforts, individually and collectively, to have an impact on decisions within the vast United Nations system. The impact of individual efforts is difficult to measure though on specific issues, notably stances on reproductive health and what are defined as gender issues, intensive lobbying by a set of religious organizations, some in alliance, is recognized as a significant force for policy.⁴⁴

To end on something of a sour note, it bears mention that some religious groups are prominent among those who are most hostile to the very idea of the United Nations (though these rarely include interfaith actors). The most ardent opposition is reflected in a popular Christian fiction series, the *Left Behind* books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. To summarize part of the basic plot line, the main villain, Nicolae Carpathia, is the Anti-Christ and takes control of the United Nations as secretary-general. He uses the institution to achieve global domination, with the United Nations the world body that manifests evil incarnate. As one recent commentary notes, this reveals one of the biases of the series, and others who hold to similar beliefs about the end times: "The United Nations is evil and acts against the will of God."⁴⁵

September 11, 2001: A watershed

A long string of quite diverse incidents of violent religious extremism occurred during the last half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, but the attacks of September 11, 2001 remain a central focus. The interfaith movement came to be shaped centrally and durably by security concerns and a preoccupation with interreligious tensions and their links to conflict and violence. The attacks shocked many world leaders into action. Notwithstanding many assertions that Islam, as

a religion, was not responsible, the global conversation has tended to focus rather heavily on Islam and perceptions of its predilection to support violence.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 and others that followed thus mark a major turning point in the interreligious world, giving religious relations and tensions a sharp new focus. There have been countless interfaith gatherings in the months and years following 9/11, some local and informal, some at the most senior levels of religious and political leadership. Important global initiatives have sought to promote and sustain dialogue and “alliances of civilizations” (to contrast with the supposed “clash of civilizations”). Academic and religious leaders have launched new studies and academic programs. The World Economic Forum established a multi-year Council of 100 leaders from different sectors, including unprecedented outreach to religious leaders, to seek new approaches.⁴⁶ Think tanks, universities, NGOs, religious institutions, and businesses all engaged.

Among recent interfaith efforts (described in greater detail below) “*A Common Word Between Us and You*” merits a special focus. This letter, signed by many of the most noted scholars of Islam, addressed Christian religious leaders and aimed to alter “the rules of the (peacemaking) game by making the conversation more public.”⁴⁷ The effort set out consciously to make interreligious dialogue far more visible. A Common Word signaled a new public domain that religious leaders wished to occupy, especially through the use of the Internet and social media. In January 2016 a distinguished group of Muslim scholars met in Marrakech, Morocco and signed an unprecedented common declaration focused on protection of religious minorities called the Marrakech Declaration.⁴⁸ That effort also engaged different religious communities both as witnesses and participants and it aims to link core theological principles to action.

The watershed of 9/11 inspired a wide variety of initiatives by community organizations to bridge understanding among religious communities. These efforts take many forms, and have been especially marked (in terms of number and diversity) in the United States and Europe. Many interfaith efforts have built on longstanding local organizations and approaches. Prominent examples of stepped up activity include the interfaith outreach of Habitat for Humanity (which promotes a “theology of the hammer”), city-focused interfaith work such

as the Inter-Faith Ministries of Wichita, and the Washington DC Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington. The Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) represents a bolder model, operating across the United States. New academic programs focused on interreligious approaches have been launched in colleges and universities as well as seminaries; the American Academy of Religion formally recognized interfaith and interreligious studies as an area of study in 2013 and the Association of Theological Schools altered its criteria for accreditation to hold schools accountable for assuring a clear approach to promoting pluralism.

Efforts to address tensions between Muslims and followers of other religious traditions, and increasingly non-religious communities, have special importance and involve special demands. Widespread lack of knowledge about Islam and aggressive anti-Muslim propaganda, notwithstanding intensive public education efforts in schools and through media, fuel Islamophobia.⁴⁹ Efforts to address it vary from activities like new modules in schools, community interfaith programs, multi-religious shared service projects, and interfaith *iftars* (a celebration marking the breaking of the daily fast during the month of Ramadan). They undoubtedly help to change attitudes and enhance understanding, both on individual lives and on communities, but the impact is difficult to pinpoint and above all to measure. The raw tensions of the immediate post 9/11 period have been exacerbated by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, continuing tensions in Israel and Palestine, and violent conflicts where religious tensions are seen as leading or complicating factors.

Especially contentious are a set of issues surrounding women’s rights and religious freedom.⁵⁰ Shared, if unintended, alliances of liberal and conservative communities contribute to negative rhetoric about the Middle East in general and Islam specifically in several places, including North America, Europe, and South East Asia. Governments, specifically Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, have engaged in both public and private outreach efforts beyond the Middle East region to increase understanding and the public perception of Muslim countries. These efforts include intergovernmental institutions and initiatives, most notably the Doha International Center on Interreligious Dialogue in Qatar, the KAICIID Dialogue Centre in Austria, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan, the Kosovo interfaith

initiatives, and the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Azerbaijan.

The USA Patriot Act (2001), surveillance of mosques, and racial profiling all spur conversations on religion and interfaith engagement in the U.S. and Europe. Significant and troubling is a rise in anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant nativist rhetoric across Europe and the United States, tending to spike with each election cycle. The global economic downturn, beginning with 9/11 and deepened by Wall Street speculation in 2008, contributed to a general atmosphere of uncertainty. This sense of unease feeds the quest to place blame, with different, often minority, religious communities becoming scapegoats.⁵¹

A wide range of interfaith initiatives: towards a “F20”?

A rather bewildering array of interfaith initiatives have emerged in the early twenty-first century. Some are sponsored and supported by governments, others by various institutions. Among the latter is termed the “Faith 20” or “F20”; it illustrates global aspects and ambitions of some interfaith work. The F20 represents a continuing effort within the global governance constellation. Interreligious groups, organized primarily by the country hosting each meeting, have for over a decade assembled before each annual G7, G8, and G20 meeting of global leaders to reflect and advise on relevant parts of the agenda. Recent meetings took place in Brisbane in 2014, Istanbul in 2015, and Beijing in 2016, with plans for 2017 meetings in Germany. With the meetings scheduled close to the annual gathering of heads of state of the G20.⁵² A drawback for impact to date has been weak links between the F20 discussions and the *sherpas* who set and follow G20 agendas.

These challenges shine a spotlight on the roles that governments can and should play in relation to interfaith relations and institutions. Roles vary widely by country, taking different institutional forms both at national and local government levels. In the United States, efforts to formalize religious engagement with government support and to promote positive engagement are reflected in the work of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (established in 2001) that seeks to “build bridges between the federal government and nonprofit organizations, both secular and faith-based, to better serve Americans in need.”⁵³ Some 14 government departments have small offices that reach out

to faith and community actors. In 2013 the Office of Religion and Global Affairs was established in the State Department, reporting directly to the Secretary of State. To varying degrees this network of offices encourages interreligious action as part of the effort to promote constructive relationships among communities. At state and municipal levels, a wide variety of mechanisms have emerged, both reflected in legislation and regulation and less formally, linked to public institutions. Various other governments have direct outreach efforts that include national and local government interfaith endeavors. Significant programs through educational institutions are a common theme. In cities and states where interreligious strife has erupted (for example Bradford in England, Amsterdam in the Netherlands), active government outreach and support for interfaith work aims to encourage these efforts.

Notes

1. As noted above, the terms are used somewhat interchangeably, largely in keeping with usage by those involved, with full recognition that differences in understandings and usage by scholars and practitioners are significant.
2. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
3. Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014).
4. “France: The Third Republic and the 1905 Law of *Laïcité*,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, accessed on July 22, 2015, <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/france-the-third-republic-and-the-1905-law-of-em-laicite-em>.
5. Chapter 1 of Katherine Marshall’s 2013 *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers, Modern Shakers* (Routledge) outlines varying constitutional arrangements.
6. Paul Chaffee and Harish Singhal, “Reclaiming Ashoka—an Iron Age Interfaith Exemplar,” *The Interfaith Observer*, October 14, 2011, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2011/10/14/reclaiming-ashoka-an-iron-age-interfaith-exemplar.html>.
7. Saint Francis is cited as an exemplar when he failed to convert the Sultan of Egypt to Christianity but came away appreciating that Christians and Muslims could live harmoniously.
8. Paul Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi’s Mission of Peace*. (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2009).
9. M. Ashraf Haidari, “From Confrontation to Cooperation in South Asia: Lessons from Sikhism and Sufism,” *The Diplomat*, June 21, 2015, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/from-confrontation-to-cooperation-in-south-asia-lessons-from-sikhism-and-sufism/>.

10. For a rich history of the Parliament and its aftermath see: Marcus Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope: One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue*, (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 1992).
11. Anna Halafoff explores this tension further in *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Science+Business Media B.V, 2013).
12. For example, a small Christian-Marxist dialogue in parts of Eastern Europe.
13. "France: The Third Republic and the 1905 Law of *Laïcité*."
14. See: John S. Nurser, "Preparing for San Francisco" and "The Charter of the United Nations Organization," in *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002).
15. Glendon, Mary Ann. *A world made new: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), Chapter 5, pp. 73–78.
16. Patrice Brodeur, "From the Margins to the Centers of Power: The Increasing Relevance of the Global Interfaith Movement," *Cross Currents* 55, no. 1 (2005), accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.crosscurrents.org/BrodeurSpring05.htm>.
17. The records of its foundation are at Swarthmore College: "World Conference on Religion and Peace Records, 1967–1995," Swarthmore College, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/DG078WCRP.html>.
18. Juliet Hollister's obituary in the *New York Times* described her path: "As she recalled it, she was sitting in her kitchen when, over peanut butter sandwiches, she told a like-minded friend, 'The world is in a mess.' Her prescription, for a starter, was to promote dialogue and understanding among the world's religions." Wolfgang Saxon, "Juliet Garrison Hollister, 84; Led Temple of Understanding," *New York Times*, November 30, 2000, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/30/nyregion/juliet-garretson-hollister-84-led-temple-of-understanding.html>.
19. "About URI," United Religions Initiative, accessed February 3, 2017, https://www.uri.org/about_uri.
20. Nisid Hajari, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015). William Dalrymple's brilliant *New Yorker* review, "The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition," highlights these religious dimensions: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>.
21. Brodeur, "From the Margins to the Centers of Power."
22. For example, see: Wendy Tyndale, *Protestants in Communist East Germany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).
23. David Kowalewski, "Protest for National Rights in the USSR: Characteristics and Consequences," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 4 (1980): 430.
24. "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: Nostra Aetate, Proclaimed By His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965," The Holy See, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.
25. A full history of these events is provided in Michael Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).
26. Hans Kung, *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration* (Chicago: Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993), <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/declaration-toward-a-global-ethic>.
27. Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, "Learning with Jubilee: World Bank engagement with the Jubilee 2000 Campaign," in *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2004), pages 35–38.
28. Tamara Straus, "Jubilee 2000: The Movement America Missed," *Alternet*, March 5, 2001, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.alternet.org/story/10568/jubilee_2000%3A_the_movement_america_missed.
29. See a discussion in Hans Ucko, 1997 *The Jubilee Challenge—Utopia or Possibility? Jewish and Christian Insights* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1997).
30. See also discussion of ethical dimensions in Jo Marie Griesgraber "Influencing the IMF," in *Critical Mass The Emergence of Global Civil Society*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson and James W. St. G. Walker. (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).
31. Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Anchor Books, 2014), 371.
32. Douglas and Sampson, eds., *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
33. For example, see: Scott Appleby, Robert J. Schreiter, Gerard Powers et al., *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).
34. Proponents include (among others) William Vendley, Douglas Johnston, Joseph Montville, Harold Saunders, David Little, David Smock, Susan Thistlethwaite, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Mario Giro, Qamar Ul-Huda, Joyce Dubensky, and Susan Hayward. For example, see: David Smock and Daniel Serwer, *Facilitating Dialogue: USIP's work in Conflict Zones* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2012) and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, ed., *Interfaith Just Peacemaking* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
35. Diplomat and scholar Joseph Montville speaks often of such diplomatic efforts. See description in Charles Homans, "How the left-field idea of diplomacy without diplomats became an essential tool of statecraft," *Foreign Policy*, June 20, 2011.
36. Several of these cases are explored in different chapters in *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, ed. Douglas Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
37. "The Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations," United Nations, accessed February 3, 2017 <https://rngos.wordpress.com/>.
38. Bud Heckman and Stein Villumstad, "The UN and Religious Bodies in Common Search for Peace," *New Routes* 16, no. 1 (2011): 24–27.

39. For a recent analysis see *Religion, State and the United Nations: Value Politics* ed. Anne Stensvold (Routledge, 2017).
40. “The United Nations and Faith: How the Secular and Religious are Working Together to End Global Poverty and Suffering.” *Christian Today*, December 13, 2014, accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the.united.nations.and.faith.how.the.secular.and.religious.are.working.together.to.end.global.poverty.and.suffering/44368.htm>.
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42. See for example *Religion and Development Post-2015: Consultation among donor organizations, United Nations Development Agencies and Faith-based Organizations*. New York, May 12–13, 2014. Hosted by UNFPA in its capacity as convener of the UN-Inter agency Task Force, led by Azza Karam.
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44. Reproductive health and rights is a continuing topic of concern that tends to have repercussions extending beyond the topics themselves. See a report (to which the author contributed) commissioned by UNFPA to clarify the diversity of religious perspectives and how they have affected policy: “Religion, Women’s Health and Rights: Points of Contention and Paths of Opportunities,” 2016.
45. Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, “Is UN The Anti-Christ? No, But Settlements Are Detrimental To Peace.” *Huffington Post*, Updated Dec 01, 2016. See also Tyler Wigg Stevenson, “Revelation’s Warning to Evangelicals: Left Behind May Be Hazardous to Our Health,” *Yale Reflections*, 2005, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://reflections.yale.edu/article/end-times-and-end-games-is-scripture-being-left-behind/revelation-s-warning-evangelicals-left>
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47. Drew Christiansen, S.J., “The Context of the ‘Common Word,’” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2008).
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49. Gallup, “Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West,” accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>
50. See discussion in Katherine Marshall. “A Popular Revolution? Gender Inequality and Political Change in North Africa,” in *The African Renaissance and the Afro-Arab Spring: A Season of Rebirth?* Ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Erik Doxtader, Ebrahim Moosa, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 139–156.
51. Among scholars who have explored these issues in depth is Jocelyne Cesari. See for example: *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014) and *The Awakening of Muslim Democracy: Religion, Modernity and the State*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
52. Forthcoming book by Sherrie Steiner, *Moral Pressure for Responsible Globalization: Documentation and Significance of The F8/F7/F20 Initiative*.
53. “Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships,” The White House, accessed May 26, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ofbnp>.

CHAPTER 2

Intellectual Foundations for Interfaith Engagement, Theories of Change

Much contemporary interfaith work attempts to further interfaith understanding and cooperation by exploring beliefs, ideas, and related practices. That involves the academy (research and teaching), public information more broadly, including media, and the understandings, or theories of change, of those directly engaged in dialogue and action. Ideas drive and inspire action, as do academic research and teaching. Thus both are important and related dimensions of interreligious action and dialogue. This chapter's challenge is to explore threads linking ideas about interfaith through millennia of religious history and thought to contemporary action. One purpose is to address questions about what we term "religious literacy," that is, the core knowledge that can support both respectful plural societies and informed policy making. Another is to explore what ideas lie behind different approaches to interfaith dialogue. Within the vast field of religious studies, we focus on self-conscious efforts to bridge different religious traditions, particularly by leading intellectuals, and on leading intellectual debates that have shaped interfaith work. This does not purport to be an intellectual history or analysis of interfaith work, an important and far larger task. Instead, it highlights the juxtaposition of ideas and action that is so fundamental to the complex interfaith world.

A gamut of approaches

Approaches to interfaith dialogue run a wide gamut.¹ They range from an underlying assumption that might be characterized simplistically as syncretic to full acceptance of, respect for, and often celebration of difference and diversity. Likewise, different approaches to dialogue and engagement shape the tactics and spirit underlying engagement. These might be described schematically as ranging from intellectual (beliefs, values, and ideas matter most) to action (pragmatic, experiential). Actors from wide-ranging disciplines and operational sectors are involved and each tends to bring a distinctive vocabulary, framing, and scholarly references to the task.

The notion of syncretism—an emphasis on the common elements that bind religious traditions or an ideal of a convergence—is an important, and sometimes contentious, current in the interfaith movement. At the 2000 Millennium Summit of Religious Leaders, business leader Ted Turner's presentation suggested one extreme when he argued that all paths lead to the same mountain summit, to diverse response.² Another formulation and frequent metaphor is that all rivers lead to the sea. The coming together of religious beliefs can be intended or an unintended fusion. The approach of the Unification Church, among others, is different in that it argues far more directly that a common religion is the desired outcome of interfaith dialogue, with little ambiguity as to under whose leadership.

Many view the full range of syncretic approaches as an anathema, obscuring both the truth claims of each individual faith tradition and its cultural heritage, and presenting issues, often unspoken, about power and influence. A more powerful and central thread in interfaith work is thus the search for understanding of and respect for different beliefs and traditions within a framework of diversity. The metaphor of praying side by side, and the belief that understanding others enhances one's own belief are enduring metaphors of such interfaith approaches.

Interfaith implies relationships among different religious traditions but intrafaith issues—within a single religious tradition like Christianity or Islam—can be as important, contentious, demanding, and promising as interfaith. The splintering of Christian communities (one estimate counts 43,000 Christian denominations worldwide today) has resulted in many ecumenical dialogues that aim in part to erase differences that have arisen through history and the tensions they create or exacerbate. Deep divisions within Islamic communities likewise invite intellectual and academic study to bolster efforts to bridge what are often bitter divides. Similar divides exist within Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religious traditions.

Timeline of influences on interfaith: Institutions and ideas

This timeline displays how some of the threads, both events and academic, contributed to the conversation on interfaith engagement, dialogue, action. Of course the actors who bring these threads into interfaith also bring interfaith into these separate movements and threads.

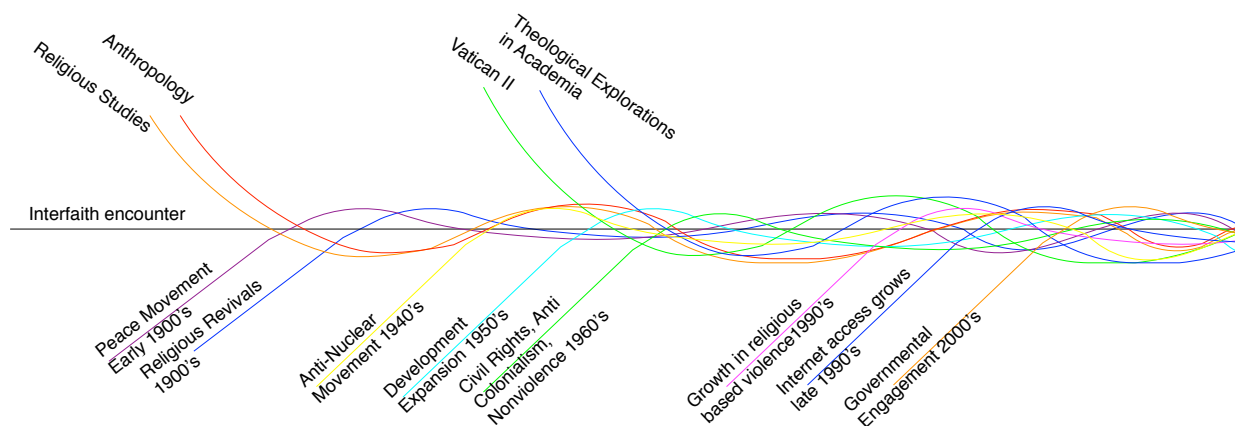


Image by Cassandra Lawrence

Within this gamut of approaches, many engage interfaith work with an explicit conviction that all religious approaches reflect a common set of values and that identifying and agreeing on these common values is both desirable and feasible. Doing so offers a path towards understanding and common purpose. Prominent among such approaches are theologian Hans Küng's work to define and refine an articulation of a global ethic.³ He identifies a set of common principles drawn from different religious traditions, for example prohibitions on killing and stealing, that can provide common ground. Still more distilled is the Golden Rule principle (do unto others as you would have them do unto you), a version of which can be traced in most religion traditions.⁴ It is the core of the Charter of Compassion,⁵ an effort to rally communities around a common purpose, inspired by writer Karen Armstrong.

There are, however, interfaith voices that would disagree vehemently with such propositions, and would rather focus on the benefits and richness of religious diversity (often comparing biodiversity and religious pluralism). Clearly, some involved in interfaith work see their truth claims as superior and might at some level hope to convert others to their beliefs, even though in general proselytizing or presenting superior truth claims go against the core interfaith spirit. Many are content

to find common ground within an appreciation of intractable differences or to resolve some of those differences through dialogue, in hopes of furthering social cohesion and peace. Thus there are differing reasons and depth of theological and practical distinctions around what paths might best contribute to positive relationships among religious communities or, at least, avoid and resolve dangerous conflicts and tensions.

Important efforts aim to bridge differences through culture—especially music and art. A prominent example is the Fes Festival of Global Sacred Music, launched in Morocco by, inter alia, Sufi anthropologist Faouzi Skali, after the first Gulf War (1991); a program of dialogue was an integral part of the festival, alongside diverse sacred music. The underlying premise is that shared appreciation of sacred music can open minds and hearts sufficiently to change the dynamic of intellectual understanding of major world challenges ranging from violent conflict to business ethics.⁶ Literature and drama, consciously or unconsciously, can spark different understandings of stubborn attitudes and problems and, in a history of interfaith ideas, deserve a special place. Less obvious looked at through an intellectual lens is sport, but efforts to link the core values of the Olympics to social peace and interfaith understanding reach enormous audiences.⁷

Some foundational intellectual approaches

Debates about the purposes and parameters of interfaith engagement have colored interfaith action from its earliest days; ideas have inspired action and action has influenced ideas. The path has led from common acceptance of the “rightness” and implicit superiority of one’s religious traditions to a broadening understanding of the diversity of traditions and beliefs. Scholar Diana Eck’s lifelong fascination with the diversity of and interplay among religious traditions was sparked by her encounters with differing perspectives as a student in India. She describes vividly the awareness she gained (as a young woman from Montana) when an Indian sage questioned why only one group of people should have access to religious truth.⁸

Contemporary approaches to interreligious dialogue have roots in religious controversies as practiced in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds and in the Middle Ages as they shaped early approaches to engagement among religious traditions. The trilateral controversies of the Middle Ages, in part the result of members of the three faiths living together, led to important growth of mutual knowledge and, in western Christianity, shifts in its kinds of learning. Aquinas’ knowledge of Aristotle, for example was the result of contact with Arab (Muslim) scholarship. The Christian intellectual tradition in the West, as exemplified by Scholasticism, was an outcome of interaction with Muslim high culture. In the twentieth century pioneers of Muslim-Catholic dialogue included the French anthropologist and spiritual writer Louis Massignon, whose *badilaya* movement still brings Muslims and Catholics together in prayer and support groups.

Early academic histories and analyses of the interfaith movement drew in part on ethnographic studies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many were informed by missionary notes and translated religious texts. Fascination with oriental cultures, beginning in the late 1700s, especially after Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign, permeated art, music,

and literature; their popularity in elite Western circles sparked a broadening interest in different cultures. Artists invented scenes of harems and mosques, and some traveled the world, searching for authentic locales to enrich their imaginations. Influential scholars researched and catalogued these “foreign” expressions and languages. Among them was Max Müller (1823–1900), who, in translating the *Upanishads* and the *Rig Veda*, married ideas of transcendentalism and philosophy in his study of religion and its evolution. He argued that all religions contained truth, pointing to a common heritage in India.⁹ He famously said, “He who knows one, knows none.”

The Jesuits are often described as the first globalizers and as leaders in seeking understanding through learning and dialogue. The Jesuit experience of entering deeply into the cultures of various civilizations, controversial at the time within the Catholic Church, constituted an important approach. Jesuit missiology in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, though still aimed at ultimate conversion, practiced an approach to other religious traditions that was uniquely receptive to the high, intellectual traditions of other faiths. Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit mission in China is the classic example of this effort, but there were similar efforts in Ethiopia, India, and Indochina. The last Jesuit to enter Tibet, after learning Tibetan, devoted himself to studying Tibetan religious texts and dialogue



Courtesy Livingston

The Fes Festival of World Sacred Music is an annual week-long event that integrated dialogue alongside music.

with the Buddhist monks about their meaning. The China mission accommodated to Confucianism, but succumbed to Roman intrigue during the Chinese Rites controversy of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.¹⁰

Significant archeological discoveries in Egypt and growing studies of the classics in the mid-nineteenth century contributed to new understandings of religious history and the nature of differences among traditions. Anthropologist E.B. Tylor's 1870 *Primitive Culture* popularized the term "culture", with religion presented as an important element. James Frazer's influential 1890 work, *The Golden Bough*, a comparative anthology of religions, generated some controversy since it placed Christianity at the same level as other religions and suggested that science would supplant Christianity; the book traced a linear progression of religion from magical thinking through animism, polytheism, monotheism, and finally scientific thought.¹¹ Naguib Mafouz's *Children of Gebelawi*, first published in 1959, recreates the interlinked history of the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as an allegory set in an imaginary alley in nineteenth century Cairo; it won him a Nobel Prize in literature but was banned in Egypt.

Swami Vivekananda first appeared on the world stage at the 1893 Parliament of World Religions. He suggested a different view of diversity, a diffuse religious development, not dissimilar to Müller's earlier argument that all traditions had validity and potential contributions. His approach has been characterized as a belief that all paths lead to the same divine being, which is often seen to challenge both evolutionary theory and the notion of Christian superiority.

The well-documented influence of Muslim thinkers on the European Renaissance and development of math and science is an important thread in this narrative of interfaith thinking. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and his prolific tenth century writings deeply influenced Christian theologians, for example Thomas Aquinas, and earned him a place in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, alongside other Greek and non-Christian thinkers. His contemporary, Abu Rayhan Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Beyruti (973–1048CE), was a Muslim thinker with first-hand knowledge of Indian Philosophical and religious culture, together with their appreciation for Greek and Islamic philosophical and scientific literature. He delved deeply into comparisons between different cultures;¹² his

scientific approach comparing Greek, Christian, Islamic, and Indian religion and philosophy is one of the earliest examples of comparative religion.¹³

Scholars working from very different disciplines have explored the significance of religious beliefs in terms of, inter alia, psychology, brain science, and philosophy. Clifford Geertz, who is considered the father of anthropology, focused both anthropology and religious studies on an appreciation of how people make meaning in the world, a perspective that discredited traditions that assumed a hierarchy among different religious traditions. "The drive to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order, is evidently as real and pressing as the more familiar biological needs..."¹⁴ Geertz highlighted the universal within the particular, enriching anthropological and religious studies with extensive field work. What emerged was a complex picture of living communities, versus the armchair studies that were an earlier norm. Joseph Campbell, American author and teacher, also deeply influenced religious studies and anthropology through his writings on comparative mythology, the mono-myth, and the mythic hero. Relying heavily on symbolic interpretation, he drew from Carl Jung and the Buddhist book of the dead, *Bardo Thodol*, concluding that all religion draws on a single great narrative. Both Geertz and Campbell negotiated anthropology, religious studies, and psychology, in their efforts to understand why there is religion, how it came to be, and how different traditions related to one another.

Development of religious studies

Academic religious studies developed within a context of debates variously known then, and now, as history of religions, comparative religions, and science of religion. The expanding study of religions inspired new, if very different, religious studies departments in various universities. Individual schools and specific academic departments took differing approaches. Theology and religious studies departments, at least in some institutions, tended to take on separate lives; many theology departments were hived off from academic departments. Universities in the United States and Europe slowly integrated studies of Semitic and Asian languages, with a growing norm of enhancing understanding of the individual and society within scientific norms.¹⁵

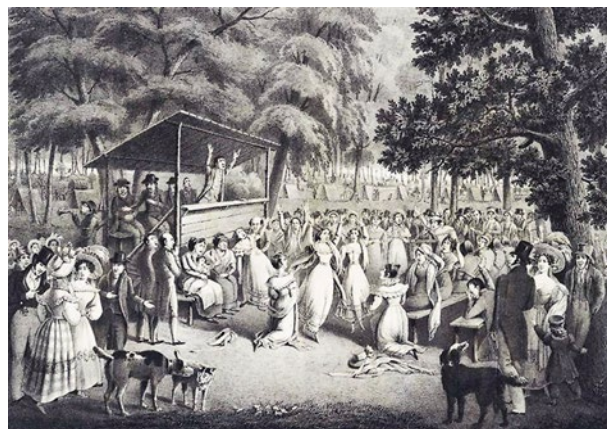
With so many emerging schools and academic fields involved, religious studies from the start involved a

multi-disciplinary approach. Harvard University rooted its early religious studies program in the study of “history, languages, and philosophy.”¹⁶ William James, a long time faculty member at Harvard University, included psychology in his studies of philosophy and religion. His influential 1902 work on the topic was titled: *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Still in print today, the ideas in *Varieties* can be traced in the thinking of various public leaders and scholars in psychology, philosophy, and religion. A bifurcation in religious studies took form, between one strand that was more theological and practical, and another pursuing lines of social and scientific.¹⁷

Religious revivals shake accepted wisdom

Social strains in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflected, and contributed to, important theological shifts in several religious traditions, including Christianity and Judaism. The Second Great Awakening (1740–1840) in the United States saw a sharp shift in Christian focus from individual salvation towards corporate salvation. Many Christians were engaged in the abolition and the temperance movements. With rapid industrialization after the Civil War, the Third Great Awakening (1850–1900) shifted attention towards the sins of capitalism; this was captured in the idea of the social gospel, reflected in the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch. His books, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) and *Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917), reflected a push within Christian circles to address the development of society more directly, more than through individual spiritual salvation.¹⁸ American evangelical Christianity saw the organization of tent revivals, many focused on working to save the souls of every immigrant to the United States.

In England and in Europe, a growing Christian focus on links between religious and social concerns brought important changes. The controversial Oxford movement in the nineteenth century shook the foundations of a staid and established Anglican Church. It sought a renewal of “catholic,” or Roman Catholic thought and practice within the Church of England, contesting the Church of England’s Protestant tendencies. Its argument held that the Anglican Church was by history and identity a truly “catholic” church (“branch theory” suggested a unification of the church). They argued for revival of medieval practices. One product was new Anglican



Wikimedia Commons/library of Congress

The Second Great Awakening in the United States shifted Christian focus towards corporate salvation. This piece, *Camp Meeting*, drawn on stone by H Bridport, circa 1839 depicts this shift.

monastic orders. The Christian social movement was deeply influenced by French philosopher Henri de Saint Simon’s 1825 work, *Nouveau Christianisme*. Saint Simon suggested “a brotherhood of man must accompany the scientific organization of industry and society.”¹⁹ The social gospel movement inspired the 1889 creation of the Christian Social Union, which focused on economic conditions and, through the work of slum priests, was linked to the Oxford Movement. The Christian Social Union, like groups in the United States, addressed the urban poverty and degradation that accompanied the industrial revolution. The Oxford chapter of the Christian Social Union focused on understanding the social mechanics of poverty, while the London chapters were more concerned with ground work to alleviate everyday suffering.²⁰

These various movements, in Europe and the United States, fed and took ideas from each other. While Rauschenbusch and others would look back at the end of the nineteenth century as a dark time of conservative fervor that supported industrialization and social Darwinism, Social Gospel leaders took comfort from what they saw as new ways of imagining society.²¹ Rauschenbusch, during an 1891 European sabbatical, spent time learning from his British counterparts about “Anglican Socialism,”²² though he was “perturbed by the intense nationalism evident in both conservative and liberal theologians in Germany.”^{23, 24}

Jewish and secular voices were integrated progressively into what was initially a largely Christian social initiative. This was partly the result of growing awareness prompted

by anti-Semitism and events like factory fires that involved mainly poor immigrant Jewish workers. Christian social scientists including John R. Commons secularized their rhetoric “to make it more amenable to non-Christians and more in line with the new movement to secular expertise as the basis for social control.”²⁵ Some leading progressive writers in the United States in the early twentieth century were Jewish, for example Herbert Croly and Walter Lippmann.²⁶

Jewish Christian relationships were a continuing focus, prompting much analysis and debate. The Reform movement within Judaism focused on revival of Jewish practice while preserving tradition, included promoting greater integration into European society. Abraham Joshua Heschel, reacting to growing anti-Semitism at the turn of the twentieth century, promoted positive relationships with Christians as fully within Jewish teaching. The reform movement grew also in the U.S., as thousands of Jews fled rising anti-Semitism, pogroms, and exclusion. Isaac Mayer Wise, considered the father of Reform Judaism in the United States, helped establish the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Hebrew Union College (the first permanent American rabbinical college), and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.²⁷

Growing interest in religious difference and in other traditions was also evident in various parts of Asia. In India religious reform movements developed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and included Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Vedanta movement, with Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi as leading figures. Vivekananda, an early member of the Brahmo Samaj, worked to end child marriage, illiteracy, and to break down the caste system; as a “disciple of Ramakrishna, he saw an essential unity of all religions.”²⁸ In the context of his influential role at the 1893 Parliament of Religions, he went on a speaking tour whose theme was the Ramakrishna Vedanta philosophy, that challenged western notions of religion.

Many ideas were reflected and debated in new academic journals. The University of Chicago Press first published *The Journal of Religion* in 1921. Christianity was the primary focus of the first six issues, but articles also addressed Judaism, Paganism, and Buddhism.

Various interfaith gatherings through these years explored the significance of religious difference and commonality. They included the second World Parliament of Religions in Chicago

in 1933, and the 1936 World Congress of Faiths in London. Religious studies and sociology scholars dominated the latter, with a follow-up in Oxford the following year focused on defining religion, and encouraging religious leadership to rally against the impending war.²⁹ A report foreshadowed what has become a stock element of interreligious work: assembling different scriptural passages focused on the “advocacy of Peace and non-injury,” drawing from Islam, Christianity, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Some enduring debates were also foreshadowed: one participant, Rev. Leslie J. Belton, editor of *the Inquirer*, a Unitarian publication, noted “a cleavage between those who maintained a rational approach and those who maintained a mystical approach.” He wondered whether that was not due to a confusion of terms. “Were not both the scientific and the mystical approaches legitimate?”³⁰

The academy deepens and widens its reflections

The study of religion deepened and broadened over the years. An International Congress for the History of Religions convened in Paris in 1901 with an agenda focused on promoting the scientific study of religion. As the sciences gained momentum, some religious studies and anthropology programs adopted a scientific detachment from their subjects. Ironically, one result of this diversification was increasing evidence of distrust and misunderstandings among academics studying religion, theologians, and those advocating interfaith understanding. A broad East/West fault emerged. Very simplistically, Western schools tended to look at religion as a static experience, focused on ancient texts, while Eastern studies centered more on deepening understanding of the human experience.³¹ Another divide that sparked continuing debate turned on the respective roles of the individual and the community: is religious adherence more about personal belief or about identity and responsibilities within a community?

Issues of inclusion

Some early arguments within religious studies departments questioned whether an adherent of a faith could be an objective scholar (and vice versa) and on the circle of inclusion. In relation to interfaith efforts, the boundaries of belief and scholarship and theology and religious studies were questioned. These debates turned on a large question: what defines a religion? This issue, which generates lively exchanges to this

day, has legal and theological significance but centered on questions of inclusion and exclusion as interfaith activities expanded. How open should the circle be? Early interfaith meetings generally focused on a small group of traditions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Over time the circles have tended to expand, to the delight of some and the discomfort of others. The process has been accompanied by active discussions about criteria and differing notions of authority and legitimacy. Some previously marginalized traditions, Zoroastrians and Sikhs, Unitarian Universalists, and reform Jews, for example, are respected participants in most interfaith circles today. Other traditions are welcome in some places, but not in others. Intensive debates swirl around definitions of cults. Indigenous religious traditions were rarely present until quite recently but today are generally an integral part of the broader interfaith events, as are representatives of Confucianism, Shintoism, and Taoism.

A common call today is to include not only pagans and non-believers, but also adherents of various faces of humanism. This dimension of inclusion takes different forms in Europe and the United States, and occurs in juxtaposition with lively debates, epitomized by Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens,³² about the role of religion in society. Neopaganism also has had a significant role in the emerging interfaith culture. Representatives were especially evident during the 1993 Parliament of Religions and representatives are active in several interfaith organizations.

Questions about inclusion are linked not only to theological and philosophical questions about the nature of religion but also the practical definition of religious tolerance. Scholar Marcus Braybrooke suggests that by the 1950s and 1960s, many scholars kept aloof from interfaith bodies for fear that they would be placed in a false position or that scholarly reputations would be tarnished. Already challenged by tenuous relationships with their purported religious leaders, interfaith leaders ran into fears that “their orthodoxy might be compromised.”³³

Such debates took on particular intensity within individual traditions, and thus both in intrafaith encounters and lived realities. Among Christians, ancient tensions and rapprochement between Catholics and Protestants, among Protestant denominations, and with the various Orthodox churches took different forms, occasionally erupting in violence, more often in simmering tensions, bare tolerance, or shifting alliances. The twentieth

century was a dynamic period of religious change, with new denominations forming, the rapid growth of charismatic traditions, and shifts in adherence. Peace among closely allied traditions was often more challenging than among those with little common history and less proximity. This drama played out in both intrafaith and interfaith action, from the academic world to day-to-day encounters. A constant series of inclusion and exclusion issues punctuated interreligious efforts—whether to include the Church of Latter Day Saints or Scientology, or the Unification Church, or another new “cult.” Similar dialogue has occurred in other religious traditions among the various groups of Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims. Many of these debates spill over into political domains.

Political dimensions and interfaith understandings

Interactions between academic reflections and more practical, political action were interwoven during the twentieth century as they are today. An example is the Moral Rearmament movement,³⁴ founded by Dr. Frank Buchman in 1931, and known at first as the Oxford Group. Among its stated priorities was ecumenical and cross-cultural encounter. During this period of spiritual revival, explicitly directed to a bold vision of transforming the world, intellectuals often joined activists. In the face of the growing nationalism of 1930s Europe, Moral Rearmament advanced a spiritual response to the arms race. The Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey was established by the World Council of Churches in 1946, and became a center for ecumenical encounter and study. These and other groups focused on the individual transformation necessary for collective change.

Academic study of religion and multifaith experience gathered steam in the 1960s. Many universities established religious studies departments, ecumenical programs, and various institutes. To highlight some American examples, Harvard University had long granted degrees in religious studies but finally established a department in 1963. Boston University, which had awarded degrees in religious studies since 1919, had no separate program until 1966. St. Mary's College in Baltimore, Maryland established an ecumenical institute in 1966, and Hartford Seminary (originally a Congregational institution, now non-denominational) developed an Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim relations program in 1973. At Georgetown University, the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding

was founded in 1993 through an agreement between the Fondation pour L'Entente entre Chrétiens et Musulmans, Geneva, and Georgetown University to build stronger bridges of understanding between the Muslim world and the West, as well as between Islam and Christianity. On the US West Coast, the various theological seminaries in the San Francisco Bay area dating from the second half of the nineteenth century began to cooperate, haltingly, with other schools in the area. In the post World War II period there was a rise in ecumenical sensitivities and cooperation. Understandings of theological education began to shift away from denominational isolation and consortia of seminaries began to form. In 1962, the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) was formed.³⁵

Huston Smith's text *The World Religions: Our great wisdom traditions* (1958), originally titled *The Religions of Man*, became a staple of these new programs and remains an important textbook for students of religion. Born to Methodist missionaries in China, Smith was exposed early on to different religious identities. His work focused on the core elements of religions, emphasizing the inner experience of individuals more than the institution.

Prominent among new journals launched in the 1960s was the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (1964) founded by Leonard and Arlene Swidler, the first peer reviewed journal on interreligious dialogue.³⁶

If this complex and interwoven history has a common thread, it is the story of how narrowly defined understandings of religion, theology, and religious studies expanded in many directions, driven both by new fields of understanding, influential public intellectuals, and the dynamic social changes of the era. The numbers of scholars, journals, university departments, religious media, and meaty books increased exponentially. What was understood as religious studies shifted from a notion of exposure to other traditions, grounded in a position of assumed superiority, towards a range of models set in a dynamically plural society where tolerance and religious freedom were emerging ideals. Faced with a stunning complexity of religious ideas and voices, many have focused on reviving ancient traditions or on an emphasis on core texts and practices. This has sometimes traced a path to fundamentalist revivals but also to a multiplying series of manifestations of tolerance and cooperation among very different traditions.

Catholic social teaching and outreach

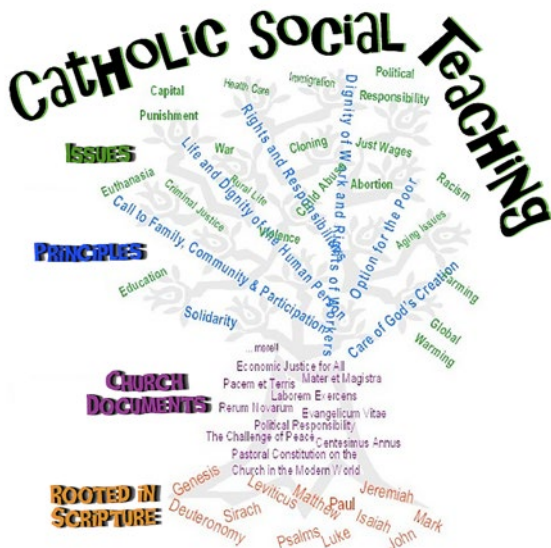
Always a central part of intellectual theological endeavors, with a unique worldwide presence and reach, Catholic Church thinking and thinkers play central roles in interfaith approaches at many levels. Distilling these roles is far beyond the scope of this review. Two topics merit special attention in the global story: the turning point that was marked by Vatican II, and the far-reaching influence of Catholic social teaching.³⁷

The energy and ferment of ideas that surrounded the Vatican II³⁸ conference in Rome (1962–1965) had widespread impact on ideas and approaches within Catholic communities and well beyond, including the academic field of religious studies. The Catholic Church and its vast array of scholars, universities, and activists were now officially authorized and emboldened to engage in ecumenical and interfaith studies. The depth and reach of Catholic social teaching became far more widely known, exercising significant influence, for example, on thinking about labor issues,³⁹ health care, and education. Catholic theologians Raimon Panikkar and Paul Knitter, influenced by Vatican II, delved into the theology of religions, exploring how Catholics and other Christians could engage other religions. At the same time the seminal thinkers who inspired and shaped Liberation Theology (notably Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff) had wide influence on social thinking and social movements worldwide, including on many interfaith actors.

The graphic on the next page illustrates the complex root and branch system of Catholic Social Teaching.⁴⁰ The links to interfaith thinking, and action, are complex, indirect and direct, but these traditions play clear and wide-ranging roles.

Social activism's religious face

Many religious leaders and scholars were central players in the various social justice coalitions that were a centerpiece of the mid twentieth century. Interfaith coalitions were vital actors in many independence movements in colonial regimes, civil rights coalitions in the United States, and the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. Various movements brought together influential theologians and activists including Abraham Joshua Heschel and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Heschel, along with other religious leaders, was also influential in crafting the Vatican II language that opened the Church to Judaism and other religions as more than primarily subjects for conversion to Catholicism.



The complex root and branch system of Catholic Social Teaching.

Less positively, many of the violent conflicts in different world regions in the post Cold War period have had important religious elements. This has sharpened the focus of religious peacebuilding in widely varying contexts. Especially prominent were conflicts in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, the Balkans, the Iran/Iraq War, Burma/Myanmar, and Sikh/Hindu tensions in India. In scholarly and policy circles there was much talk of a resurgence of religion, concern about the neglect of religious topics in the study of policy and international affairs, and reflection on links between religion and development. Interfaith peacebuilding has drawn considerable attention.

Theologian Hans Küng, once a respected scholar in Vatican circles, was excluded and sidelined after various theological conflicts, but as Vatican II approached, he came to play an advisory role. His work exploring Jesus as an historical figure, combined with forthright critiques of religious practice and approach, helped to establish the Catholic foundations for interfaith engagement. Küng's 1989 assertion that there can be no world peace without peace among religions echoed around the world, in academia, among religious leaders, and at the grassroots. Küng was a principal author of the 1993 Declaration of Global Ethics, which played a significant part in revitalizing active efforts to advance interfaith cooperation.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw active interrogation of earlier predictions and assumptions that religion was on the

decline ("God is dead"), as they appeared to be thoroughly discredited by lived realities. One result was a proliferation of journals, institutes, and scholars that focused explicitly on religious dimensions of international affairs. They worked, in-ter alia, to elucidate the nature of religion and its role in global politics and local conflicts. The *Journal of Interreligious Insight* was reformed in 2003 and now publishes in partnership with the Interreligious Engagement Project, the World Congress of Faiths, and Common Ground; it explores the theoretical and practical aspects of dialogue and interfaith engagement. The *Interfaith Observer*, founded in 2011, offers a remarkable digest of interfaith activities.

Modern pluralism in practice

The many institutions and people who engage in interfaith work today share a keen awareness of religious diversity and the daily challenges of the religious pluralism that characterize modern societies, especially in the cities that now house over half the world's population. Different legal and constitutional regimes as well as traditions and socio economic circumstances color relationships within communities and between communities and government authorities. Issues of religious freedom and its significance in different settings permeate interfaith relations. The intersections of culture, ethnicity, and religion play out in complex ways. Against this backdrop, the voices of several scholars are particularly influential. Among them are Diana Eck, whose pioneering Pluralism Project at Harvard University, launched in 1991, meticulously documents American religious diversity. Sociologist Peter Berger's often articulated paradigm of religious pluralism as a central social feature of modernity is cited frequently in both scholarly and policy circles.⁴¹ Brian Grim (who, as a scholar, activist, and businessman rather defies categorization) is much sought after for his sharply tuned presentations based on data on religious trends.⁴²

Scholar practitioners like Eboo Patel and Patrice Brodeur are central figures in interfaith discussions. Patel founded the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)⁴³ in 2002, building on initiatives on college campuses to join young adults' experience of multiculturalism with their desire to serve the community, thus fostering a science and art of interfaith cooperation. IFYC is seen as a model of campus engagement and an important research ground, given the large number of student participants and their marked diversity. IFYC integrates dialogue

and community action with leadership development, contending that the combined effects are what achieve results. Campus surveys of religious tolerance and understanding seek to measure change in student perception of other religious groups through two projects, the Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey (CRSCS) and the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS). In an arena where robust evaluation is especially rare, some data from recent studies points to the effectiveness of various programs. Both Patel and Brodeur emphasize the vital multidisciplinary nature of interfaith studies and the centrality of the challenge for programs to increase religious literacy.⁴⁴

Patrice Brodeur brings to interfaith work long academic research and teaching experience at the University of Montreal and practical experience, initially as a youth leader.⁴⁵ He serves on the board of the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace with long engagement in their innovative approaches and programs. At KAICIID in Vienna, he led its ambitious mapping project for interfaith peace work.⁴⁶

The Pluralism Project, IFYC, and KAICIID's mapping projects reflect keen awareness about the need for measureable data. Religious leaders and volunteer grassroots organizations cringe at the challenges involved in measuring complex relationships, and little if any funding has gone to measure long-term changes in community attitudes. But pressures to show tangible results are real and growing. This pressure is both internal and external and reflects the general cultural shift for results orientated programing. "If you can't measure it, does it exist?" is a persistent if implicit question.

Some institutions that prepare faith leaders and scholars now include an orientation to different religious traditions. This is, of course, an ancient approach, but the societal dimensions are more pronounced today. There are interfaith ministries for hospitals and college campuses, as well as the long established military chaplain corps. Journals and programs led by seminaries encourage interfaith understanding and training in dialogue and cooperation. An example is *The Journal of Interreligious Studies*, which began in 2009 as a student publication, now shepherded by the Center for Interreligious and Communal Leadership Education (CIRCLE). Various theological scholars, including Jonathan Sacks and Or Rose, have established hubs for interreligious understanding, including State of Formation, viewed as one of the most



JPUUpdates, January 18, 2016

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (far left) Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath (carrying Torah), and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (Right) were brought together in the civil rights movement in the United States.

positive web developments for interfaith publications in the past decade, and founded as an offshoot of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*; it is an online forum for emerging religious and ethical leaders. Peace studies and conflict resolution programs pay increasing attention to religious understanding and interfaith cooperation, though integration is rather scattered and tends to focus on religious extremism. Examples include programs at Eastern Mennonite University, the Caux Scholars program linked to Initiatives of Change, and (among many others) George Mason University, American University, and Georgetown University's conflict management programs.

Theologians and religious scholars of all faiths have sharpened their focus on interfaith engagement, especially its capacity to address the nagging issue of religiously linked violence. Karen Armstrong, author of a long list of popular books on religious identity, has written extensively about religious extremism and violence and promoted debate around the topic. Important Muslim scholars influence interfaith thinking, including Akbar Ahmed, Sayyid Syeed, Khaled Abou El Fadl, Ingrid Mattson, Mohammed Abu-Nimmer, Ayse Kadayifci, and Qamar Ul-Huda. Christian Leaders from unlikely communities include Brian McLaren, Richard Cizik, and Rob Bell, influential evangelical advocates for interfaith understanding and cooperation. This wide spectrum reflects efforts to bring political or religious conservatives into the interfaith community, to wrestle with the seeming contradiction that a

community with an exclusionary belief system can engage in fostering a plural society.⁴⁷ Interfaith and interreligious studies groups within the American Academy of Religion and changing criteria for religious scholar accreditation, to account for taking other religious traditions into consideration, are other reflections of the changing field.

Many scholars, Joseph Campbell among them, have encouraged studies of paganism and indigenous religious traditions. Traditionally this was part of anthropology, generally apart from religious studies, a field that tended to place these traditions in what they saw as a primitive framework. James Cox in *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions*⁴⁸ argues that a redefinition of both religion and indigenous is needed to study and understand the role of these traditions. This “moves the discussion towards issues of power generated by the typically exotic construction of the ‘Other’ embedded within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies of ‘primitive’ peoples...working within the hegemonic institutions of European and American expansion.”⁴⁹

Growing efforts seek to include non-religious subjects, alongside religious worldviews in academia, religious liberty, and interfaith conversations. A 2015 debate over British exclusion of Humanism in religious education curricula framed lively exchanges about including different philosophies and explicitly non-religious traditions in interfaith work. Should humanism and atheism use the same markers used for religion to define their non-religious views? Should they identify key texts, leaders, and events? Universities, for example the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, offer Humanistic Studies degrees, which “help students develop a greater understanding of what it means to be human through the study of history, literature, philosophy, religion, languages and world civilizations.”⁵⁰ George Mason University offers a course on Humanism and the Renaissance.⁵¹ The University of Monterrey has a bachelor of Humanistic and Religious Studies.⁵²

Media and public outreach: traditional and social media

New media and its effects on interfaith engagement is a live current topic. Press reporting on religion has been on the rise since the Iranian revolution in 1979, and many new efforts to educate reporters and editors on religion and specifically Islam aim to stem the tide of negative publicity and stereotypes.

News outlets have increased visibility of religion coverage, in an attempt to educate, report the news, and include a broader religious voice. Foundations—like Ford, Luce, Woodcock, Doris Duke, Carnegie, Open Society, and El-Hibri—support efforts to inform and redirect media coverage in more positive directions. Worth special note is the US Public Radio’s Interfaith Voices program. Its origins are described thus: “We were born just three days after 9/11, when a feisty nun got the idea to host a multi-faith panel on religion and terrorism, live on the radio. The phones rang off the hook, and it became clear that listeners were hungry for informed, respectful dialogue on religion in the public square. We carry on that mission today with our weekly show...led by that same unstoppable nun-turned-radio host, Maureen Fiedler.”⁵³

The globalized media, including Hollywood, play important roles in interreligious understanding. In the best of circumstances, media can open new vistas and promote positive models. An example is the Brazilian soap *O Clone*, about two Brazilian teens who meet and fall in love while in Morocco and navigate family and culture; viewers in Kyrgyzstan were said to have taken *O Clone* as an introductory course on Islam.⁵⁴ A soap opera featuring Christian and Muslim families aired during Ramadan on Egyptian television, breaking all viewing records in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world. M.O.S.T, the Muslims On Screen and Television initiative, has sought to intervene to help producers and directors re-image stereotypical portrayals of Muslims.

Social media plays large roles both in public reactions and mobilizations and in the structure and organization of response. Global support can be rallied for a church burned by a mob, a mosque bombed by extremists, girls kidnapped in Nigeria, and a community forming protective rings around others as they pray. Stories, positive and negative, spread rapidly and spur similar actions elsewhere. Al-Qaeda was an early adopter of social media, exploiting the Internet to draw in recruits and IS is notorious for its skill in use of social media. Many religious leaders have been slow to catch up with social media and are critically under-informed about its potential. This illustrates a broad generational divide in society that tends to be especially acute in religious communities. Interfaith groups’ use of social media—and the internet more broadly—to gain support, spread understanding, and change opinions is entwined with other voices looking to spread misunderstanding

and hate. The democratizing effect of the Internet has thus both hindered and fed the interfaith movement.

Attacks on reporters, authors, bloggers, and cartoonists by terrorists and governments complicate the situation. Debates about religious liberty, freedom of speech, blasphemy, and the protection of religious minorities are intense. A central question is whether and how far better knowledge about religions can help to counter religious intolerance. Above all evidence suggests that experience and exposure that build empathy make the most difference.

Looking to the money: financial challenges

Financing research and policy analysis supporting interfaith work poses significant challenges. In a nutshell, focused and sustained financial support for interfaith ideas and movements is limited. Interfaith work in the United States has benefitted from a small group of foundations that have included, over the years, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Henry R. Luce Foundation, the Templeton Foundation, the El Hibri Foundation, and the Russell Berrie Foundation. The GHR Foundation (which supports this project) is prominent among them. The Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation provided important support to interfaith work at important stages. KAICIID is an important new actor. Several organizations have recently formed an Interfaith Funders Group network to improve knowledge, cooperation, and research.⁵⁵ The British Department for International Development (DfID) supported a major research program about religion and development (through the University of Birmingham) that included some focus on interfaith dimensions; it focused more on operational than intellectual dimensions. The German government is a current leader in focusing both intellectual and practical attention on issues of religious roles in sustainable development and peace and has, with various partners, supported an international partnership.⁵⁶ A contemporary trend is the sharp increase of web-based accounts and analyses of interfaith work.

Context: sources and centers

Interfaith work is a relatively new field of investigation. It tends to be approached from the angle of specific institutions or faiths. Historical accounts are rather patchy and solid data is notoriously problematic. Leading interfaith organizations document their histories at least to a degree but generally

dedicate limited resources to the effort. KAICIID has recently worked to fill gaps with their ambitious interfaith mapping program of interreligious work. The WCC and the Catholic Church both have a clear eye to history, producing extensive documentation of their work that can touch on interfaith activities. *The Interfaith Observer*, founded and led by Paul Chaffee, aptly describes itself as “a monthly treasure-chest of interfaith news and opinion.”⁵⁷ Noteworthy scholars who have documented the rise of interfaith activities include historian of interfaith Marcus Braybrooke and theologian Paul Knitter. Various practitioners, including Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, John Borelli, and Reverend Bud Heckman, have produced scholarly work on the topic.

Many concepts and approaches—the intellectual grounding of interreligious work today—have emerged from experience more than intellectual exploration. Indeed theological and philosophical giants contribute and develop ideas, but practical on-the-ground interreligious work bears far more the mark of lived experience. That said, academic study and research are an important dimension of interreligious work and shape action and institutions in important ways.

Religious literacy challenges

The ideas and intellectual ferment that are part of interfaith history highlight a complex and eminently practical challenge: what standard and the knowledge can and should be expected of those who engage in religious and interfaith matters? This is a challenge both because of the acknowledged general lack of knowledge about religion among many contemporary disciplines and professions and because the topic is complex and sensitive: this is not a matter of a simple “religion 101” curriculum. On the former challenge, scholar Stephen Prothero has documented the withering of religious training and awareness in the United States, even within specific religious communities, in a call for religious literacy.⁵⁸ And as to the latter, many contemporary academic programs, in the United States and elsewhere, rarely offer much less require courses that aim to ensure a broad understanding of the global religious landscape. Remedying this situation is a difficult problem, because it can be argued that too little knowledge can itself be perilous. Various institutions, including the US State Department and parts of the United Nations system are exploring both the kinds of knowledge they expect from operational

officers, how it might best be delivered, and how networks of advisors and experts can best serve the varying requirements of engagement in religiously complex situations in different sectors and world regions.⁵⁹

Notes

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CHAPTER 3

Lay of the Land: Mapping Contemporary Interfaith Institutions and Initiatives

This chapter explores the many contemporary interfaith institutions and initiatives, providing a descriptive map of an enormously varied landscape. The goal is both to describe initiatives and institutions that fall under the broad interfaith category and to explore how they might fit into an aggregate interfaith constellation or movement, or form part of broader networks. This is a challenge because practical approaches and underlying goals and theories of change vary so widely. While “mapping,” suggests a primarily descriptive goal, the analysis reflects an effort to assess strengths and weaknesses of various strategies and endeavors; it is preliminary in the sense that a full assessment would involve work and methodologies far beyond the scope of this project. It also investigates how do and do not they relate to one another. Thus the objectives are to provide a guide of sorts, but also to contribute to a broader assessment of direction and of impact.

The analysis is illustrated by a series of 30 short narratives (Appendix B) that introduce and characterize the many different organizations and initiatives whose primary objective and ethos is interfaith. It is not a directory nor does it purport to present a comprehensive picture—the selection of institutions is primarily designed to illustrate their range, within schematic categories. In practice there are tens if not hundreds of thousands of entities that, explicitly or implicitly, aim to promote interfaith, interreligious, or intercultural understanding, operating probably in every world nation, certainly every in world region. No comprehensive directory of interfaith organizations exists. Efforts along these lines have been made over the years,¹ but products are incomplete and have a brief shelf-life. A comprehensive directory effort would probably serve little purpose and, in a dynamic world, would rapidly be out of date.

The descriptions illustrate, individually and collectively, the evolution, spirit, and different activities of interfaith organizations. A central feature is their wide diversity. An underlying question is what common ground links them; another how and how far they differ and diverge in significant ways.

This chapter sets out a categorization of interfaith approaches and organizations, and the specific narratives illustrate the different categories. This framework draws upon and is often inspired by the quite large number of efforts to fit interfaith work into categories or different “taxonomies” (for example, Paul Knitter, Rev. Bud Heckman²), but it is original. It reflects the experience that emerged from research both of the historical and intellectual trajectory of interfaith efforts overall and knowledge of and experience with specific entities and approaches.

The broad universe of interfaith and interreligious organizations, initiatives, and leaders comprise what can be seen as a complex but partial network, a network of networks. Many organizations and approaches overlap, interlock, and blend. However, a more common feature is separate, largely uncoordinated action. Coordination and harmonization thus represent a central challenge, if the whole is to add up to more than the sum of the parts. The map’s complexity reflects the fact that various institutions engage many, even most religious entities, and that is a vast, complex, and dynamic institutional world.³ Religious institutions come in many forms. They include the vast array of religious, congregational hierarchies, structures, and communities (for example the Roman Catholic Church and the Baha’i Community). Many faith-inspired NGOs are involved in interfaith endeavors, whether in operational work “on the ground” or at a broader level. Some interfaith initiatives focus on quite specific agendas and approaches, responding to a situation or challenge, providing water or housing is an example. A significant part of interfaith work involves dialogue or engagement with non-religious actors. This applies with respect to the growing initiatives focused on addressing climate change but also work for peace and social justice.

This analysis benefits also from several notable histories that trace and analyze many interfaith endeavors. A few have reviewed the complex in its entirety. These include the work of Patrice Brodeur, including the Interfaith Mapping Project he led at KAICIID; Marcus Braybrooke’s historical recounting



Faith leaders attend the closing ceremony for the 2016 International Conference on Family Planning in Indonesia, where they discussed their role in the family planning conversation.

of the movement in several books; Rev. Bud Heckman's analysis (cited above); and Anna Halafoff's 2013 *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions*. The latter focuses on the implementation of multifaith initiatives "as cosmopolitan strategies to counter global risks—such as terrorism and climate change—and advance common security in ultramodern Western societies."⁴ More focused analyses treat a specific dimension, like, for example Msgr. Michael Fitzgerald and John Borelli's book that presents a Catholic view of interfaith dialogue.⁵ Other mapping and analytic initiatives evaluate specific strategies of interfaith engagement in terms of their dynamics, for example, dialogue or approaches to a sector, like health or environment.⁶ In general the research on the overall topic is rather patchy with some areas covered far more intensively than others. A particularly weak area is assessment of impact.

It is important to recognize that interfaith engagement is far from universal and by no means includes all faith-linked or inspired activities. Significant parts of the religious world deliberately hold themselves apart from interfaith work,

whether because their credos and operational approaches focus on a single faith or goal, or because they do not see interfaith engagement as particularly useful or as a priority. Much of their effort, whether focused on spiritual matters within their communities or social, economic, cultural, or political engagement, is conducted within a specific faith context. Interfaith approaches clearly offer advantages especially in terms of inclusion but they can also involve significant demands, for coordination and partnership, for example, that may be seen as obstacles. Interfaith approaches and work need to be seen alongside and as part of the broader religious institutional roles and engagement.

Defining categories of interfaith action

Categories of institutions, approaches, and practical entry points that frame the bewildering array of interfaith endeavors are outlined below.

Broadly, organizations fall along a range that extends from major transnational organizations to efforts centered in specific world regions and countries, to the host of locally focused

initiatives. Some take the form of formal, legally established organizations, with headquarters, paid and full-time volunteer staff, and a historical track record, while others are more informal, operating often virtually across various institutional and territorial boundaries. Some are all inclusive of different religious communities, others more specifically focused on a narrower subset (which includes ecumenical initiatives). Another spectrum is public (that is, supported by or directly involving governmental entities) versus private with public or private leadership, support, and involvement (or some combination). A notable set of efforts focus on academic institutions and deliberately intellectual dialogue while others have an operational, on the ground focus. Media engagement is on the increase and could be seen as a distinct category. A caution: vocabulary used can vary and organizations and initiatives vary also in stating explicitly their interfaith objectives. In many cases interfaith initiatives are part of broader institutional mandates.

Virtually all analysts of interfaith work try, explicitly or implicitly, to categorize initiatives. Their very complexity and diversity calls for such an effort; framing helps to situate and understand different approaches and can be useful in assessing various approaches and strategies, for example to dialogue. Some categories reflect scale and scope: thus global, regional or national, and local. Strikingly, many initiatives emerged in response to specific events or eras (thus akin to cohorts): to a degree initiatives are colored by the crisis or era that shaped their formation. The many efforts that emerged following 9/11 are a prime example. Crises open new approaches and doors of opportunity, but they also can contribute to dispersion and fragmentation of effort; some sprouts flourish while others wither. Likewise there can be a regional “tone,” while initiatives linked to a specific religious tradition (for example, Buddhism) are likely to reflect features of beliefs and organization.

Roles of history and ideas

This report’s extended historical introduction highlights the significance of events and different histories that have shaped the interfaith landscape over time. The graphic at the beginning of Chapter 2 illustrates elements of the timelines that have influenced overall patterns.

Interfaith engagement involves actors who approach the challenge from very different perspectives (and with differing theories of change). Approaches range along a spectrum from

highly intellectual exchange that might assume that the path forward depends on coming to grips at a deep theoretical level with common elements and differences among religious traditions, to quite pragmatic, action-focused approaches that assume that addressing common problems together and building relationships, working at a very practical level, offers the best path to greater harmony.

Scholar/activists Diana Eck,⁷ Paul Knitter,⁸ and Eboo Patel⁹ have explored the complex manifestations of three broad categories of actors they see involved in interfaith dialogue: exclusivists, inclusionists, and pluralists. With a few variations, this breakdown essentially highlights the individual approaches each type tend to employ as they engage, or not, in interfaith work. Paul Knitter invokes Amartya Sen’s *Idea of Justice*.¹⁰ Arguing that communities may not agree on what exactly justice looks like, they can nonetheless more or less agree as to the features of injustice, each reacting with the same “gasps of disbelief” in the face of human suffering. Knitter divides interreligious dialogue into two groups. The first, falling within his “theory of theology,” holds that all theological disputes need to be resolved, or ideas of justice clarified, before acting. The other, which Sen calls “realization-focused-comparison” and Knitter calls “dialogical approaches,” focuses on collaborative action as a response to injustice, even as they continue to disagree on what is just.

Differences in approach often reflect different understandings of the root causes of interfaith tensions and how best to address them. Theological and intellectual approaches assume a centrality of belief and a view that community identity and response follow from it. They may take as a given something akin to a notion of clashing civilizations. Others may assume that tensions reflect lack of knowledge or misunderstandings of other communities; therefore better understanding, both of people themselves and their beliefs, can lessen tensions. Action approaches often look to human relationships and knowing “the other” as a primary driver of peace amidst conflict. The question thus arises: what comes first: changing or confronting beliefs or change inspired by action?

In various ways an organization’s or initiative’s theory of change underlies strategies, language, practical priorities, and leadership style. To illustrate this latter point, Religions for Peace emerged during a time when intense debate centered on whether change was led from the top or the bottom. Their

choice to blend community decision making with a top down implementation reflects this debate.

Towards a map of organizations

The following reflects different categories and approaches that emerged from this review of interfaith initiatives.¹¹ Many organizations and initiatives have multiple facets and features. Many organizations listed as illustrations are described in short narratives.

A. Type of organization/initiative

1. Global, multipurpose, formal (examples: Religions for Peace, Tony Blair Faith Foundation)
2. Global network/franchise (example: United Religions Initiative)
3. Part of or linked to a religious organization or figure (examples: Catholic Church Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Hizmet supported network of interfaith dialogue centers)
4. Network (examples: Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Global Network of Religions for Children, North American Interfaith Network)
5. Global, specific group or topic (example: Global Peace Initiative of Women)
6. Global, development purpose, interfaith segment (example: Habitat for Humanity)
7. National, specific purpose (examples: religious freedom organizations in the US, National Religious Campaign against Torture, Shoulder to Shoulder Initiatives).
8. National or regional organization (examples: Religions for Peace, Japan, URI North America)
9. City or local organization (example: Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington)
10. Media (examples: Interfaith Voices, The Interfaith Observer, Read the Spirit)
11. Interfaith initiatives to link to business or finance (examples: Interfaith center for Corporate Responsibility, 3IG, Religious Freedom and Business Foundation).

12. Academic interfaith center (example: Graduate Theological Union, Interreligious Studies¹²)

B. Organizational affiliation/primary link

1. Global and broadly representative—Leaders, organizations, groups from multiple countries (examples: Religions for Peace, World Faiths Development Dialogue—WFDD)
2. Global reach, specific faith origin (examples: Community of Sant'Egidio, Pax Christi)
3. Intergovernmental—Joint governmental initiatives (examples: KAICIID, Alliance of Civilizations, Doha International Center for Interreligious Dialogue)
4. Government interfaith outreach (examples: Kazakhstan, Kosovo initiatives, Finnish government support for FinnChurch Aid interfaith work).
5. Ecumenical—Multiple Religious leaders or groups within a tradition: (example: World Council of Churches)
6. Community—Individuals within a specific regional context (example: Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land)
7. Governmental—Institution of a single government body (example: outreach by French government to Muslim communities across French cities)

C. Target populations or communities

1. Elite—Leaders of any level, community, religious, national, global (examples: The Common Word Initiative, pre-G8, G7, or G20 meetings of religious leaders)
2. Midlevel—City officials, police (examples: The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, San Francisco Interfaith Council)
3. Grassroots—Community Members (example: responses to specific anti-Semitic or Anti-Muslim action with community protection). These initiatives are sometimes aim to be representative with some formal religious leaders in key positions; others are deliberately informal with “lay” leadership.

4. Multilevel—any combination of the above (example: United Religions Initiatives that each work at many levels from global to very local)
5. Engage specific communities (examples: Interfaith Youth Core, Global Peace Initiative of Women). Of special importance, with their own challenge, are efforts to engage youth and women.
10. Spiritual mobilization, centered on prayer and worship (examples: Sant'Egidio annual Prayer for Peace, Day of Prayer in Guinea during Ebola crisis, Arigatou World Day of Prayer for Children)
11. Media focused efforts (examples: Unity Productions Foundation; Hartley Film Foundation)

D. Core strategy

1. Advocacy—Advocate for institutional, government-level change (examples: Religious Partnership for the Environment, Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation, religious freedom organizations)
2. Action to bring about change (examples: the Alexandria Process, Habitat for Humanity “theology of the hammer,” Nigeria, outreach and crisis intervention by the Imam and the Pastor)
3. Education—Increase understanding, academia (including education about religion in schools), leader training (examples: Hartford Seminary, religious leader training in South Sudan)
4. Cultural, to promote understanding and common values through arts, sports, festivals (examples: Fes Festival of Global Sacred Music, religious events around Olympic Games, UN Alliance of Civilizations)
5. Dialogue to promote understanding (examples: Elijah Institute, World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace¹³)
6. Dialogue process focused on theology (example: Anglican-Orthodox dialogue)
7. Development—Community projects either local or international (examples: Alliance of Religions for Conservation, support from Norwegian Church Aid)
8. Network—Coordinate and organize various faith and interfaith groups (examples: Women of Faith Network of RfP, United Religions Initiative Youth Network).
9. Statement of belief, joint statement issued as the primary action (examples: Charter for Compassion, Global Ethic, Common Word, Marrakech Declaration).

E. Theory of change—What will bring lasting change?

1. Understanding is the force for change: Changed beliefs about the other will lead to changed behavior
2. Experience can change attitudes and behavior: Changed behaviors will lead to changed beliefs or at least changed behaviors.

F. Funding sources

1. Religious institution support
2. Subscription/contributions by members supports organization
3. Pro bono, volunteer
4. Individual patron (small to major donors)
5. Foundations/corporations
6. Public funds
7. Fee for service

The following paragraphs highlight features and challenges that characterize several of the most active organizations and initiatives.

Transnational and global institutions: Three organizations in particular operate on a global stage, albeit in rather different ways. Religions for Peace (RfP) aspires to represent global religious institutions and serve as their voice in working to promote peace and interfaith harmony. The United Religions Initiative (URI) and the Parliament of the World's Religions claim less that they are “representative” of world religions, instead presenting themselves more as global movements of ideas and people. All three have a base in the United States and global reach. Their distinctive histories shape the

contemporary organization. Each, with a broad and global mandate, confronts (in different ways) the challenge of serving a representative function, as they understand it, and of inclusiveness within the diverse religious world. They face challenges of financial support as the religious organizations that are part of each entity—as formal members or supporters—rarely provide adequate funding for the operations. Lastly, all are deeply engaged in the core challenge of addressing religious tensions and working for peace. Various other organizations look to global and interfaith representation but at a smaller scale. Areas of focus include cultural exchanges, peacebuilding, and post conflict reconciliation.

Governmental and intergovernmental: Formal governmental and intergovernmental interfaith engagement is relatively recent and appears to be increasing, prompted largely by local and global interreligious tensions. It is related to religious roles in formal peace negotiations (termed Track II or Track 1.5 diplomacy¹⁴) or to broad aspirations for world peace. Some clearly emerge from local circumstances.¹⁵ Interfaith or multifaith engagement is attractive in some national settings and also at the United Nations, notably because it promises to calm fears of favoring one religious community over another. Interfaith organizations may be part of broader civil society fora that engage with governments. Examples include religious engagement in consultations on Poverty Reduction Strategy documents and, to a degree, on the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs, SDGs). Mechanisms range from faith-based councils that act as liaisons between the religious leadership of the country and the government, for example the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, to agencies whose goal is to foster protections for minority religions and promote religious tolerance, like the Sudan Inter-Religious Council. On occasion distrust of governmental engagement needs to be overcome. KAICIID is the most prominent current example of a multinational interfaith initiative.

Special case of the United Nations: The long and quite complex United Nations history of engaging (or not engaging) with religious and interfaith organizations reflects in part a broad reticence linked to views of some member states and the complexity of the UN system, which includes many distinctive organizations.¹⁶ The Committee of Religious

NGOs at the United Nations,¹⁷ a coalition of the many religiously linked NGOs that engage at the UN, aspires to serve a coordinating function. The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging FBOs for Sustainable Development reflects an effort to focus on religious dimensions of UN operations.¹⁸ Among other agencies, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP,¹⁹ have specific programs and guidelines on links to religious communities. Most broadly, the High Level Task Force on Dialogue of Civilizations provided the grounding for establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations, whose mandate is to promote dialogue and engagement. Interfaith Harmony Week, an initiative originally proposed by the King of Jordan, has become an annual feature with events worldwide.

Formal religious institutions and initiatives: Various interfaith initiatives and organizations have a regional or national scope. Some echo global organizations, forming part of global networks (the RfP regional councils are an example), while others have arisen in response to more local ethos and circumstances. Some are continuing bodies, for example Religions for Peace Uganda, while others are linked to specific events, for example the 2015 US Buddhist Catholic dialogue—sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.²⁰

Local/regional efforts: A host of local and regional interfaith initiatives are linked to global or regional networks or organizations, though many emerge through local leadership and initiatives. Some have formal nonprofit status, often run by volunteers, a small-dedicated staff, or some combination. Activities range from facilitating informal interactions to organizing around common community issues, including development and conflict mediation. Some networking organizations seek to support these local initiatives, through regional conferences, trainings, and social media. Examples include the North American Interfaith Network, National Conference for Community and Justice, African Council of Religious Leaders (part of RfP), the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative in Uganda, and Grand Rapids, Year of Interfaith. An example of a specific response to an issue is a 2014 Manila, Philippines meeting on religious roles in disaster preparedness organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP.

Community interfaith contact: Sometimes called the dialogue of the everyday, much energy for interfaith activity comes from personal interactions with people of other religions, multifait family backgrounds, Muslim children playing inside the walls of a local monastery, Senegalese Muslims recognizing Easter, Holi celebrations that include Jewish and Buddhist neighbors, or a Christian/Jewish family celebrating Passover Seder alongside Christmas. Such experiences help to enrich a community image that includes multiple identities, with appreciation both for their distinct attributes and the benefits of a combination. There is an understanding inherent in these efforts that respect and tolerance are often linked to personal knowledge and awareness of others. Among the many examples of deliberate efforts are student exchanges, video/Skype dialogue, mission travels, living room dialogues, and interfaith youth groups. Projects include interfaith food drives, park cleanups, worship and prayer services, local youth groups and school groups. The countless interfaith prayer services that followed the June 2015 Charleston, South Carolina shooting and interfaith prayer events inspired by the Ebola crisis are other examples. Normalized and frequently mundane interactions are also inherent in many network activities: a common observation after interfaith gatherings of many kinds is that their most important impact is personal friendship, appreciation of others, and recognition of common purpose. New organizations and initiatives frequently emerge from such personal contact.

Academia: It can be argued that the academy (that is, scholars and universities) had the earliest and most significant roles in fostering the development of interfaith awareness and action. Scholars of the social sciences, anthropology, and humanities, as well as theologians, called attention to the richness of religious experience, underlying social and political tensions and scope for cooperation. Universities offer a platform for people seeking institutional support. While many university scholars, especially in Europe and the United States, were to a significant degree blind to religious developments in parts of the world, this picture is changing. Religious literacy is rarely a core competence for Liberal Arts and other scholars, but programs that support interfaith understanding have mushroomed, in a wide variety of shapes and forms. Interfaith student groups, chaplains, and interfaith community

action are common at many universities, as are student exchanges and programs designed to introduce individuals to the religious other. Programs straddle the divide between secular interreligious education and the theologically infused interfaith interaction. Harvard University's Pluralism Project, IFYC, the National Association of Campus Ministries, and Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs are examples of academic networks that have active links to interfaith approaches and activities.

Theological education: Especially in North America and in Europe, but also in other world regions, religious education that explicitly includes other religious traditions is on the increase. Programs range from one off lectures to interfaith education and collaborative curricula that link different schools as well as non-religious entities (an example is HIV/AIDS training in East African seminaries). The Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, founded in 1893 at Hartford Seminary, is an example of a progressive program. Among 150 schools polled in 2009, there were 1,210 courses about "other" faiths. Three rationales for the new attention were highlighted in an Auburn Study, "multifaith education (1) makes better religious leaders, (2) strengthens faith, and (3) enhances proselytizing."²¹ The Ecumenical Institute Bossey Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Interreligious Studies, is accredited by the University of Geneva. The American Academy of Religion today highlights multifait issues and programs. Successive Parliaments of the World's Religions have engaged both religious studies and theological students in many aspects of their activities.

Some challenges that confront interfaith work

The following paragraphs highlight some significant strategic challenges that are seen across different institutions and programs.

Target population:²² Leadership or elite versus broad engagement is a long-standing topic of debate within interfaith circles. A 2004 report by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), *Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue* explores the issue, focusing on target populations of various organizations and initiatives as a marker for different kinds of interfaith dialogue. How far, it asks, should interfaith dialogue target

“leaders,” a term that generally designates formal leadership and elites, or a broader interreligious community? Many religious “leaders” are men, generally quite mature. This highlights the persistent question of how to engage women and youth.²³ Some interfaith initiatives do have an *elite* focus, centered on people in senior positions in politics, religion, academia, and other fields who, it is assumed and hoped, have wide influence on ideas, practices, and values; ideas are expected to “trickle down.” Others focus more on *mid-level groups* that “have influence over smaller groups of people in a more personal way.” A third category is *grassroots* (trickle up), where “participants or activists are individual citizens... having an impact on their families, friends, customers and others whom they have personal relationships.” Various programs aim to either bring together multiple levels of the population or work with multiple levels individually, in several different programs. Major organizations over recent decades have evolved towards a “both/and” approach.

Approaches to dialogue: Dialogue has always been and remains a core interfaith activity and strategy, though the tools and techniques employed have developed over the years. What is meant, however, needs to be examined. The term “dialogue” is complex and carries much freight. Some view it as a transformative process, while others describe it as more akin to a recipe for talk that can avoid or postpone the need for real action.

While mutual understanding is the underlying purpose of any dialogue, organizations tend to approach dialogue in two rather different ways. A first centers on theology, and typically involves high-level scholars and religious leaders whose goal begins with understanding divergent theologies. A theological focus is, as Knitter argues, based on a belief that common theological agreement will naturally lead to a just society. Dialogue efforts aim to create space for intentional conversations around identity, religion, and conflict. Jürgen Habermas argues that through “communicative action”²⁴ participants will coordinate action after deliberative conversations, even if such action is beyond an organization’s scope. Examples include the elaborate conversations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and those led by the Anglican Communion. “This is the kind of dialogue in which we try to get our *heads* straight—that is, our concepts correct, our misunderstandings adjusted,” Knitter argues.²⁵

Scholarly programs at Claremont Lincoln University, Claremont School of Theology, Elijah Institute, Hartford Seminary, Fuller Seminary, Temple University, International Institute for Islamic Thought, the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, the Study of Religions across Civilizations (SORAC), and many others start from scholarship and ideas. Scriptural reading, which can be undertaken at many levels, is an example of an approach that deepens understanding through careful study.²⁶ Scarboro Missions, a Roman Catholic mission society, has developed curricula based on the effort to explore and deepen understanding.²⁷

Contemplative practices in many religious traditions also encourage dialogue and common prayer across religious lines. The Contemplative Alliance, a program of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW), gathered religious leaders from the U.S. and Iran to “to delve more deeply, to connect on an inner spiritual level so that bonds of friendship and appreciation can unfold.”²⁸ A common response to a crisis but also a core part of interfaith action, including the 1986 Assisi interfaith gathering convened by Pope John Paul II, is prayer.

A second strand of interfaith dialogue efforts are linked directly to conflict resolution. Anger and misunderstandings, are a common hurdle to overcome in conflict resolution, and call for varying techniques and approaches that can involve religious groups in different ways. Dialogue in such situations works to reconcile communities during and after war, violent acts, or hate speech. Participants in such religio-political dialogues tend to focus less on the theological aspects of the disputes, though they can also play a part. While those directly engaged in conflict may participate, political dialogues can involve a broader set of members of the conflicting communities. Listening is a critical element, together with mediation. The Alexandria Process is an example; religious and political leaders engaged in a process aimed at addressing tensions between Israel and Palestine, looking to common religious beliefs and heritage. In Israel the Interfaith Encounter Association focuses on civil society dialogue. The Corrymeela Community, Northern Ireland’s oldest peacebuilding institution, has worked for over 50 years to “heal fractured communities”²⁹ through an approach that deals with engaging people directly around their specific wounds and problems. Truth and reconciliation efforts of various kinds in different world regions often have religious leadership and religious roots (Archbishop

Desmond Tutu was instrumental in organizing and guiding South Africa's T and C). An area of rising interest is religious roles in trauma healing.

Interfaith action (praxis): Action-focused approaches have many proponents. A common path is to identify a problem, such as homelessness or global climate change, that affects a community or group of communities, then work to build multi-faith groups or multi-sector coalitions (addressing a variety of different topics) to address it. The large group of faith-inspired organizations (FIOs) tend to favor and engage in such approaches, actively seeking opportunities for interfaith collaboration at a practical level. Examples include the collaboration of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) in Nepal following the earthquake and numerous interfaith food banks and homeless shelters across the world. The Jubilee Debt Campaign to address third world indebtedness leading up to the year 2000 was a multi-sectoral coalition, with a strong spiritual component, including biblical inspiration, and religious leadership. Habitat for Humanity's interfaith statement identifies the common goal among their interfaith partners as building a house: "most often, when people of different faiths come together to build a Habitat house, individuals find a new respect for one another."³⁰ Interfaith community groups responded to the Hurricane Katrina disaster. The Global Faiths Coalition for Education, established by A World at School, has gathered over 28 member organizations, representing six major faiths, to coordinate efforts to increase access to education.³¹ The hope is that the individual will engage in cross-cultural understanding and dialogue after, or alongside, a specific community action.

There is remarkable agreement across the board among interfaith organizations, large and small, that collaboration and mutual support is the order of the day. Especially in the United States, the principles set forth by American Jewish activist Saul Alinsky,³² centered on community organizing with a sharp focus on bold purpose, has infused many in the pragmatic school. It has also inspired or necessitated complex alliances and partnerships. This presents a significant current issue—collaboration is easier aspired to than achieved. It is somewhat ironic that the bigger the issue (for example nuclear disarmament, ending the death penalty, climate change), the more collaboration seems to be possible.

Institutional change/advocacy: Advocacy is very often part and parcel of interfaith work. It can be especially effective when linked to action and community experience. Religious liberty is an area of focus, with a particular attention on addressing problems in government relations and religious minorities. Prominent contemporary examples are the plight of the Rohingya community, which is Muslim in a largely Buddhist Myanmar/Burma, threats to Christians in Pakistan, and Islamophobia in the United States. Interfaith organizations that engage in advocacy include large multinational organizations like the UN Alliances of Civilizations, and smaller nationally focused groups like the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism. Their platforms range from formalized relationships with governments to consultant type roles offering advice to governments and corporations, to activists, who gadfly/speak truth to power approaches. The tempo of advocacy on climate change issues is picking up. Some interfaith groups center their advocacy on women's rights, working, for example, to end gender based violence and child marriage.

Education (curricula, online courses, part of public education/diplomacy, etc.): Educating communities and individuals about the religious other has been part of interfaith activity since before the 1893 Parliament. Education can be the starting point for interfaith approaches, with a focus on classroom based programming, films, books, and public service campaigns. Such strategies frequently blend with advocacy campaigns and media strategies. New social media tools and hashtag activism are increasingly significant. A new edge is bringing interreligious education to younger populations, specifically high school and elementary students. In the U.S. especially but also in France and countries influenced by French-style *laïcité*, concerns about injecting religious elements into public education have complicated the challenge of working towards a basic religious literacy as a foundation for understanding and mutual respect.³³ Educating students and policy makers about the diversity of religious identities is key to any strategy to counter violent extremism, with a particular focus on what images of the religious other are embedded in curricula.

Cultural (sports, arts): Cultural activities offer a promising area for interfaith action, including film, art and music festivals, and sporting events. They may be linked to education, advocacy, and dialogue, and involve creative collaboration

among religious communities. Groups that use the arts as intentional dialogue starters include CARAVAN and Morocco's Fes Festival of Global Sacred Music that includes an unusual dialogue process inspired by a belief that sacred music can open hearts and minds to new understanding and ideas.

Financing interfaith work

Funding structures of interfaith organizations and initiatives resemble closely those of the general non-profit world, with a few notable differences. They tend to be unclear, and there are few strong fundraising models. Since the mid 2000s efforts to professionalize and incorporate corporate models have attracted attention but, as a recent review pointed out, "nonprofit leaders are much more sophisticated about creating programs than they are about funding their organizations, and philanthropists often struggle to understand the impact (and limitations of their donations)."³⁴ A general observation is that more modest organizations and programs (relying on less than US\$2 million a year) tend to find more funding sources and can generally rely on informal giving. Of 144 nonprofit organizations created since 1970 that had grown to US\$50 million a year or more in size, "we found that each of these organizations grew large by pursuing specific sources of funding—often concentrated in one particular source of funds or small donations."³⁵ Contrary to popular concepts that organizations must diversify funding, organizations that grew often developed sophistication with one particular source of funding.

Funding of interfaith initiatives varies. Several foundations have provided significant funding for programs of varying sizes. Prominent among them are the Henry R. Luce Foundation and the GHR Foundation. As organizations seek larger amounts of multi year funding the pressure to conform to industry standards increases, thus demanding clear strategic frameworks. The influence of charismatic leaders is less significant than a focus on results. Organizations that have not laid the groundwork for solid and credible monitoring and evaluation face mounting challenges. Several organizations depend heavily on inspired high net worth individuals who believe in the goals of an organization. Membership organizations can seek to fund their operations through member subscriptions. A few, rather rare, organizations are able to create adequate revenue streams. IFYC leads trainings, seminars, and sells books, and Interfaith Families sells curricula. Others

charge membership fees. The process of revenue creation for non-profits is being turned upside down by the growth in B-Corporations, which models a revenue based business to fund the nonprofit side of programs.

Governments in some settings provide grants to interfaith programs, both as the "soft side" of the global war on terror and as a way to engage religious leadership and their constituents. This funding varies widely by country and some eschew any direct financial involvement. Interfaith Kosovo, Interfaith Benin, and the office for religious harmony in Pakistan are government funded. Several governments have specific offices focused on relations with religious bodies (at the ministerial level in some countries).

Notes

1. Two illustrations are the World Economic Forum Council of 100's report on institutions involved in West-Islam Dialogue, 2008, <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/islam-and-the-west-annual-report-on-the-state-of-dialogue>, and the 2015 KAICIID mapping of interfaith organizations working for peace, <http://www.kaiciid.org/what-we-do/mapping-dialogue-peace>.
2. *Interactive Faith: the Essential Interreligious Community Building Handbook*, ed Rev. Bud Heckman (Skylight Paths Publishing, 2008) presents the following categories (p. 223):
 - Dialogue vs. action
 - Right-brained/heart/arts centered vs. Left-brained/reason/head centered
 - Formal vs. informal
 - Representative vs. grass-roots
 - Organizational vs. personal
 - Staffed vs. unstaffed
 - Advocacy/public witness vs. Conversation/private exploration
 - Particularistic/differentiated vs. Syncretistic/blended
3. The topic of Katherine Marshall's *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers, Modern Shakers* (Routledge, 2014).
4. Anna Halafoff, *The Multifaith Movement Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 4. Another example of a "guide" is Sandy and Jael Bharat *A Global Guide to Interfaith: Reflections from Around the World* (O Books, 2007).
5. Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Orbis Books, 2006).
6. Paul Knitter, "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Social Action," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013).
7. Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001).

8. Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002).
9. Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).
10. Paul Knitter, "Justice as the 'common cause' for interreligious dialogue? Revisiting a complex question," *Horizons*, 38 (2002), 104–107.
11. The approach is international but there is a tendency to bias towards US based efforts, in part because information is more readily available.
12. "Interreligious Studies," Graduate Theological Union, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://gtu.edu/academics/areas/interreligious-studies>.
13. An effort to bring Muslim Imams and Jewish Rabbis together reflected an underlying hope that these religious leaders could find common ground and build alliances that would address conflicts in the Middle East, through a rapprochement between Islam and Judaism. Religious leaders from over 43 countries attended three different Congresses and many beautiful sentiments and wise proposals were expressed. But the effort proved too demanding to sustain. The reasons why are debated: insufficient finance, appalling organization, and insufficient will to act, are among them.
14. Track II suggests a parallel negotiating process in a situation led by non-state actors; Track One and a Half suggests a hybrid process involving both state and non-state actors, sometimes officially and sometimes unofficially.
15. See Task Force report led by Scott Appleby and Richard Cizik for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, *Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for US Foreign Policy*. February 23, 2010- See more at: <http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/engaging-religious-communities-abroad-new-imperative-us-foreign-policy#sthash.ues9ySUB.dpuf>.
16. Jeffery Haynes, "The United Alliance of Civilisations and improved global dialogue," in *Religion, State and the United Nations: Value Politics*, ed. Anne Stensvold (Routledge, 2017).
17. "About," The Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations, accessed February 2, 2017, <https://rngos.wordpress.com/about/>.
18. Azza Karam, "Opinion: Religion and the SDGs- The 'New Normal' and Calls for Action," Inter Press Service, accessed July 2015, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2015/07/opinion-religion-and-the-sdgs-the-new-normal-and-calls-for-action/>.
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22. *Evaluating Interfaith efforts*, USIP, 2004.
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35. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

Reflections, Towards Conclusions

This report documents the complex history of interfaith initiatives as an interwoven part of both broader world historical trends and the varied histories of religious institutions, communities, and relationships. World events have shaped interfaith approaches, and new ideas and scholarship have inspired leaders and communities to engage with others in many different ways. The dynamic contemporary landscape of interfaith initiatives and organizations includes many thousands of actors, approaching their work from very different angles and with differing approaches and theories about how these will bring about change. Interfaith efforts share many values and structures of civil society movements, notably those engaged in peacebuilding, through their specific engagement with the tensions and mysteries of religious difference gives them distinctive features. Quantitative measures of scope and impact are needed with various efforts to define standards and criteria but to date there is little agreement on optimal and meaningful approaches. The numbers and diversity of interfaith efforts appears to be increasing, propelled both by growing awareness of religious tensions, by the manifest pluralism of societies, and particularly by the globalized urban environments that demand that communities live together, co-operating on challenges that range from day-to-day mundane relationships to epic tensions.

Interfaith activists address a broad gamut of topics but by far the largest cluster of activities is around peace and efforts to address social tensions and violence. This in turn involves issues that range from conflict prevention to mediation and conflict resolution to post conflict reconciliation and recovery. Interfaith efforts have been especially successful in the response to certain forms of crisis, notably to natural or to man-made disasters. Some interfaith initiatives have classic prophetic religious roles of confronting issues of injustice, “speaking truth to power.” Active interfaith support for the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the United States are sterling examples. The challenge of climate change has long engaged interfaith

efforts and they are increasing, both centered on annual international meetings on environment (termed the Conference of Parties, or COP) and at the local level. Especially since the year 2000 focus on seeking action on poor country debt, interfaith groups have concentrated on international development agendas; health has been a particular area of interest with the HIV/AIDS pandemic galvanizing action, but so has a wider agenda of development issues ranging from development models and strategies to more specific topics like water and housing policies.

Leading issues and debates around interfaith initiatives and organizations

Measuring effectiveness: Interfaith work faces the challenge of the contemporary emphasis on the discipline of measurable, tangible results. The impact of much interfaith engagement is, however, especially difficult to quantify, since it is often long-term with multiple factors and actors involved in outcomes and processes. Nonetheless various organizations are engaged in pioneering monitoring and evaluation efforts, IFYC, the Pluralism Project, and USIP among them. The focus is on capturing changes in community trust and assessing how effective specific programs are in bringing about such change.¹ Financing such evaluation work is itself a hurdle.

Dialogue advocates and skeptics: Dialogue is an honored and valued approach within many religious circles but it has plenty of skeptics. However, it is often the only way to begin to address contentious and dangerous issues, and it can lead at least to defining possible actions and to changes in understanding of narratives.

Supporters of dialogue focus on the potentially transformational impact of open exchange of ideas and the learning that comes with deep sharing of experience and better understanding of others. Interfaith dialogue is linked to the emergence and testing of new approaches to conflict resolution and the broad notion of peacebuilding; leading

proponents include Jean Paul Lederach, Mohammed Abu Nimer, and Susan Thistlethwaite. The virtues of dialogue include its core function as a problem solving mechanism, and a mechanism for dispute resolution. Such work, which may take long periods of time with steps forward and back, is often poorly appreciated. Hoped for benefits go beyond solving an immediate problem to a broader empowerment and mutual recognition of the parties involved.² Even so, direct impact of a specific dialogue event, let alone a complex set of linked processes, is difficult to measure and even to articulate persuasively, witness the constant frustrations in the poor media coverage of many dialogue efforts that seem to those involved exciting and significant. Solutions include better communication of success stories and rigorous efforts to build the assessment arsenal.

Some doubters question the effectiveness of gatherings whose apparent focus is talk (as opposed to action). Other reasons for unease might include reluctance to address explosive topics like historic wounds or even to broach a divisive topic like abortion. One observer notes that critics of interfaith dialogue “often apply a single litmus of concrete change: a reduction of violence in the world.”³ Since violence persists and people often will not speak with each other, a somewhat facile conclusion is that interfaith dialogue does not work.

A set of activities, linked to but distinct from dialogue per se, are what the World Council of Churches terms “Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue.” This approach aims to find common ground in meditation and prayer, thus in sharing the prayer and liturgical life of the other. One example is *Dialogue Inter-religieux Monastique*. Common retreats and silent meditation are employed as ways to break through anger or failure to comprehend an opposing position.

Conservative engagement: Participation of religious actors in interfaith initiatives is far from universal. Many conservative religious communities, especially, can be hesitant and some are actively hostile. Reasons for hesitations vary. Interfaith analyst and scholar Anna Halafoff suggests that what we are seeing is less a clash of civilizations than a clash of an anti-cosmopolitan versus a cosmopolitan mindset. Diana Eck points to complex challenges around differing beliefs, arguing that religious conflicts often “have less to do with what one believes than with how one believes what one believes.”⁴ One

avenue to wider inclusion (which is essential to the basic goal) is a sharper focus on intrafaith engagement, notably within the large Christian and Muslim communities.

Most interfaith conversations tend to engage those most open to such endeavors, what Eck terms pluralists and inclusivists. Faced in different world regions by violent extremists wielding machetes and religious texts with equal fervor, it is increasingly important to reach out to religious exclusivists and extremists of all kinds. This is easier said than done but bringing the doubters and opponents into conversation is a leading interfaith challenge. There are successful examples. “Safe space” is an especially significant requirement, allowing people to get to know one another and to engage privately, as opposed to holding discussions in the full glare of publicity. Engaging those somewhere in the middle is another important tactic.⁵ Evangelical Christian colleges, for example, can play important roles in exposing their students to diverse cultures and viewpoints,⁶ and the same applies to Muslim seminaries, or *madrasas*.⁷ Intrafaith conversations involving ultra conservative and conservative individuals are happening, though both scale and impact are difficult to measure. A final tactic is to build coalitions around topics where there is consensus or something approaching it. The “unlikely bedfellows” that together supported US legislation on trafficking and on religious freedom offers an example.⁸

Inclusiveness—religious privilege, nones, nons and indigenous communities: Questions about who is at the table (and who is not) run through interfaith history and they are very much alive today. Some religious groups will not join a meeting if certain groups are present or certain activities are planned (for example anything called a liturgy). Interfaith actors today have become more sensitive to these issues (compared, for example, to the practice at the 1893 Parliament of Religions where all representatives recited the Lord’s Prayer together daily⁹) and many interfaith gatherings include a wide spectrum of religious actors, including avowed atheists. Different organizations approach the issues of inclusivity differently. Nonetheless issues around religious privilege persist and pose practical issues. The issue tends to be more pronounced in representational groups, less so in grassroots activities, though some traditions nurture boundary issues and are wary of anything political or interspiritual.



Elijah Interfaith Institute

The Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders gathered in St. Ottilien, 2014.

Washington Post columnist and Brookings fellow, E.J. Dionne, commented recently on the high degree of hostility between deeply religious and nonreligious Americans. Both sides, he laments, “feel misunderstood and under assault, and respecting each other on matters of faith and politics seems beyond our current capacities.”¹⁰ An Aspen Institute study suggested that holding interfaith gatherings at secular sites might help in reaching both conservatives and nones.¹¹ Including indigenous communities in interfaith gatherings¹² and sacred voices who are not part of institutional structures familiar to Western Abrahamic traditions remains an issue, though both have been active in some large interfaith events.

A critical issue in interfaith work is how to include women and youth, where they cannot and do not hold formal positions within a religious hierarchy. Some interfaith efforts, especially involving religious elites, carefully respect religious hierarchy while others have found ways to engage religious actors in lieu of formal ordained clergy. Organizations like GPIW work deliberately to hear and amplify women’s voices, while Eboo Patel and the IFYC highlight youth voices. Over time indigenous, Neopagan, agnostic, and humanist traditions have become more integrated into interfaith activities.

Multifaith ministries: Interfaith advocates include people who self-identify as multi-religious or interfaith. Many grew

up in interfaith homes, with parents in different religions and emerge with multiple identities. The boundaries between respect for difference and syncretism are fine and sensitive, but the reality is that multiple identities, sometimes termed interspiritual or non-denominational, reflect a significant trend. Some interfaith seminaries teach people who identify as neither Jewish nor Muslim, but both. “We are on the threshold of a new interspiritual age” brought about by a confluence of world events, cultural changes, and the technological revolution, argue two scholars, Johnson and Ord.¹³ There are more than a dozen interfaith seminaries with hundreds of graduates, so an institutionalization is emerging after a rough journey.¹⁴

Normalizing diversity: Interfaith friendships and romances, visible varied settings, like Hollywood, Bollywood, Brazilian soap operas, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, and female athletes competing in hijab at the Olympics, are positive representations of religious diversity on the big and little screen. But cultural biases are also on public display in persisting stereotypes—Arabs and Muslims as stupid and violent, Blacks as poor and violent, women as unintelligent and weak. Deliberate efforts to challenge them thus have special importance. Groups like the Media Education Foundation work to reveal media bias, both in journalism and in art, using documentaries, newspaper articles, and social media.

New technologies as possible game changers:¹⁵

During President Obama's August 2015 visit to Kenya, Kenyans expressed distaste for CNN coverage through Twitter after Kenya was described as a "hotbed of terror."¹⁶ The trending hashtag #someonetellCNN illustrated a brave new world of political and cultural commentary through social media. #CanYouHearUsNow is a hashtag that Muslim women have used in 2016 to speak out against objectivization. Technology is also reshaping interfaith engagement in important ways, influencing the diversity of forms, methodologies, contents, and goals of many interfaith organizations. Perceptions integrate local and global variables, and challenge or undermine traditional centers of power.¹⁷ This global and local context (dubbed glocal) shifts engagement and exchange of ideas from one mediated by elites to a more democratic sharing of ideas. Managing positive and negative facets of the rapid fire, uncontrollable world of new media is a challenge that interfaith actors share with many others. Social media also fuels anger and a sense of grievance, as it shines a powerful spotlight on inequalities that were less visible if no less real in the past.

Beyond nations: Religious institutions preceded and have long transcended national borders but with many different forces of globalization, these trends have accelerated, with positive and negative impact. Global religious communities divided by political borders come together in sometimes new ways, feeding both cosmopolitan and anti cosmopolitan sensibilities. Diaspora communities can be intensively, hour by hour, engaged with communities across the globe. Young people can learn about different religious traditions through the Internet and through personal travel and acquaintances in ways their forebears could not have imagined. ISIS and other extremist groups use similar techniques and networks to recruit and encourage violence. Some assume blithely that leaderless networks lead to positive compassionate developments; this is naive as it obscures the roles of powerful interests and of criminal networks. A question is how to integrate traditional chains of hierarchy with these borderless networks. Pretending that hierarchies do not exist can allow unacknowledged leaders to escape accountability. The Internet does not fundamentally alter power dynamics, which can become more complex with the explosion of the number of communication channels that elite factions can exploit.

Philanthropy focus: The Foundation Center reported in 2010 that global private philanthropic giving by U.S. funders had increased from US\$5.6 billion in 1994 to US\$15.8 billion in 2002 to US\$25.2 billion in 2008. The Peace and Security Funders Group found that just US\$257 million went to peace and security in 2008 and 2009 combined.¹⁸ Half of this funding went to research and policy analysis, while the three areas that received the most generous funding were fieldwork in conflict areas, advocacy, and public mobilization. Foundations and visionary individuals play vital roles in interfaith work. The Peace and Security Funders report noted that two large foundations provided over one third of all peace and security dollars, and that 22 foundations awarded over one million dollars on average, over the two years.¹⁹ Knowledge about financing that goes specifically to interfaith activities is patchy but these reports highlight the vital roles that support can play in defining patterns and directing efforts in specific directions.

Security—governmental and intergovernmental:

Government and intergovernmental support for interfaith activities can help in achieving results, while opposition or unwise intervention can undermine them. Violent extremism with religious expression poses new challenges for governments. Of increasing concern are heavy-handed tactics sometimes used by authoritarian leaders but is also a risk in fear-riven democracies. The focus on countering violent extremism (CVE) has brought the political and religious together in new ways. Security support and peacebuilding are still largely segregated. The Tony Blair Foundation²⁰ illustrates a form of interfaith organization that has obvious links between religious and political actors, using both interfaith and security language. Public engagement between world political and religious leaders encouraging positive relationships among religious communities appears to be on the increase.

Humanitarian crisis response: Faith communities have always responded to humanitarian crises in their communities, including environmental disasters like Hurricane Katrina, Typhoon Haiyan, earthquakes, floods, and economic disasters like worker conditions and refugees. Religious communities are also an integral part of post war responses, witness faith-led reconciliation efforts after World War II. A newer trend is ambitious international FIO partnerships grounded in an

interfaith ethos. After the 2015 Nepal earthquake, LWF and Islamic Relief joined together to bring services to earthquake survivors, in predominantly Buddhist and Hindu communities.²¹ Similar partnerships in Aceh supported post tsunami reconstruction. The interfaith picture in humanitarian crises also involves problems. In the Nepal case a Hindu American Foundation communication hinted baldly that “other faith based groups... are not always selfless.” The purported ulterior motives included evangelizing and church-planting.²² Similar tensions arose in Aceh following the 2004 tsunami and in Haiti following the major earthquake. This highlights both the competition that is a reality among faith actors and some impediments to interfaith cooperation that include prominently concerns about motivations of different actors and especially proselytizing.

Responding to hate crimes: The immediate response to religious hate crimes (in the US and France) has included interfaith engagement, often including protective circles, interfaith prayer services, and fundraising for damaged property. Longer-term responses are illustrated in the many interfaith organizations and initiatives created after 9/11, the London and Madrid bombings, and other events. Matthew Weiner, formerly part of the New York Interfaith alliance and now at Princeton University, sees the situation and its evolution as follows: “Before 9/11, interfaith meetings existed, but religious leaders were more interested in focusing on their own traditions rather than engaging in fluid dialogue. We now have first responders in the interfaith community.”²³ Rabbi Potasnik observed that “in a very short time we can come together.”²⁴ Many, but not all, communities that experience crisis after crisis have prepared systematically for disasters and this has prompted some communities to negotiate their religious and ethnic identities in positive ways.

Future directions

If you start dialogue from a theological perspective only, you lock yourself into conversations about the self and not about the other person—people are happy to tell you about what they believe or what their traditions have to say, and the other person will say the same about themselves. People remain in enclaves, acknowledging each other but not

necessarily trying to find where the borders are porous and open. Starting from a non-theological perspective, from a historical, cultural perspective, at least opens up that space.

—Muslim intellectual and university administrator

Exploring the interfaith landscape drives home the dynamism and complexity of the array of formal organizations, initiatives, and largely unstructured efforts that fall under a loose interfaith rubric. They come in all sizes and shapes and touch on virtually every area of human endeavor. They range from elaborate institutional and intellectual enterprises with global ambitions to local, often spontaneous crisis responses to specific incidents. The most sustainable efforts tend to have a kinship with classic civic community building ventures and very often are part of or closely linked to broader mobilizations and efforts (for example for peace or environmental protection). However, the specific theological and academic focus in some interfaith work is also a significant part of the story, shaping ideas and social, political, and economic understandings. Another thread in the interfaith “map” is the history and contested roles of several organizations that aspire to serve as global and umbrella organizations with a meaningful voice in world affairs: what the Parliament of Religions termed “Guiding Institutions,” akin to the United Nations and other transnational bodies.

The history and present state of interfaith work are wrapped up in many of the transformations that are disruptors and shapers of modern life. The challenges to established institutions that shake some foundations of society include transformations of religious institutions and questioning of traditional authority. A feature of contemporary religion in many societies is the lively marketplace of ideas and entities: the freedom to choose, which in turn alters the horizons of interfaith understanding and the ways in which religious identities intersect with other understandings of identity. Erosion of teaching about religion as a core part of citizen education in some societies (the United States, France, and Great Britain are prime examples) means that basic understanding about the significance of even one’s own tradition let alone others can be a core challenge for social peace.

As religious institutions have proliferated and as many have assumed new political characters, both in reality and in perception, interfaith relationships, including various kinds

of tensions, have taken on new forms and, with the new technologies that are a facet of modern globalization, move and mutate with lightening speed. When there is even a remote religious facet the impact can be multiplied: witness the fallout when images of cannibalism in the Central African Republic fueled riots in Bangladesh, or cartoons drawn in Denmark and a Hollywood film sparked worldwide protests. Peace and understanding among different and dynamic religious institutions and beliefs has become a central challenge for many if not most modern societies.

An overall, somewhat ironic observation, is that interfaith work has transformational aspirations and potential and can be powerful, especially at the community level, but it tends to be poorly appreciated in many settings. Notwithstanding bold visions and objectives and despite greater recent recognition that religious institutions and beliefs play vital roles in contemporary societies, interfaith actors are rarely welcome at the leading global policy tables and in core institutions of many communities. Thus their overall impact is far less than might be expected given how important religious beliefs are to so many world citizens, and mounting evidence that interfaith relations have a crucial part to play in peace and social cohesion. Interfaith initiatives at times play leading and creative roles, but their voices and insights are often unheard. Telling the story well and documenting work in meaningful ways thus represent continuing challenges.

Key challenges and possible future areas for action are the following:

Appreciating better what is being done and with what impact

- Global interfaith organizations are rarely recognized as central global institutions with respect to core global agendas (acting on the environment and fighting hunger, for example). Mechanisms to gather and articulate the essential and collective wisdom of religious communities in meaningful ways need to be strengthened as a first step.
- Areas of disagreement among religious actors and with non-religious actors can be highly visible in many global forums (for example on youth engagement, approaches to gender violence, blasphemy laws, and family planning). Religious voices, including interfaith, are implicated.

Tensions linger and oxygen is sucked from debates. Honest recognition of differences and robust discussion in “safe spaces” could help move towards better understanding and common visions. This could dispel myths associated over simplistically with “all religions” and help ensure that perceived differences do not impede or detract from wider, constructive religious engagement.

- Accentuating positive experiences and messages and seizing opportunities to move interfaith work closer to the centers of action is important, with the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si!* as a prominent example.
- The interfaith agenda is, above all, about diversity. Dealing creatively with diversity as a facet of globalization presents theoretical, but also practical issues. The interest of various governments and foundations in religious institutions making diversity work (as well as potentially destructive forces against diversity) and looking to religious leadership (for example the Marrakech Declaration) offers a promising avenue.
- Often interesting, sometimes inspiring interfaith engagement in local communities is rarely shared, so that it does not appear to be building towards common approaches. Addressing this eminently fillable gap in knowledge through good case studies and analysis could have outsize benefits.
- Interfaith roles in peacebuilding are increasingly robust but still sit largely at the margins of the field, poorly integrated, in large part because religion tends to be bracketed with culture in insidious ways and because, ironically, religious intervention is more often equated with conflict than with peace. The untapped potential for interfaith roles in direct conflict resolution efforts and broader post conflict healing and reconciliation is large. Reconciliation and healing, increasingly recognized as vital for lasting peace, are areas where interfaith actors should have a comparative advantage.

Rethinking institutional manifestations

- Activities and institutional forms that emerge in response to successive crises tend to focus on immediate, more than longer-term opportunities and challenges. This contributes to an institutional map that, overall, is rather incoherent with generally ineffective coordination. There is a positive aspect—it is organic, touching on wide-ranging



Angela Jimenez/Intersections International

Ribbons of Hope, a project of Intersections International, was an event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

issues—more jazz than composed scripts. Moreover, many initiatives are not sustained. They draw attention and have important symbolic and often calming effects but tend to flag as a crisis fades. Recognizing this tendency could help in assuring greater sustainability.

- Interfaith groups offer important opportunities for the localization of humanitarian organization and finance that is part of the “Grand Bargain.” Better knowledge and clear focal points are needed to translate potential into scaled action. Their role deserves a robust review.
- Emerging academic centers of excellence focused on interfaith matters make important contributions but their scope is fairly limited and could be enhanced. There is much potential in the development of the equivalent to public-private partnerships by fostering rarely found research initiatives that bring together interfaith organizational actors, philanthropic actors, and institutional research agencies.

Addressing some conceptual and structural questions about the roles of interfaith institutions

- Violent extremism tends to overwhelm some interfaith agendas. In contrast, a tendency in reaction is to infuse interfaith discussion with bland bromides about love and peace. Deflecting these tendencies demands a willingness

to confront them and to broaden the horizons and agendas of interfaith work and religious engagement more broadly, beyond violence and extremism.

- Few interfaith actors are contending with important gaps in the academic field of interfaith relations and rarely see a compelling need to act on this intellectual core. This tends to weaken overall impact. Priority action needs to include more robust research, funding, and coordination on high priority topics, as well as work towards common understandings of challenges and the shared assets needed to address them.
- Relationships between interfaith and other religiously associated social justice work and civil society mobilization pose practical challenges in various settings—who belongs at what tables and what do they represent? Approaches will vary as the issues and potential roles of interfaith actors differ widely among countries. Competition for space is a common if often masked phenomenon in many African countries, for example, but also in Europe. It has arisen in practical ways for example around mobilization on HIV/AIDS in transnational settings like the United Nations. Interfaith representatives need to claim but also to earn their place at the table through meaningful engagement. Civil society approaches (academic and in practice)

need to consider faith and interfaith engagement more systematically.

- With interfaith work a significant element of the dynamic but shifting civil society landscape, at local and national levels, it can fall victim to the tendency to “shrink” or threaten civil society space. The often ambiguous roles that religious actors and formal institutions play in societies and vis a vis states can fudge how faith and interfaith institutions are understood in this broader dynamic. Seeing the issues more clearly is a start. Interfaith groups need to address the civil society challenges as a priority.
- Tensions between understandings of human rights and religious teachings and values, especially in relation to critical challenges of equality, need to be addressed, not because there will ever be total agreement but so that common values can emerge in authentic ways and areas of difference, for example on the significance of family values and potential tensions around proselytizing, can be better understood and managed.
- Global interfaith organizations have not developed sustainable financing for their work. Inadequate and varying financing mechanisms available to support interfaith work are a critical challenge for scaling and integrating the contributions of interfaith efforts. Major funders rarely see the full potential of the field or discipline.

Areas where interfaith could have particular impact

- Specific and meaningful focus on interfaith roles in conflict prevention and governance issues, especially in fragile states, is a priority. Attention to the aggravating issues of corruption and poor governance as a grievance and cause of state weakness and failure lacks a coherent direction and religious actors could play far more positive roles.
- Two prominent issues are commonly linked to religious beliefs and actors: proselytizing and impact on women’s roles and rights. Both present ethical and practical issues and deserve priority attention in interfaith reflection and action.
- Interfaith engagement on refugee integration and related policy debates needs a more robust tack.

- Various communication mechanisms and initiatives specific to faith and interfaith actors and could be better appreciated and built upon. This includes Internet sites, radio, social media, and academic journals, which can play positive as well as negative roles. Interfaith issues and action are not widely appreciated in the public sphere. Attention to this specific communication challenge is an area for action.
- Well-grounded policy responses that take interfaith realities into account and integrate religious beliefs and communities as key elements of social cohesion can and should be bolstered, for example through case studies.
- Mapping local interfaith work and diffusing results could help bring greater coherence to community level initiatives and inspire a broader “collective impact.”
- Creative interfaith programs at various universities contrast with a frequent absence of attention in others. Defining common standards knowledge about religious background and capacity to address the issues professionally (sometimes termed “faith literacy”) is a work in progress.
- Agreed evaluation criteria, standards, and mechanisms are especially weak. Most evaluative data is qualitative and narrative-based, rather than quantitative and statistically accessible. Recent efforts in addressing how best to get to the second are invaluable and the results of such findings need to be disseminate as widely as possible, as soon as possible.

“Religious literacy” is central to many of these challenges. Practical action at the broad interfaith level inevitably focuses on levels of knowledge and effective communication strategies and tools. Robust and plausible documentation of best practice, good case studies, and measurement of contributions and potential of interfaith approaches are crying needs. And where is this information gathered for ready public access? These questions apply at the community, national, regional, and global levels. To realize the broader interfaith aspirations and potential, far better awareness of what is at stake and meaningful definitions of common purpose are needed.

The knowledge gaps highlight some core challenges of what can be termed “religious literacy.” It involves civic knowledge extending from community to national and international levels, to counter misconceptions and simple lack

of understanding of different world views, including religious traditions. Here education systems, media, and political leaders play central roles. Interfaith efforts are a vital part of this challenge. Clear, demanding expectations about the level of knowledge applicable for relevant professions should be set (including international relations, humanitarian work, medicine, and law, for example) and appropriate “religious literacy” resources developed and disseminated to help achieve them. In parallel efforts can focus on making relevant knowledge (for example on “economic literacy”) available to various religious actors.

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APPENDIX A

Using terminology¹

Terminology matters. In the intrinsically complex subject of religion terminology adds layers of further complexity. Complexities multiply when translation to different languages is involved. Basic terms are the topic of heated debates, and are embedded in nuance. The meaning of specific words (religion, faith, spirituality, secular) but still more what they convey (and what they omit) are contested. Definitional efforts and debates take place both within various academic disciplines (anthropology, political science, psychology, and theology among them) and in religious and non-religious communities and even within families.

When many religious tradition are involved complexities are magnified and this extends to the terms used in describing efforts that bring different traditions together. How are they best described? Among terms used are interfaith, interreligious, interworldview, interspiritual, multireligious, multifait, intercultural, and intercivilizational. Ecumenical or interdenominational normally refer to intrafaith (that is, within a single tradition) and are most commonly used within Christianity (Merriam Webster defines it as “of, relating to, or representing the whole of a body of churches”).

The report’s authors respect and appreciate these debates and the potential for confusion involved but does not venture far into probing language complexities. It does it advance a view as to relative merits. For the sake of simplicity interfaith is most often used though especially where an organization or individual prefers a different term that term is adopted.

“Religion” for some is a straightforward description of institutions and approaches; for others it implies formality, in keeping with one of the word religion’s Latin roots, “to bind together.” Religion may signify simply a broad and intangible set of beliefs tied to the transcendent. It can also describe very specific theological premises and practices. The Oxford dictionary definition is: “the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal god or gods.” Yet plainly religion is not a “thing,” and it may help not to use it as a noun, the adjective “religious” helps to sharpen focus

and may better convey the idea of an approach rather than any sort of tangibility.

“Spirituality” can suggest the essence of religious belief and practice. Alternatively it may refer to something distinct and apart from, and contrasted with, organized religion. The Oxford dictionary gives two definitions: “related to religion or religious belief”; and “relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.”

“Faith” may be used in ways similar to religion, as in “world faiths,” suggesting a broad category of traditions that view themselves as religious in nature. It may also suggest a broader set of specific beliefs or convictions that go beyond the implied hierarchy and formality that the term religion conveys for some. But faith also suggests a broader concept of belief in something transcendent. The term faith in English has still wider connotations, a quality of belief in what is commonly unseen. Some comment that “everyone has faith; the question is, faith in what?” The Oxford dictionary gives two definitions: “a strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof”; and second, “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.”

“Religion” sometimes implies believers organized in formal communities (a church or congregation, or denomination). That notion sits uncomfortably in some traditions. There are believers (another quite widely used term)—some Buddhists, for example—who maintain that they do not have “faith” in the commonly understood sense of the word. The term “religion” and the assumptions that lie behind can be seen as western, derived from specific monotheistic religious traditions.

While “secular” suggests clarity and virtue for some, a common set of principles and values that is linked to a separation of what is religious from what is not in public context, in other settings it can imply a Godless and, by implication, valueless approach. One Oxford dictionary definition is “not connected with religious or spiritual matters.” The historical origin of the term expressed the contrast between those living

within and outside monastic orders, and those bound or not by monastic rule. Today the common use is rather to contrast the non-religious (as in a secular political party) with an explicitly religious base or inspiration. A most common modern meaning of “secular” describes a society where religious institutions do not play much if any role in politics.

The term “faith-inspired” institutions or organizations suggests a wider net than is commonly suggested by the term “faith-based organization”; it suggests less formal institutional affiliation. Many organizations, for example, derive a sense of institutional purpose from a specific religious tradition and

yet operate independently from any formal religious body (church, mosque, temple, etc.).

In sum, definitions are difficult. This report uses “religion” and “interfaith” largely because they are commonly used and quite widely accepted. No definition satisfies all concerns. The definition conundrum should not obscure the intrinsic underlying complexities involved.

Notes

1. The discussion draws on Katherine Marshall, *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers, Modern Shakers*, (Routledge, 2013).

APPENDIX B

Profiles of Selected Organizations, Events, Approaches

Organizations and approaches profiled

Global institutions with global reach:

1. Seeking to represent religious voices: Religions for Peace
2. United Religions Initiative (URI): A global coalition of “Cooperation Circles”
3. A global religious meeting place: The Parliament of the World’s Religions
4. An intergovernmental venture to advance interfaith work and action: The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)
5. Praying beside others: The Sant’Egidio Interreligious Gatherings
6. Achieving a place at global policy tables: Religious gatherings alongside G7/G8/G20 meetings

National and local interfaith approaches

7. Interfaith and environment: Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and GreenFaith: Interfaith partners for environment
8. The US government reaches out to youth: President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge
9. Grappling with religious diversity in a state: the Singapore experience
10. Encouraging and celebrating local interfaith initiatives: World Interfaith Harmony Week
11. Frankfurt: interfaith initiatives in a city
12. Religious communities and leaders: Contending with HIV/AIDS
13. Senegal: Cadre des Religieux pour la Santé et le Développement (CRSD)—Group of Religious Leader for Health and Development (CRSD)

An avowedly syncretic approach

14. The Unification Church

Approaches from within a religious tradition

15. A promising group meets a political fate: The World Islamic Call Society (WICS)
16. The Interfaith work of the Gülen (Hizmet) Movement
17. Pax Christi
18. International Shinto Foundation

The coordination challenge

19. Trying for coordination: the International Interfaith Centre (IIC)

Advancing theological dialogue

20. Anglican Communion: Ecumenical and interfaith dialogues
21. Deep dialogue: The Elijah Institute
22. Scriptural reasoning

Working towards global social and economic agendas

23. Focusing on a sector: The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA)
24. A Global Network for Children—Arigatou

Focus on specific groups: women, youth

25. Engaging young people: the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)
26. Sisters of Salaam Shalom
27. Interfaith explorations at the World Food Programme (WFP)

Approaching interfaith through incentives, the arts

28. Prizes for interfaith work: the Niwano Peace Prize
29. West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
30. Indonesia Weather Station

Global institutions with global reach

1. Taking on the challenge of representing the world's religious institutions: Religions for Peace (RfP)

Religions for Peace (RfP),
(formally and) formerly

Religions for Peace 

known as the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), has its headquarters in New York City, across from the United Nations building. It functions from its headquarters as a respected global interfaith organization. The thrust of its work is focused on peace, through advocacy, bringing parties together, and, on occasion, more direct mediation. RfP has engaged in related issues, including development activities, HIV/AIDS, and climate change issues over the years though its capacity in these areas is quite limited.

RfP functions as a coalition of regional and national chapters, and is headed by Dr. William Vendley, theologian and longtime interfaith activist. It coined the term “representativity,” a concept reflected in a careful statement, “a person, or group of persons, can represent, informally or formally, concerns of a larger community.”¹ This representation is reflected in its large group of co-presidents and carefully organized and orchestrated leader elections. The aim is to assure balanced representation, both religiously and regionally, so that no single group dominates. As an organization that aspires to present a common face of religious institutions as well as to encourage dialogue and cooperation among them, RfP’s efforts to address the challenge of credible and balanced representation of religious voices is both noteworthy and praiseworthy but it can also inject a rigidity and cumbersome governance structure that affects the organization’s capacity to respond swiftly to crises, design activities, and engage groups that lack formal religious representation (such as women and youth).

RfP was conceived and born in the 1960s, and it was formally established during the first World Conference of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan in 1970. Japanese religious leaders and organizations, notably Rissho Kosei-kai, were instrumental in negotiations and financial support for RfP in its early years, as were several foundations, notably the Ford Foundation. A first official committee meeting was held in 1963, largely a Christian Jewish gathering, and it was followed by several conferences and working groups,

including the Inter-Religious Conference on Peace held in Washington, DC. RfP governance is focused on global assemblies, held roughly every five years, in different world regions. Global assemblies were held in Loven, Belgium (1974), Princeton, New Jersey, USA (1979), Nairobi, Kenya (1984), Melbourne, Australia (1989), Riva del Garda, Italy (1994), Amman, Jordan (1999), Kyoto, Japan (2006) and Vienna, Austria (2013). RfP, which has UN consultative status, focuses considerable attention on the core institutions of the United Nations headquarters.

RfP takes pride in its work to promote peace, often through its regional and country councils. Both Liberian and Sierra Leonean interreligious councils played significant roles in supporting negotiations that ended long civil conflicts.² Drawing on their neutral standing within the community and extensive community network, the Sierra Leone IRC facilitated wide distribution of the peace agreement, helping rebels and community members to reconcile after the bitter conflict. In 2013, an interreligious council was established in Syria,³ whose activities have included denunciations of sectarian violence. RfP engages in global coalitions that address specific peace issues such as disarmament. Community building efforts include promoting religious pluralism, protection of vulnerable populations, women and community building, democracy, citizenship, and good governance. This largely involves workshops, training events, and community efforts.

A network of regional and country chapters has taken shape over the years, varying in strength and in their work and practical mandate. Interreligious councils in 92 countries and five regions engage in dialogue and action. There is considerable variation among structures, agendas, and capacity of the councils. Each has a council of presidents, an executive council and a council of trustees that support a secretariat.

Along with most religious institutions, RfP’s formal organizational structures have historically had few women in leadership positions. Alert to this issue (and goaded by several activists), RfP has made conscious efforts to develop a women of peace network. This group meets separately during global assemblies and has an independent work program, though it has suffered serious funding issues. A similar structure reflects concern to bring in youth voices through parallel mechanisms.⁴

2. United Religions Initiative (URI): A global coalition of “Cooperation Circles”

As the 50 anniversary of the United Nations approached, with plans to bring 183 ambassadors to San Francisco, Episcopal Bishop William E. Swing and his colleagues at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco were asked to create a liturgical service that was inclusive and respectful of the representatives of the world religions who were to attend. Bishop Swing was inspired by the idea that there should be a “United Religions” as well as a United Nations. Many meetings and discussions later, the United Religions Initiative (URI) was born in 2000. A global interfaith organization with an expansive notion of membership, it is headquartered in San Francisco. Rev. Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr., also an Episcopal priest, trained as a community organizer working to address the systemic causes of poverty, has been URI’s executive director since 2013.



URI sees its character as grassroots and community driven. Its operational structure is based on Cooperation Circles (CCs), which can be formed by any group, anywhere, of any size, and with its own agenda. CCs are autonomous units that have signed the URI charter. In 2016, there were over 770 CCs, active in almost every world region, engaging over 88 faith traditions and 84 countries. URI CCs engage in a diverse group of projects that range from youth leader programs, peace initiatives, interfaith solidarity networks, women’s empowerment movements, civic engagement, and environmental protection to interfaith dialogue.

URI works through eight operational world regions, each with dedicated staff to facilitate networking and resource sharing. Global religious representatives serve as contributors and project affiliates for URI, and interfaith leaders are actively engaged with the organization.

URI’s cohesion is grounded in shared values of dialogue and “compassionate action.” The uniting force for URI members is the URI Charter, signed (following a highly participatory set of discussions) in June 2000. The only formal requirement for membership in URI is to sign the charter.

The Charter’s preamble conveys an idea of URI’s approach:⁵

“We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, hereby establish the United Religions Initiative to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

“We respect the uniqueness of each tradition, and differences of practice or belief.

“We value voices that respect others, and believe that sharing our values and wisdom can lead us to act for the good of all.

“We believe that our religious, spiritual lives, rather than dividing us, guide us to build community and respect for one another.

“Therefore, as interdependent people rooted in our traditions, we now unite for the benefit of our Earth community.

“We unite to build cultures of peace and justice.

“We unite to heal and protect the Earth.

“We unite to build safe places for conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation.”

3. A religious meeting point with a long history: The Parliament of World’s Religions

The 1893 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago, often cited as the foundation of



modern interfaith activities, was an ad hoc affair with no institutional base. However, with the prospect of a centennial event in 1993, a modest organization was established in 1988 in Chicago, whose first purpose was to organize the centenary Parliament of World Religions. The idea of such global gatherings at roughly five year intervals took shape, and became the organization’s focal point. Thus a small legal organization developed whose primary mission was to organize periodic gatherings that bring together a wide range of religious actors from all over the world. There have been five large scale parliaments: Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), and Salt Lake City (2015), with a smaller event in Monterrey, Mexico (2007). Several of these events have attracted up to 10,000 participants, including religious and spiritual leaders from a wide range of traditions. Traditionally parliament events have been organized in close cooperation with the host city.

Parliament gatherings have represented an important focal point for interfaith work, a rare place where large numbers of religious leaders, including some of the most prominent, rub shoulders with local leaders, academics, students, and others who wish to attend. The parliament events have been marked by a lively diversity, including intellectual, academic style discussions, inspirational speakers, and artistic events and displays. Each parliament has focused on a major theme: two examples (1993 and 1999) were global ethics and “guiding institutions” respectively. The Melbourne parliament took a triple approach that aimed to address leading policy issues—peace, poverty, and environment. The challenge and sometimes drawback of such a large and diverse set of events has been some lack of focus and uncertain outcomes. Many religious traditions have been less than enthusiastic about participating in such an eclectic gathering and have stayed away.

With global gatherings the main focus, the Parliament organization faced an especially difficult organizational challenge, as it needed to mobilize first for a complex international event, followed by modest ongoing programs. Financing proved to be a virtually insoluble problem. In 2013 the organization experienced a tumultuous upheaval, losing its small staff and with turnover in the Board that extended through succeeding years. There were hopes for revival as the Salt Lake City event took place. Discussions continue about the Parliament’s continuing mandate, how it could be financed, and the appropriate structure that might match its ambitions.

4. An intergovernmental approach to interfaith dialogue: The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)

The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), with headquarters in Vienna, is an ambitious and politically significant player in the interfaith world. Formally established in 2011 through a trilateral treaty between Spain, Austria, and Saudi Arabia, with the Vatican as founding observer, the center is the first major organization that aims to be



both intergovernmental and interreligious. With programs launched in 2013, KAICIID is relatively new—its mandate and practical work still taking shape. It is already apparent that it offers a distinctive set of benefits and faces some significant challenges. These include the important financial support that KAICIID receives from Saudi Arabia, where the priorities and concerns of interfaith dialogue are problematic.

KAICIID’s origins are in some sense the culmination and are part of the complex series of efforts to address tensions in Muslim-West relations. Its center of gravity is Saudi Arabia, and specifically the late King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz. KAICIID, as its name suggests, focuses on dialogue initiatives.

The broader context of Muslim led initiatives, several advanced by Middle East region royal family members, include the Amman Message (2004), the International Islamic Conference (2005), the Common Word Initiative (2007), and the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center. Qatar hosted the Doha conference on Interfaith Dialogue annually from 2003, and has established an interfaith center, the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. KAICIID represents a more institutionalized effort with a broader agenda.

After the May 2003 bombings by Al-Qaeda militants, which killed more than 40 people in Riyadh, then-Crown Prince Abdullah promoted a national dialogue aimed at sections of the society “with the aim of promoting public interest and consolidating national unity based on the Islamic faith.”⁶ The 2005 Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoon crisis prompted then-King Abdullah at an Islamic Summit in Mecca to present an initiative for Muslims to begin a global interreligious dialogue. A year later a first official meeting between the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, and Pope Benedict XVI took place. Saudi Arabia hosted two international conferences in 2008: an International Islamic Conference for Dialogue in Mecca gathered over 500 scholars and imams from various cultures and traditions to discuss the Islamic history of interfaith dialogue and to establish parameters and guidelines for dialogue, and the Madrid World Conference of Dialogue included 300 representatives from across the world, including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu representatives and government and non-governmental officials, academics, activists, and religious leaders.

Saudi Arabia's religious freedom history led to some controversy tempered by hopes that the Saudi initiative might represent, or could spark, a major shift in the heartland of Islam towards a more open and inclusive worldview. Respected world leaders including Spanish King Juan Carlos, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and American civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson participated in the conference.⁷ In November 2008, King Abdullah addressed a UN Conference organized by Saudi Arabia whose aim was to promote dialogue among world religions and "to help 'improve the image of Islam as a religion that favors dialogue over violence.'"⁸

Two interreligious conferences in 2009 laid the groundwork for KAICIID and culminated in the 2011 treaty between Spain, Austria, and Saudi Arabia that established KAICIID. The agreement allowed KAICIID to operate without government interference but with government support. Saudi Arabia agreed to fund the center's first three years and establishment of its headquarters. A board of directors is comprised of eight members appointed by the state parties, who represent the Vatican, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the King and government of Saudi Arabia, the Christian Orthodox community, and the Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu faiths. The founding documents make provision for an advisory council.

KAICIID was launched with a glittering opening event in Vienna in November 2012. In 2013, core staff was recruited and the headquarters opened. A Global Forum in November 2013 brought together an interfaith group, highlighting the work and approach of various organizations' work and approaches. KAICIID's launch underlined an alliance with RfP and several other partnerships have since been announced.

KAICIID's work programs focus on efforts to address religious dimensions of several world conflicts (notably Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Myanmar, and the Central African Republic) and on an ambitious mapping of interfaith peace initiatives worldwide. Future plans include a free university level online course in interreligious dialogue.

KAICIID has attracted wide interest and admiration but also critiques, most focused on questions about its political connections and notably the central role played by Saudi Arabia and its various religious roles and restrictions.

5. An annual interfaith gathering as a pilgrimage: The Sant'Egidio Prayer for Peace

The Community of Sant'Egidio, a lay Roman Catholic movement centered in Rome, organizes and hosts an annual gathering of religious leaders from a wide range of traditions. It may well be the single most important event of its kind anywhere in the world that is held on a regular basis. The series of meetings, described as a pilgrimage of peace, takes place in a different city each year, rotating through European cities (with a rare exception of one in Washington DC). The 2014 Prayer for Peace was held in Antwerp and the September 2015 gathering in Tirana, Albania. In 2016, which marked the 30 annual gathering, the meeting was in Assisi and it will move in 2017 to Munster, Germany.



The Community organizes the annual interfaith events on behalf of the Vatican and takes its inspiration from the 1986 World Day of Prayer for Peace. This landmark event in Assisi, led by Pope John Paul II, set the tone for later meetings: a central focus on peace, and the concept of prayer "side by side." The ideas behind the original Assisi meeting are sustained through the annual events. That idea, Community leader Mario Giro emphasizes, was to gather the world's great religions together so that they could help each other, and ensure that they could not to be manipulated. The Pope "saw a large role for this community of religious leaders working for peace, at a time during which religions were rarely taken into account."⁹

Each gathering takes place over two and a half days. An opening that blends formality—with the leaders from government and religious organizations of the host country—with music and dialogue, is followed by a rich series of panel discussions that touch on wide-ranging subjects, notably those linked to leading conflicts. The gathering concludes in the fashion of a pageant that carries deep meanings. First come simultaneous prayer sessions, where each community prays separately in their own fashion. The leaders then process to a common space (often the central city plaza), meeting the leaders from the other community gatherings on the way. The final ceremony includes witness from conflict zones, a declaration for peace and lighting of a candelabra, and communication of the declaration to world leaders through a group of young children (the future generation).

Participants include public officials, intellectuals, religious leaders, and members and friends of the Community of Sant'Egidio. Panel discussions range in topic from the power of prayer to immigration, extremism, the economy, and poverty. Overall the effort represents a remarkable combination of pageant and the ceremony of the large public gatherings and creating space for dialogue that is intellectually grounded and spiritually uplifting. Cross cultural and interreligious understanding is a common theme.

At the 2014 meeting in Antwerp, the conversation focused on the many ongoing, new and renewed conflicts around the world. Topics included Iraq, the plight of the Yazidis, Syria, Ukraine and the murder of missionary nuns in Burundi. Attendees included religious leaders, US economist Jeffery Sachs, and outgoing president of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy.¹⁰ The Tirana meeting in 2015 focused on the agonizing plight of refugees, symbolized by the body of the Syrian toddler on a beach. In Assisi in 2016, Pope Francis, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomeo, and the Archbishop of Canterbury participated actively.

The Community of Sant'Egidio was founded by historian and passionate activist Andrea Riccardi with a group of high school students in Rome in 1968, partly as a reaction to the student protests in Rome, other European cities, and the United States. Hoping to put their faith into action, they worked with refugees and poor communities in the slums of Rome. Mario Giro, a leader in the Community since 1973 commented that “We considered ourselves part of the Church, but not of the institutional bodies of the Church.” The Community has groups in more than 73 countries, and counts some 60,000 members.

The annual Prayer for Peace meetings come alongside the continuing work of the Community which includes such day to day work as care for the elderly, support to vulnerable children, tutoring migrants, fervent advocacy for causes such as abolition of the death penalty, and active mediation in conflicts and war.

6. Aspiring to influence global economic and social policy makers, claiming a seat at the table: Religious gatherings at G7/G8/G20 meetings

The periodic gatherings of global leaders that take place within the framework of the groupings of leading nations called the

G7, G8, and G20 draw far more people than the nominal seven, eight, or twenty principals. Additional countries, civil society representatives, and business leaders, not to speak of media, flock to the meetings or organize events around them, seeking or hoping to influence the outcomes. For some years groups of religious leaders from different traditions have met in advance of or shortly after the meetings to reflect on the global agenda, with the hope that their specific agendas and priorities will make their way into the formal deliberations. These meetings have taken place annually since 2005. The tradition is not formally established but in general an interfaith group from the host country takes the lead in organizing the religious gathering.

The religious leader summits have generally taken place immediately before the main meetings. Many have featured the pageantry and pomp of other religious leader gatherings, together with efforts to craft and agree on a substantive agenda. Others have more closely resembled an academic conference focused broadly on topics related to religion. Efforts have been made to transmit declarations resulting from the meetings to the political leadership. The 2009 call, for example, reflected a broad and familiar agenda: water, health, education, food security, environment, disarmament, peace, the challenge of Africa, foreign aid, and the looming shadow of the world economic crisis. It gave special weight to dealing with the plight of illegal migrants, and made a strong plea for action on nuclear weapons. Thus it mirrored the global agenda with nuances of priority and tone.

The religious leaders' primary goal is to inspire, to offer a prophetic voice calling for the world leaders to heed their moral as well as practical responsibilities. An underlying contention is that “materialism often expresses itself in idolatrous forms and has proved powerless in the present crisis.” Religious leaders, it is argued, “speak from the heart of the great majority of the human family.” They argue that a spiritual approach “can touch the hunger for meaning in our contemporary society.” The common argument is that “a new moral paradigm is essential.”¹¹

The focus has shifted in recent years to the meetings of the G20, with roughly similar format and style. In 2014 the G20 Interfaith gatherings was organized by Griffith University in



Australia, and meetings took place in 2015 in Istanbul and in 2016 in Beijing. The G20 for 2017 takes place in Germany and religious engagement is once again an ideal, an objective, and a challenge.

National and local interfaith approaches

7. Interfaith and environment: Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and GreenFaith: Interfaith partners for environment

Long-standing, even ancient, links between faith traditions and activism and environmental protection are taking on new forms with rising awareness of the global impact of changing climate. It is significant that many indigenous spiritual traditions are deeply grounded in natural rhythms and mutual interdependence and these communities have quite often taken a leading part. Specific crises that include incursions on traditional communities by extractive industries and droughts or other natural disasters have sparked advocacy and practical efforts that bring together different spiritual and religious traditions. Various interfaith alliances are giving rise to organizations and movements that highlight the shared beliefs of different religious communities. These take many forms, some global in reach, others very local, rooted in communities and their traditions.

One of the most ambitious global organizations is the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). ARC describes its prestigious origins thus: “In 1986, HRH Prince Philip, who was then the President of World Wildlife Fund International, issued an astonishing invitation. He asked five leaders of the five major world religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism—to come and discuss how their faiths could help save the natural world.” The meeting took place in Assisi in Italy, birthplace of St Francis, the Catholic saint of ecology.¹² ARC has worked through partnerships in many parts of the world, presenting itself as a global alliance and highlighting the powerful shared interest of religious institutions in environmental protection. In Bristol, England, in September, 2015, another global meeting featured faith leaders and UN officials and quite specific pledges for action. The faith leaders situated their commitment within the context of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also suggested that they were precursors of these commitment,



ahead of other global leaders in their dedication and determination to act.

An example of a more local interfaith partnership is GreenFaith,¹³ a United States based organization. A group of Jewish and Christian leaders in New Jersey was what was called at the time *Partners for Environmental Quality*, in 1992. New Jersey’s environmental challenges were the stimulus and the effort was from the start one that brought together local stakeholders from the religious, academic, governmental and business sectors to explore common interests in relation to environmental protection. Lay and ordained leaders discussed the relationship between religion and the earth in many congregations. The focus shifted over time, notably to energy conservation and use of renewable energy in religious institutions. A tour centered on environmental health and justice explored ways in which urban communities suffer disproportionately from environmental health threats. The organization was renamed GreenFaith and its mission today is to inspire, educate and mobilize people of diverse religious backgrounds for environmental leadership. Its work is based on beliefs shared by the world’s great religions, that protecting the earth is a religious value, and that environmental stewardship is a moral responsibility.

8. The US Government and higher education institutions aim to put faith in action:

President’s Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge

Recent US administrations have advanced a common commitment to engage with religious communities. The Obama administration’s approach has included a sharpened focus on religion and diplomacy (with the creation of a new office at the State Department) and outreach to youth. This is exemplified in the Challenge, launched in 2011, to all US higher education institutions to initiate or expand programs that bring together faith groups and secular student groups for community service and interfaith community building. The White House recognizes the best programs on a Presidential Honor Roll. Participating institutions are invited to an annual gathering in Washington, D.C. to share what they have learned and celebrate work completed.

Over 400 schools, from 43 states, Washington D.C., and American Samoa, have participated, including community



colleges, public and private universities, and professional schools. Participants count 152,040,202 total community service hours on projects in different sectors, including poverty, energy, the environment, health, and human trafficking.¹⁴

The Challenge falls within the broad rubric of US presidential outreach to faith communities which often highlights both interfaith approaches and links to social service. Fourteen government departments now have small Faith-Based and Community Organizations offices as a point of contact and information.¹⁵ President Obama established a Faith-Based Advisory Council in 2009 to review the offices, their work, and effectiveness. The concept for a campus based interfaith and community service initiative emerged from that review; Eboo Patel (Interfaith Youth Core, IFYC) was a member of this council and a leader in establishing the initiative. The White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the Department of Education's Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and the Corporation for Community and National Service (CNCS) Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Office run the program. IFYC is a primary non-federal partner.

In 2011 and 2012, annual gatherings were held in Washington, D.C at The George Washington University and Howard University, and regional gatherings were held around the US. Georgetown University hosted the 2013 event, George Washington University the fourth, in 2014, and Howard University the fifth. This event included an international cohort of scholars, student leaders, and activists involved in interfaith and community engagement work from over 35 countries (the International Higher Education Interfaith Leaders Forum, organized by Georgetown University and Hartford Seminary). The 2016, sixth and final gathering under the Obama administration was held at Gallaudet University and again included an international cohort. IFYC provided free consultations to any institution or group wanting to participate. A reporting structure was established and maintained by CNCS, including an initial plan of action, a six-month follow-up, and a year-end report requested from every group wishing to compete for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Government funding went largely for administrative costs within the government departments, occasional webinars, and regional gatherings. Universities, foundations, NGOs, and individuals largely funded their own participation.

9. A state grapples with religious diversity and fears of interreligious tensions: Singapore's experience

Singapore may be the world's most religiously diverse country.¹⁶ This is part of na-



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tional identity and a source of national pride, but it is also a concern that translates into measures that challenge another national area of focus, which is the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. Interfaith efforts by citizens go alongside government efforts to assure religious neutrality.

Singapore's religious diversity has a long history as have efforts to address its implications. Singapore, a British trading post, attracted people from across South East Asia from the early nineteenth century. Communities of Chinese, Indian, and Malaysian origin and beyond established themselves there. Many religious traditions are active today: recent estimates are that 42 percent of the population is Buddhist, 15 percent Muslim, 16 percent unaffiliated, 12 percent Christian, 8 percent Taoist, 5 percent Hindu, 2 percent Folk Religion and 10 percent "other."¹⁷ Religious and ethnic identities tend to overlap: 99 percent of Malays are Muslim, 64 percent of ethnic Chinese are Buddhist or Taoist, and 55 percent of those of Indian origin are Hindu. Singapore's constitution sets a secular framework, with freedom of religion a clear constitutional principle.

Responses to diversity are public and private, including interfaith institutions and approaches. Singapore's role as an intellectual hub for Islamic studies and debates is part of this heritage.¹⁸ Mohammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, a Sufi teacher and missionary, was the inspiration for Singapore's most famous and longest established interreligious organization, the Interreligious Organization of Singapore (IRO). Today it boasts membership from ten religious traditions, including, Baha'i, Judaism, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. IRO is closely associated with the government, frequently asked to lead interreligious services and activities, for example prayer services after 9/11 and the Bali bombings. IRO hosts dialogues and public lectures, among them seminars on promoting peace through faith organized by different faith traditions. Illustrative publications are *Religions in Singapore* and *Religious Customs and Practices in Singapore*. IRO has strong links with Religions for Peace.¹⁹ A Presidential Council for

Religious Harmony was established by law in 1990. It reports on matters affecting religious harmony and considers cases referred by the minister for home affairs or by parliament. The president appoints the council's members on the advice of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights. Two-thirds of the members are required to be representatives of the country's major religions.²⁰ The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act allows the government approved Ministry of Home Affairs to censor any person of authority for disparaging remarks against another religion.²¹

International religious freedom indexes point to challenges linked to religious freedom. Concerns about perceived threats to religious harmony have been invoked to justify dissolution of groups perceived as a threat to "public order, health or morality."²² Any association of ten or more people must register with the government. Participation in an unregistered or dissolved organization is punishable by fine and/or prison. Singapore's religious diversity and the dangers inherent in this diversity are recalled often in public discourse. Racial Harmony Day is celebrated every year on July 21, the anniversary of the 1964 race riots. Fear of ISIS and Jemaah Islamiah prompted the reintroduction of the Societies Act introduced under colonial rule to quell liberation organizations, now used to monitor Muslims. Weekly government approved Friday sermons are distributed. Restrictions on journalists and speech have been justified in the name of religious harmony. To support interfaith harmony, Community Engagement Programs promote racial and interreligious harmony through community based working groups. These include student groups at the National University of Singapore, who have organized interfaith initiatives, including dialogues, safe sharing spaces, and quick responses to instances of interreligious and interethnic conflict on campus.²³

10. Encouraging local interfaith initiatives:

World Interfaith Harmony Week

World Interfaith Harmony Week is a United Nations initiative, approved by the General Assembly in 2011, with a core objective of promoting and celebrating local interfaith initiatives. It recognizes and affirms interfaith cooperation around the world and aims to promote diverse local initiatives. Over



five years, some 2,000 events have been organized around the dedicated week. Over 350 letters of support from religious leaders, governments, and others have commended award winners and the government of Jordan for promoting interfaith harmony.

World Interfaith Harmony Week is one among a growing list of initiatives and projects promoted by H.M. King Abdullah II and HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan. The two have led interfaith initiatives since the mid-1990s, which include the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (established in 1994), opening diplomatic relations with the Vatican, the 2005 Amman Message, and the 2007 Common Word.

World Interfaith Harmony week has no official grand organizing institution, except for an online platform created by the Jordanian government to register individual activities that also highlights a global competition for the best projects and events. A group of religious leaders in Jordan judge the competition, with a cash prize awarded at a public ceremony to three projects found to exemplify the initiative's finest intentions. 2015 awardees included the Universal Interfaith Peace Mission in Pakistan, a human chain of light between five houses of worship in Munich, and the Toronto World Interfaith Harmony Week steering committee.

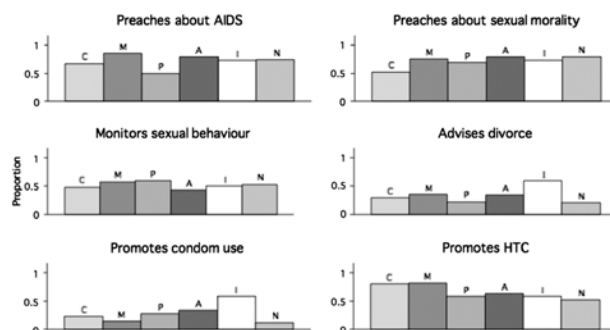
Interfaith Harmony Week represents something of a compromise in long-standing discussions within the United Nations institutions as to appropriate engagement and recognition of religious actors. A wide range of proposals have been advanced over the years, ranging from an ambitious notion of a formal Spiritual Council (akin to the Security Council), ideas for advisory mechanisms, a tripartite mechanism involving member states, religious NGOs, and UN agencies, a FBO Coordinating group, and a full decade dedicated to Interfaith and Intercultural dialogue (a proposal that is stalled within the system). Essentially, the UN focus on member states and different and often polarized views among those states as to the appropriate role of religion in intergovernmental bodies colors debates about how the UN as a body and also its parts should engage with religious institutions. Interfaith Harmony Week opens some doors to local action. It reflects quite broad support for the notion of interfaith dialogue and action.

11. Frankfurt: Interfaith initiatives in a complex city

When the Frankfurt Council of Religions was founded in 2009 the objective was to establish an interreligious body that would promote dialogue with political representatives, civil society, and society as a whole. Migrants to Germany come from different world religions. They bring to public debates their values, grounded in their religious traditions. The Frankfurt Rhine-Main Metropolitan Region is home to people from around 180 countries; almost half its 700,000 inhabitants have an immigrant background.

The Council has representatives from nine religious communities, each of which independently appoints volunteer delegates. It brings together members of Christian groups (represented by leading church figures), the Jewish community, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu organizations, the Baha'i and the Sikh religion, the Ahmadiyya, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Membership subscriptions from the various religious groups provide the funding. The Council has inspired similar initiatives in other cities.

Council activities include in-house familiarization courses within local communities and a cooperative venture with the Jewish Anne Frank Educational Centre to raise awareness in schools of the various faiths and religions. It engages on controversial subjects such as the Gaza conflict. A 2013 position paper "For dialogue and diversity—Against extremism justified on the grounds of religion" had a considerable impact in political circles and the media. Council President Khushwant Singh argues that the Council had managed to establish a fundamental consensus on extremism and issues such as pastoral care. Taking on issues of discrimination and anti-Semitism, the Council has staged interfaith conferences and celebrations and helped to organize rallies, including one against an anti-Islamic initiative. The Council has been represented since 2014 on the federal state of Hesse's Advisory Committee on Integration and at the federal state Conference on Integration.



Source: MRP (2005), N=187.
C, Catholic; M, Mission Protestant; P, Pentecostal; A, AIC; I, Muslim; N, New Mission Protestant.

has evolved and transformed societies, it has challenged religious beliefs and prompted changes in approach, for example in practical advice and in the theological narratives behind it. Hypotheses and assertions about religious roles have affected policies and programs. However, research about activities and impact of religious organizations on the HIV/AIDS epidemic has often been largely speculative, focusing on what religious organizations have the potential to do, or highlighting activities of a particular community or congregation.²⁴

Scholar Jenny Trinitapoli and colleagues have conducted extensive field research in Africa, principally in Malawi,²⁵ and focused in 2004–2005. The research tried to understand better what people in HIV/AIDS affected communities have sought from their religious leaders and how the leaders have responded. A part of the research has involved efforts to appreciate the impact of leadership from different denominational and national leaders as well as HIV/AIDS programs aimed at encouraging behavior change and supporting affected populations.

The studies have documented that religious beliefs, in the highly religious communities of Malawi, are indeed at the center of the way communities have responded to the pandemic (nearly 98 percent of rural Malawians affiliate with some church or mosque, and more than 60 percent report attending religious services at least once a week). Various publications document the rich content of pertinent messages in rural Malawian religious services—explicit references to HIV/AIDS in over 30 percent of the religious services observed—including many efforts to link messages to sexual morality. The studies documented, for example, changes in teachings about arrangement of marriages, divorce, and fidelity, all closely linked to the pandemic. They explored the many ways in which programs

12. Religious communities and leaders: Contending with HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa has engaged religious communities and leaders in countless ways. Even as the epidemic

have worked to integrate religious leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS and motivate them to be engaged, for example workshops to provide religious leaders with stronger skill-sets to support prevention.

An interesting conclusion from the research is that the most significant HIV/AIDS-related responses (and their impact on behavior) have been predominantly driven by community and local realities, more than messages from capitals. Religious HIV/AIDS-related activities have most often been demand-driven; because of trust levels, individuals seek counsel and help and religious leaders and communities respond. Studies found little evidence that supply-side efforts—NGO-sponsored workshops and formalized attempts to engage religious leaders in HIV prevention—had significant impact. But both Christian and Muslim leaders reinterpreted doctrines in ways that advanced pragmatic goals, which centered on curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS by enforcing strict norms regarding sexual behavior. They also sought to use their authority in ways that reinforced social cohesion in these times of hardship. Teachings about sexual morality that in the pre-AIDS era were rooted in ideas about self-discipline and individual morality shifted towards broader narratives about family and community obligations.

Another finding was that ideas and approaches of religious leaders often reflected sharing across religious boundaries, engaging people from very different denominations and communities. This was more significant in shaping responses and in their impact than messages from the capital. In short, much interfaith and intrafaith learning and cooperation took place, reflecting response to the crisis. It was sometimes deliberate but perhaps more often the result of informal communication and processes. Above all it was very local.

13. Senegal: Cadre des Religieux pour la Santé et le Développement (CRSD)—Group of Religious Leader for Health and Development (CRSD)

The leaders of Senegal's major religious communities

religious are widely respected and are often described as significant powers in society, politics, and economic affairs. However, on a wide range of development topics there has been no forum that allows for regular and meaningful dialogue and engagement among secular and



religious actors. CRSD was created in 2014, with support from WFDD and the Hewlett Foundation, to fill this gap, focusing on the sensitive and important area of family planning.

Senegal is renowned for peaceful and constructive inter-religious relations. There is national pride in tolerance and a very limited history of religiously linked violence. Relations among Senegal's Muslims (94 percent of the population) and between them and Christians (4 percent) are generally harmonious. Muslims and Christians live in the same communities, interreligious marriages are common and accepted, and Muslim students may attend Christian schools. A consequence of the lack of impetus coming from tension is a quite sparse interreligious landscape. Interfaith dialogue is a daily matter, without much specific institutional form. Likewise, there is a taken-for-granted quality in the role and presence of religious actors that has contributed to the lack of formal coordination mechanisms on specific topics. When a raw issue arises, for example on a sensitive topic like family codes, reforms in religious teaching in public schools, and HIV and AIDS, religious leaders are engaged, as they are around elections. But consultation on policy is not an established norm. The CRSD initiative is thus a new departure.

The government in its 2012–2015 family planning strategy, highlighted the importance of religious “champions” but had not defined how they were to be selected and involved. Imam training programs have been quite common but these have focused largely at a local level. Looking to a broader and more strategic engagement, a group of Senegalese religious leaders from the major Sufi *confréries*, Muslim associations, and Christian denominations, under the leadership of Sheikh Saliou Mbacké, came together to discuss religious dimensions of the family planning challenge. They were aghast at Senegal's high rates of maternal and infant mortality and agreed to engage, individually but more important, together, in an effort to remove misconceptions about family planning and to set the government's program in a religious framework. Working with the Ministry of Health, they engaged scholars to articulate religious teachings about family health and family planning, highlighting the religious mandate to protect the most vulnerable populations. While action on family planning is its primary purpose, CRSD sees the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among Senegal's religious communities as an important way to reinforce peace and social cohesion. And

they are committed to the objective of establishing a platform for dialogue with the government on development topics, because the religious communities are deeply involved in so many dimensions of Senegal's future.

CRSD applied for the status of an association under Senegalese law and this was approved in 2016. It includes 15 members representing Senegal's four major Sufi orders (Tijaniyya, Muridiyya, Qadiriyya, and Layeniyya), the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, and several prominent Islamic associations. Members are appointed by their respective religious communities.

CRSD has developed several key approaches to raise awareness, largely focusing on providing both religious and medical perspectives on family planning, through close collaboration with medical professionals and the Ministry of Health. Of particular note is CRSD's success in engaging women through religious networks. CRSD works closely with a midwife to conduct sensitization workshops for Muslim and Christian women's groups. In six of Senegal's 14 regions, they have trained local trainers who are respected in their religious communities to lead workshops with women's religious groups on family planning. Other activities have included workshops to train religious leaders (hosted by CRSD members themselves) and media spots.

Senegal has strong religious links with other West African countries, which face similar challenges on family planning and related issues. Thus the CRSD initiative has a West African regional dimension, which ties also to the nine-country Ouagadougou Partnership. Following a 2014 visit to Morocco (to explore their relatively successful family planning program), CRSD members in 2016 visited Mauritania and Guinea to explore cooperation. These visits have encouraged a broadening dialogue about the roles that religious leaders and communities can play in improving maternal and child health and how they can support development agendas, working with government officials and medical professionals. CRSD has identified successful approaches used in other Muslim-majority countries as well as those from their own experience, and have successfully framed both within an interfaith context.

CRSD members work from a solid consensus they have established on the importance of family planning; this came surprisingly easily (given the political and social sensitivities of the topic), though there are still areas of uncertainty and

disagreement, for example on provision of contraceptives to unmarried youth. Further efforts are planned to solidify the group and build the capacity needed if members are to engage on these and other sensitive subjects where opinions may be more nuanced, such as child marriage.

The challenges for an avowedly syncretic approach

14. Syncretism versus savoring diversity: the case of the Unification Church

Interfaith work ranges from approaches that emphasize harmony, best achieved by moving towards unity of belief and organization to an opposing view that diversity is both necessary and eminently desirable. At the unification end sits the



Unification Church, an active if controversial actor in interfaith matters. Some call it a fringe cult, others a conservative darling, and others still a vociferous interfaith peace advocate.

Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, was born in Japanese occupied North Korea, convicted of spying for South Korea, and sent to a labor camp. He fled to South Korea and his church and movement began there in 1954. Moon moved to the United States in 1971 and died there in 2012. The Unification Church currently has over three million followers worldwide, the umbrella for an array of business, cultural, and political ventures²⁶ that operate, often shrouded in some mystery as to their origin and affiliation. Internal dramas have rocked the church, including family scandals involving Moon and his children.

Moon taught that Jesus Christ asked him to continue his work on earth. This combined with strong anti-communist beliefs. Unification Church doctrine has been organized around two themes: the Cold War was a final battle between Satan (communism) and God with Korea as the fault line, and Jesus failed to create an earthly family with Adam and Eve's failure as a God centered family. Working against communism and promoting marriage and families were key methods to bring peace on earth.²⁷ Church doctrine aimed to restore the religious and spiritual underpinnings to government and society in general through societal and personal change.

Moon's new religious movement (called, pejoratively, the Moonies) bore similarities to other new religious phenomena, including Scientology, Hare Krishnas, the Children of God,

and the Transcendental Meditation Movement. As members were isolated from family and friends an anti-cult movement emerged.²⁸ Christian religious establishments were alarmed both by the impact on young people and the idea advanced of a monolithic theocracy. The Unification Church was excluded from many ecumenical gatherings and denied entry to the National Council of Churches.²⁹

But the organization built a network of organizations to carry out and fund church missions, including the Professors of World Peace Academy established in 1973, “to contribute to solutions of urgent problems facing our modern civilization and to help resolve cultural divides between east and west.”³⁰ Moon believed that “all previous religions provided only partial insight into God’s purpose for mankind,”³¹ so that learning in an interreligious setting was necessary to gain breadth of understanding. A growing network of business ventures included manufacturing through the Tongil Group and Unification Church International, each led by one of Moon’s sons. Tongil Group holdings include hospitals, American Life TV, International Seafood of Alaska, New World Communications, Kahr arms manufacturing, pharmaceutical companies, tourism, and others media outlets in Korea, the United States, and South America. Unification Church International operates the *Washington Times*, True Whole Foods, and Marriott Hotels in Korea, among other holdings.³²

The organization involves itself directly in politics, national and international. The Peace United Family Party aimed to reunify Korea and *Conservatives.com*, cooperating with the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., and other organizations, worked to end communism. Conferences in the United States for evangelical and fundamentalist clergy focused on family unification and the dangers of communist governments.³³ When Moon was convicted of tax evasion in 1982, various leaders defended Moon, citing religiously motivated targeting. The church embarked on a massive campaign to rehabilitate public perceptions of Moon, mailing information to religious leaders around the country. The coalition created the American Clergy Leadership Conference. Louis Farrakhan from the Nation of Islam became a Moon ally. Moon underwrote the Million Family March in 2000,³⁴ where Farrakhan blessed couples.³⁵

The Universal Peace Federation (UPF), a Unification Church organization, focuses on renewal of the United Nations, interfaith peacebuilding, peace and security, marriage

and family, education and human development, and youth and service. UPF has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, and has worked to create a spiritual council for the United Nations. It has supported the Ambassadors for Peace Program, promoted Track II diplomacy, consultations among scholars, diplomats, government officials, civil society representatives, people to people diplomacy, and peace and security forums in Jerusalem, Washington, D.C., and Tokyo.³⁶ Church doctrine on women’s roles in creating peaceful communities led to the Women’s Federation for World Peace, established in 1992, packaging Unification theology as a tool for the “liberation of women” (meaning reviving traditional families by being “unusually obedient”).³⁷

Approaches from within a religious tradition

15. A promising group meets a political fate: The World Islamic Call Society (WICS)

The World Islamic Call Society (WICS), initially established in 1972, was for a time a highly regarded international network, based in Libya under the patronage of then President Muammar Gaddafi. Funding appears to have come largely from the Libyan government (though governance was never fully transparent). At its peak WICS included some 250 Islamic Organizations around the world (in 80 countries) in its General Conference and engaged with both the Vatican and the World Council of Churches on interfaith dialogue. Its reputation was grounded in generous charitable work that included infrastructure building, disaster relief, and active work on education. WICS infrastructure projects included hospitals, schools, and mosques, especially in Africa, but also in Europe and Southeast Asia. The Gaddafi mosque built by WICS in Kampala, Uganda is “believed to be the best and largest mosque in sub-Saharan Africa.”³⁸

It was also known for its proselytizing mission though this was never quite explicit.

The organization has been far less prominent and visible since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in late 2011. Further, reports filtering out suggest that the organization over its life had two very distinct faces: the philanthropic (and public) side committed to advancing Muslim people and to interreligious dialogue and harmony, and a darker side reflected in funding



for terrorist groups both based in Libya and in other places, notably Africa.³⁹ In various countries WICS appears on lists of NGOs linked to terrorist activities and thus has been banned or discouraged.

The broad appeal of WICS' interfaith work was based in significant measure on the understanding that the organization represented a moderate form of Islam, linked to Sufism, so that it was seen as an alternative to the conservative Wahhabi school promoted by Saudi Arabia and the Muslim World League (MWL). WICS and the MWL were seen to be in a race for the hearts and minds of the world's Muslims. A WICS comment stated its belief as follows: "Meetings and dialogues are the best means to understand others in order to buttress peace, affirm human fraternity and contribute in building a civilization that shuns hate, aversion and war..."⁴⁰ Meetings held in 1989, 1990, 1993, and 1997 played a part in Vatican recognition of Libya in 1997. Annual dialogues from 1997 onward aimed to strengthen Christian-Muslim relations, and included a focus on the "A Common Word Between Us and You," project. WICS worked with UNESCO and in 2002 gained UN Consultative status.

The accusations of terrorist links clearly cast a pall on WICS. In 2004, an American Muslim linked to WICS was convicted in a plot to assassinate the Saudi Crown Prince.⁴¹ In 2011, the Canadian NGO operating under WICS was implicated in funneling money to a coup attempt in Trinidad and Tobago, a plot to bomb JFK International Airport, and funneling money into the US, circumventing the US embargo. Further reports surfaced after the revolution, of intelligence personnel in the ranks of WICS.

The government that took office in Libya after Gaddafi's fall stated that it would "purge [WICS] of its dark side,"⁴² but the government's instability has clouded WICS' role and future.

16. An Islamic interfaith approach and focus: The Gülen (Hizmet) Movement

A global movement inspired by Turkish Muslim leader Fethullah Gülen (involving an estimated two million people) has interfaith dialogue as an important part of its programs in different countries. The movement has come under intense scrutiny from the Turkish government, accused of political motivations and subversive activities, which its leaders deny.



The movement, a decentralized, quite loosely connected community of followers, prominently includes business leaders, media leaders, and educators. It has special appeal to Turkish diaspora populations. Sufi in inspiration, it takes various forms in different parts of the world; in Washington D.C., the Rumi Forum is an active think tank with frequent speaker events. Gülen himself is a leader in the Sufi tradition who studied with teachers in the Qadari tradition. The teachings above all of Said Nursi (1876–1960) influenced his path as a spiritual leader. Self exiled from Turkey in 1999, Gülen has lived since then in the United States, in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. Initially a supporter of the Erdogan government, a rift opened between Gülen and his movement from 2013.⁴³

Followers call the movement Hizmet (service), the Turkish public Cemaat (Community Assembly). The stated aim is to show Turks and Muslims ways to integrate modernity with religious piety, including dialogue between science and religion. The approach involves building a middle ground between the secular state and Islamist movements. A wide range of professional associations have emerged through the movement, including the Journalist and Writers Association in Turkey, Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), Turkish Chinese Industrialist Businessmen Association (TUCSIAD) in China, and Dünya Türk is Konseyi (DTIK: The World Turkish Business Council).

Gülen emphasizes education as central to his strategy for a modern Islamic community. A first group of schools were opened in 1982 and there were 300 schools in Turkey (before recent tensions between the government and the movement) and over 1000 schools worldwide. Followers emphasize these are not "Gülen Schools," in the sense of being under the direct control of Fethullah Gülen, but "Gülen inspired."⁴⁴ Many are supported by local business leaders and wealthy followers.

Gülen's meeting with Pope John Paul II in 1998 highlighted the movement's work for interfaith and intercultural dialogue.⁴⁵ Gülen cites verse 49:13 from the Quran as inspiration. "All mankind we have created you from male and female and have made you nation and tribes that you may know one another" and advances four pillars of interfaith dialogue: love, compassion, tolerance and forgiving.⁴⁶ Various organizations and institutes have been established across the globe by Gülen followers with an interfaith focus. Among other activities they organize cultural tours for non-Turks and non-Muslims.

Movement organizations include the Australian Intercultural Dialogue Society, the Dialogue Society in London, and the Forum for Intercultural Dialogue in Berlin, as well as various organizations along the lines of the Rumi Forum in the United States. Each hosts interfaith *iftars*, panel discussions, and intercultural and interfaith events, drawing public and political leaders from their local areas. They work with the Gülen Movement's many media outlets (television, radio, newspapers). The focus is a dialogue of civilizations.

The Gülen Movement includes development efforts, among them Kimse Yok Mu Association (KYM) established in 2002 that operates in over 113 countries and is a member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

As a result of tensions between the Turkish government and the Gülen movement, Gülen linked schools and student residences as well as media outlets in Turkey were shut down and, in 2016, many associated with the movement were jailed or lost jobs.⁴⁷

The Movement and its efforts have many admirers, who see it as epitomizing modern and moderate Islamic approaches and lifestyles. Astute in outreach and energetic in action the movement's voice has been widely heard. Critiques (apart from those linked to its political motivations and activities) include rather tepid support for women's leadership especially within movement organizations and a proselytizing style (in the sense of explicit promotion of its work).

17. Pax Christi: From reconciliation to an international network with peace as its focus

Pax Christi (Peace of Christ) International, a global Catholic peace movement, works for peace, human rights, and justice and reconciliation. It was born in 1945 in France, jointly initiated by two French citizens deeply marked, in different ways, by the bitter tensions of World War II: Marthe Dortel-Claudot and Peirre-Marie Théas. Reconciliation was the initial goal, very much focused on France and Germany. They worked to bring French and German people together at a very local level for prayer and reflection. Their efforts sparked wider engagement and Pax Christi expanded its focus through the 1950s, first to other parts of Europe and then beyond. The movement took the form of a network of national chapters and so it remains today,



though with some sub-national entities. Pax Christi is active in over 50 countries with 120 affiliated member organizations and counts over 100,000 members. A small International Secretariat is based in Brussels and Pax Christi has consultative status as an NGO at the United Nations. It is seen as an official Catholic Peace movement (it was named as such by Pope Pious XII in 1952).⁴⁸

Pax Christi's vision and mandate are broad: "grounded in the belief that peace is possible and that vicious cycles of violence and injustice can be broken."⁴⁹ It combines a strong focus on grassroots organizing and high profile international advocacy. Human rights are an important center of thought and action, leading it to work for human security, disarmament and demilitarization, and achieving a just world order. It works for peace with a religious inspiration. Member organizations act at various levels, from small communities to the global stage. Examples of action include public dialogue events about the role of peace in individuals' lives, human rights awareness-raising campaigns, promotion of reintegration projects for ex-combatants in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and workshops on nonviolence and peaceful spirituality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Pax Christi is particularly well known for its work, along with allied NGOs through the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), for the international regulation of small arms, including pressuring governments to endorse the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Pax Christi reported human rights abuses in Latin America in the 1980s (sometimes at considerable risk to its members), and worked actively to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Pax Christi has at times and in several different places engaged actively in mediation. It played an important role, for example, in various phases of peace talks between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Church leaders in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan invited Pax Christi to explore possibilities for a political solution to the conflict. Pax Christi was part of the initiative that led to talks in Juba and a cessation of hostilities agreement, that was eventually taken over by the UN and the government of South Sudan.⁵⁰ Pax Christi led the resource group that provided advice to the peace process' chief mediator.⁵¹

Pax Christi draws on grassroots members' understanding of local context, buttressed by a global and long-term vision to

support local actors and coordinate external peace efforts. Programs operate at all levels of society, from engaging top-level leaders to small civil society organizations and communities. They include early warning systems to prevent conflict, monitoring and reporting on child soldiers, and community-based disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs after conflicts end.

Reconciliation is central to Pax Christi's post-conflict work. Programs are rooted in the belief that the process of reconciliation depends on addressing past injustices and rebuilding peaceful relationships between individuals and communities. Pax Christi "calls all its Members, and all people of good will, to devote themselves in an active and practical way to the work of reconciliation."⁵² The movement emphasizes peace education, with a special focus on youth. Recognizing that religion can play both positive and negative roles in conflict, Pax Christi promotes inter-religious and multi-cultural dialogue and cooperation. Events in conflict and post-conflict contexts have included a closed-door dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian civil society actors, dialogues between Serbian and Albanian youth in Kosovo, and a series of trainings on peace, reconciliation, and respect for human rights in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Historically, Pax Christi's involvement over 30 years in dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church during and after the end of the Cold War stands out.

Pax Christi's unique governance model both ties it to the Catholic Church but allows it considerable independence of action. From the start, women have played integral roles in Pax Christi leadership, with a tradition of shared leadership between both Catholic clergy and laypeople. Etienne De Jonghe, former and long time Secretary General of Pax Christi, argues that this joint leadership of the movement's founders "set a model that stayed with Pax Christi ever since: formal leadership roles are held by senior Catholic Church leaders as well as lay leaders. Women who, obviously, could not hold a formal position in the Church hierarchy, were effective leaders within the movement."⁵³ Since 2007, this joint leadership has taken the form of a co-presidency; a Bishop and a lay woman. Marie Dennis and Bishop Kevin Dowling currently serve as Pax Christi's co-presidents.

18. International Shinto Foundation⁵⁴

The International Shinto Foundation (ISF) is a small New York based organization with links both to the principle founder, Worldmate, and to a parallel Japanese entity, Shinto Kokusai Gakkai. Originally established in 1994, it supports a variety of academic ventures (including university chairs at Columbia University, the University of California (UCLA and UCSB), Zhejiang University (China), and London University) and communications about religion. Interfaith initiatives are part of its mandate and support has gone to various interreligious efforts including the Parliament of the World's Religions, Religions for Peace, Hartford Seminary, Interfaith action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), and the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). ISF supports the Religion News Association and the US President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge. ISF thus supports major institutions that champion the positive support for religious diversity, enhancing communication about religion, and fostering sincere appreciation of unique traditions.

ISF's original objective was to advance understanding and public appreciation of Shintoism and Japanese culture, against the setting of negative images of Shintoism associated with World War II. Imeda Yoshimi, a previous ISF executive director, described the outdated but influential perception of Shintoism as a "loathsome ideology that drove Japan to war", accentuated by the very limited serious academic study of Shintoism in western countries. ISF thus begins with an effort to advance understanding about Shinto as a fundamental part of Japanese culture, as a rich appreciation of the Japanese people and Japanese culture is otherwise inaccessible. ISF links this central goal of enhancing understanding of a specific religious tradition to active efforts to advance an appreciation for the value of interreligious cooperation.

ISF is not a religious organization and its aim is not to propagate Shinto. It is not involved in political activities. ISF was recognized in 1996 as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by the United Nations Department of Public Information and has since taken part in the information services of the United Nations. In 2001, ISF was recognized as an NGO with special consultative status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).



ISF's philosophy is articulated as follows: "We live in a pluralistic religious world. Modern realities of migration, transportation, communication, globalization, education and intermarriage—among other things—have brought us increasingly closer to 'the other.' However, this 'closeness' can highlight differences, make for cognitive dissonance, and even create tension. 'Interreligious cooperation', or 'interfaith' as it is often simply called, recognizes the common shared values of faith traditions and works to advance a world in which people of faith and goodwill can live together in harmony. Interreligious cooperation is dialogue, education, action, and advocacy that strengthens the capacity of distinct faiths and people to live in harmony."

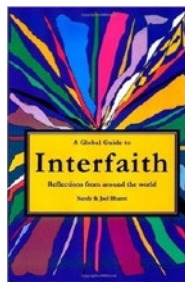
The coordination challenge

19. Tackling the tough challenges of interfaith coordination: the International Interfaith Centre (IIC)

Many participants and observers have remarked that the many different interfaith organizations operating today often know little of what others are doing in similar places and on closely related subjects. One response was an International Interfaith Centre (IIC), created in large measure through the energy of two individuals, from their base in Oxford, England. IIC sponsored meetings and publications (including the "Global Guide to Interfaith"⁵⁵) and was active through the late 1990s. Changing circumstances that included funding difficulties led to the Center's gradual demise.

IIC was founded in Oxford in 1993 by the World Congress of Faiths and the International Association for Religious Freedom, in cooperation with Westminster College, Oxford. It was for a time a significant player in the field of interfaith cooperation and understanding. Its main activity was arranging and participating in conferences, seminars, lectures, workshops, and symposiums in the UK and other countries, and producing publications, DVDs, and an e-learning website. It founded a network of international interfaith organizations.

In a 1998 report to the World Council of Churches,⁵⁶ IIC described its purpose and work, which focused primarily on dialogue linked to the religious elements of violent conflicts.



A 1997 conference in Oxford, "The Place of Dialogue in Halting and Healing Conflict," brought together activists from Northern Ireland and Bosnia to dissect the role religion was playing in their respective conflicts. This was followed by a series of conferences on religion, community, and conflict that included a range of activists from around the world, both from conflicting parties, and those whose broader aim was to share practices with other activists.

IIC worked closely with the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the World Parliament of Religions, Rissho Kosei-kai, and the World Congress of Faiths. They shared offices, promoted each other's work, and collaborated on projects.

During its lifetime, IIC acted as a gathering place for other interfaith organizations to strategize on future engagements.

Advancing theological dialogue

20. Illustrating the breadth and depth of processes of theological exchange: Anglican Communion Ecumenical and interfaith dialogues

The Archbishop of Canterbury has long established responsibilities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. He is supported in his ecumenical role by staff at Lambeth Palace, the Anglican Communion Office, and the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity, together with Church of England bishops who specialize in particular ecumenical relationships. He has personal representatives ("apocrisiarioi") to Byzantine Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as to the Vatican. The Archbishop leads a process of engagement within religiously plural English society and with those parts of the world where religious plurality "has been normal for centuries."⁵⁷ Archbishop Justin Welby has long experience of inter-faith dialogue and conflict resolution work, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.



Structured dialogues are an integral part of the work of the Anglican Consultative Council, acting on behalf of the Anglican Communion churches. These include formal ecumenical and interfaith conversations.⁵⁸ Long-standing and continuing dialogues between Anglicans and other Christian communities take place within a distinct framework. The overarching and long term objective is church unity but the

interim motivation is to address points of specific difference and tension.

A particular focus on interfaith dialogue (Muslim and Jewish) dates from the 1988 Lambeth Conference where Anglicans were called to strengthen their relationships with people of other faiths, “through dialogue built on mutual understanding, respect and trust”. Aims include sharing with others in service to the community, and becoming “a medium of authentic Christian witness.”

A 1967 meeting between then Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI launched a specific focus on ecumenical dialogue. Spurred by the Second Vatican Council that began in 1962 the conversations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics were organized by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) in three phases, 1970–1981, 1983–2005, and 2011, which is ongoing. Several Popes and Archbishops of Canterbury issued six “common declarations” between 1966 and 2006. Two active commissions include the ARCIC and the International Anglican—Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM). The latter, established in 2001 as a Bishops’ commission, aims to “draw out how they compel us towards joint witness and mission in the world.” It met annually from 2000 to 2007. “Growing Together in Unity and Mission,” published in February 2007, aimed to foster discussion and reflection and called for action based upon an “honest appraisal of what has been achieved in our dialogue.” Beginning in 2011, the focus was on examining “how the abiding goal of the dialogues is currently perceived and understood, and how that goal will inform the entire dialogue process,...to explore how right ethical teaching is determined at universal and local levels.”⁵⁹

The Baptist World Alliance and the Anglican Consultative Council undertook a five-year dialogue program from 2000 to 2005. Each conference focused on a different region: Europe, North America, Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They aimed “to explore the way in which Christian faith and witness is shared by Anglicans and Baptists in different regions of the world.” A 2005 report highlighted theological convergence and difference, with examples of Anglican and Baptist co-operation in different world regions.⁶⁰ The Anglican-Lutheran dialogue started in 1972 and was completed in 2012; monitoring and collaboration continued with annual gatherings (2013 in Helsinki and 2014 in Hong Kong). Since

1972 seven regional declarations have outlined ways in which the two communities have cooperated and explored various theological topics. Its aim was to bring “all the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran World Federation into fuller communion.” The final publication in 2012, “To Love and Serve the Lord,” discusses how Anglicans and Lutherans “have understood *diakonia* (ministry) in the past; and how they might co-operate in this ministry more deeply in the future.”⁶¹ “Growth in Communion” (2002), reviewed Anglican-Lutheran relationships in different regions, exploring potential church-dividing issues as well as commonalities.

More modest dialogues between Anglicans and other churches address similar agendas. The Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM) held in England, South Africa, and the United States, explores developments in the relationships between the two Communion. The Anglican-Old Catholic International Coordinating Council has produced almost yearly communiqués since 2004; from November 2013 they began mapping existing relationships, co-operation, and European social issues. The Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Commission worked on issues of Christology emanating from the AD451 Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in the Byzantine Empire. They met from 2001 to 2003, and after a long break resumed meetings in 2013, inspired by growing concern for the Middle East, Kenya, Pakistan, and Nigeria. Their gatherings concluded with an agreed statement on Christology in 2014.⁶² Dialogues between the Anglican and Orthodox churches began in 1973, leading to the creation of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD) in 1989. It gathers senior clergy from Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion annually to discuss the doctrine and theology of the church.

The Jewish dialogue has a two-fold pattern: meetings of the principals who receive and discuss the work of the Anglican-Jewish Commission and provide subject matter for future Commission meetings, and the Commission itself, which looks in greater depth at matters of current mutual interest and concern from the perspective of Jewish and Christian writings, scripture and theology.⁶³

Muslim and Jewish interfaith dialogue has taken different forms. The Muslim dialogue involved a series of meetings and exchanges with al-Azhar University in Cairo, which

established a Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions. A series of meetings focused on study exchange and continuing theological discussions.

21. The Elijah Institute: a conscientious pursuit of depth in intellectual interfaith dialogue

The Elijah Interfaith Institute is a recognized leader in academic interfaith work, located in Jerusalem and reaching out globally. The program focuses on deep intellectual exploration of interfaith issues. Founded in 1996 by Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein, it works to foster peace between communities through dialogue, education, research, and dissemination. It describes itself as “the only place in Jerusalem where members of different Jewish denominations shared in an open atmosphere.”⁶⁴

The Institute began as a consortium of 13 institutions making up the Elijah School for the Study of Wisdom in World Religions. From 1997 to 2002, the main activity was an annual summer school in Jerusalem that exposed students to different religious traditions, East and West, allowing in-depth exploration of topics fundamental to the religious life: law, mystical prayer, representation of God in icons and images, leadership, saints, sacred space and more. Personal transformation through encounter with persons and wisdom of other traditions was a goal. The institute built partnerships with universities and seminaries around the world. It contributed to planning several high profile gatherings, including the interfaith meeting of Pope John Paul II, the First Congress of Imams and Rabbis in Brussels 2005, and a visit to Jerusalem by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The Institute prides itself in its intellectual and spiritual approach to interfaith activities, and its ability to connect Abrahamic faiths with other major faith traditions. It argues that the best way to address interfaith cooperation is to bring together the heads of religions and then allow the ideas and conversations to trickle down to scholars, eventually reaching the community at large.

A Board of World Religious Leaders, created in 2003, invites significant leaders of Buddhism, Christianity, religions of India, Judaism, and Islam to use their respective traditions to solve current problems. The Board convenes about every



two years addressing topics like “Friendship Across Religions,” “Religion, Society and the Other,” “The Crisis of the Holy,” and “The Future of Religious Leadership” The Board issues periodic joint statements, for example in face of the 2008 economic crisis and about various acts of vandalism to holy sites.

In 2000 the founders concluded that the growth in interfaith dialogue “requires a framework for more systematic encounters and joint collaborations...to enable scholars and teachers of different traditions to share their teaching, engage in common projects, create intellectual resources and provide a powerful symbol of interfaith cooperation.”⁶⁵ The Elijah Interfaith Academy was created so that scholars and teachers of different religions can to share their teachings. The Elijah Interfaith Academy prepares position papers for the Board of World Religious Leaders and resources for the Elijah Educational Network, that works to create quality study materials for collaboration practices and sustainable programs on the community level. This approach is referred to by Elijah as Sharing Wisdom—Scholar to Street.

The Institute obtained UNESCO status as an affiliated academic network, providing an opportunity to disseminate ideas and study materials through a larger range of institutions worldwide. It works with numerous secular and religious institutions in the United States.

A significant project is the House of Prayer and Education Center (HOPE Center) in Jerusalem, just outside the Old City. Inspired by a biblical quote, “My home shall be called a house of prayer for all people,” the Center is to have prayer spaces for the diverse religions, a museum on prayer, art exhibitions, a library, a hospitality center, and various spaces for research and educational activities.

22. Scriptural reasoning

Scriptural reasoning is a specific form of interfaith dialogue where people of different faiths



SCRIPTURAL
REASONING

come together to read and reflect on their scriptures.⁶⁶ Scriptural reasoning focuses on exploring texts and interpretations of different faiths, rather than seeking a consensus on issues and beliefs. The Cambridge University Interfaith Programme describes scriptural reasoning as learning to “disagree better” by improving understanding of different faiths and a person’s own scriptures, as well as developing bonds across

faith communities. Scriptural reasoning is practiced in many different locations, including areas affected by religion-related tensions and conflict. The process is largely similar: a group chooses an issue, narrative or theme; participants then prepare a particular passage from their faith scripture to present at the group meeting that relates to the topic. Led by a facilitator, the group discusses each passage one at a time. The goal is to learn and understand, explore differences, and build friendships.

Working towards global social and economic agendas

23. Action focused on a specific sector: The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA)

An ambitious Hindu inspired alliance aspires to global impact through an interfaith alliance centered on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Drawing “inspiration from historical guideposts and modern advances” the goal is to galvanize collaborative action among the world’s religious and spiritual traditions, governments, international organizations (notably the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF), businesses, and civil society.⁶⁷ From its base in India, GIWA works to build a range of national and international partnerships, as the leader in a multi-religious, multi-sectorial engagement on WASH related issues. A Netherlands and international base is being established through an international not-for-profit organization.



Established in 2013 in partnership with UNICEF, with co-sponsorship from USAID and the Netherlands, GIWA aspires to work on advocacy, movement building, and direct operations. It advocates with governments for environmental restoration and access to water and sanitation. It rallies religious leaders, encouraging them to work in and lead their own communities. It organizes and supports local development projects, including building public bio-digester toilets, water purification sites, disaster response, and environmental restoration. After the 2013 Uttarkhand floods in India, GIWA mobilized support for various projects to provide clean drinking water and toilets in the region. The goal is to provide thousands of eco-friendly toilets to villages throughout the Ganga River Basin. Finally, GIWA has working partnerships with international organizations engaged on WASH issues, including religious organizations.

GIWA works to gather public support from political and cultural leaders. A priority is the National Ganga Rights Movement, an effort that has included visits from Macklemore, Sting, different Bollywood stars, HRH Prince Charles and Camilla, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thami, former Emir of Qatar, and others. GIWA has facilitated the publication of several reports and plans and educational pamphlets on keeping rivers clean and proper hygiene for elementary schools.

24. A cause draws on religious networks: The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

A global network inspired by a Japanese Buddhist community aspires to mobilize



religious communities world wide and link their efforts to support children. The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC),⁶⁸ launched in 2000, focuses on rights and well-being. A critical goal is the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, seen as an essential step on the path to a world “that is healthy and just for all children and youth.” GNRC seeks to build partnerships with leaders, individuals, and communities, international, national and regional institutions, grassroots organizations, and people of good will everywhere.

GNRC comprises an interfaith network of organizations and individuals, “a dynamic worldwide alliance of religious organizations and people of faith and good will.” Its inspiration and support is the Japan-based Arigatou International, founded in 1990 by the Japanese Buddhist organization Myochikai, whose members support its work with donations. The name “Arigatou” or “thank you” in Japanese, expresses the gratitude of Myochikai members for the opportunity to support children around the world by their giving.

GNRC members are drawn from all of the world’s major religions and many other spiritual traditions. The common mission is to empower ordinary people at the grassroots level to make faith-based contributions to the realization of every child’s right to attain full physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, moral, and social development, which can only take place in a caring and protective environment. By offering an open space for interfaith dialogue and action, GNRC hopes to realize its commitments through prayer and action, fostering respect for and celebration of religious and cultural

diversity in all of its work. Specific work revolves around ethics education, poverty alleviation, addressing religious extremism, and peace building. It works to carry out, inspire, and leverage activities and projects that promise to create a better world for children.

Because it is convinced that children are themselves builders of a better world, GNRC strives to empower children to develop their spirituality, to live in solidarity and confidence with people of all beliefs and cultures, and to make powerful contributions, as world citizens and stewards of the Earth, to peace and dignity for all.

Focus on specific groups: women, youth

25. Responding to the central challenge of engaging young people: the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)

The Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), under the leadership of Eboo Patel,⁶⁹ attracts wide interest as a dynamic interfaith organization sharply focused on engaging young people. It has grown from a modest Chicago-based program to one of the most recognized interfaith organizations in the United States, and closely watched by interfaith advocates. Its prominent features include an active presence on college campuses, creative alliances, and active efforts to evaluate its work. It is a growing entity—the budget has increased from less than US\$100,000 to over US\$4 million in ten years. IFYC data indicate that in 2014, 688 campuses used IFYC programming and resources; 256 campuses showed sustained commitment to interfaith cooperation; 17 campuses launched interfaith majors, minors, or concentrations; and 756 students, faculty, and staff trained at interfaith leadership institutes.⁷⁰

The idea for IFYC emerged from casual conversations among a group of young people in 1998. IFYC began a year later,⁷¹ with the aim of building a model for interfaith youth engagement in Chicago. IFYC set a goal of building a movement from the outset, but knowledge has also been a central theme—journal articles, case studies, and working relationships with specific universities and colleges are part of the process of developing and monitoring IFYC programs. Patel speaks often, including at the Clinton Global Initiative, TED Talks, and the Nobel Prize Forum.



IFYC works explicitly to hone its message and branding. Leadership institute trainings include facilitating challenging conversations, asset mapping, increasing interfaith literacy, and coordinating interfaith social action. It has developed resources and training for faculty and staff. Topics of focus include connecting campus mission to interfaith cooperation, and articulating personal reasons for advancing interfaith understanding. Products include training and teaching modules, toolkits for events (e.g. Fast-a-Thon), case studies, book discussion guides, facilitator tools for interfaith conversations, and discussion guides on controversial events (for example Charlie Hebdo). Leadership under a US White House sponsored initiative, the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, has boosted IFYC's renown and status. Current research includes two-multiyear studies measuring change of individual students and religious climates on campuses. The Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey is to be administered at 50 colleges and universities and the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey at over 140 campuses over four years.

Eboo Patel and IFYC term interfaith a science and Patel argues that interfaith is the civil rights movement of the twenty-first century. The focus, they argue, must be squarely on youth (though, with its focus on some college campuses there is an exclusiveness implicit in the IFYC model). Pluralism is defined as respect for people's diverse religious and non-religious identities, mutually inspiring relationships between people of different backgrounds, and common actions for the common good. This is achieved through relationships, knowledge, and attitudes. Among its creative ventures, IFYC's formal goal is to make interfaith cooperation a social norm by changing public discourse, nurturing and networking a critical mass of interfaith leaders, and partnering with college campuses.

26. Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom

The Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom (SOSS)⁷² is an example of a grassroots,



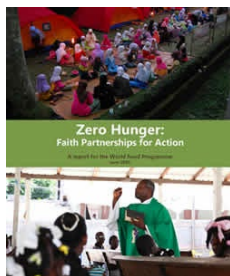
women focused dialogue and action group. The SOSS was started by a Jewish woman to engage Muslim and Jewish women in dialogue and friendship. It now has hundreds of members across the US and UK despite being relatively recent,

and international links to Kosovo and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. An annual conference draws hundreds of women.

27. Interfaith explorations at the World Food Programme (WFP)

When Pope Francis accepted an invitation to address the Executive Board and staff of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Rome in June 2016, WFP's leaders quickly realized that this amounted to a new, unprecedented involvement of a world religious leader with WFP on the vital topic of hunger. They also understood that it was important that the event be authentically interreligious, so as not to suggest an undue bias towards any one religious community. As a result, on the occasion of the Pope's address, WFP sought and promulgated statements from 25 religious leaders from different religious communities that emphasized, in terms that resonated with each community, the importance of ending hunger. They supported a review (undertaken by WFDD) of some of the myriad religiously inspired programs across the world that provide support to hungry people each and every day.⁷³ And they invited an interreligious group to participate in the event and to spend time exploring with WFP's leadership and governors how new partnerships might move shared objectives forward. An interreligious initiative took off from this auspicious beginning and now involves discussions about how religious bodies are engaged in the Zero Hunger effort across different world regions.⁷⁴

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organization, a United Nations agency that works both to advance development and to serve a humanitarian mission, following humanitarian principles. WFP provides food aid on a large scale, working in emergency situations and providing post emergency assistance to communities affected by war, conflict, and natural disasters. It also supports longer-term efforts to improve smallholder agriculture, reduce food waste, and improve nutrition. WFP estimates that it reaches more than 80 million people with food assistance in 82 countries each year. WFP has a mandate to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of Zero Hunger by 2030, which was agreed upon by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.



WFP's traditions are secular and any specific religious dimensions of its work have been largely unstated over its history. However, it works through elaborate partnerships that include many faith-inspired partners, among them World Vision, Caritas Internationalis, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Samaritan's Purse. The leaders of these organizations are part of the initiative to reach out beyond established partnerships, and notably to reach and work through local communities. The June 2016 events marked a new departure and a new challenge: to engage a range of religious communities in the common effort and to explore what this engagement might mean in practice.

Approaching interfaith through incentives, the arts

28. Prizes for interfaith work

A respected mechanism to encourage interfaith work (among other good works) are international prizes and other forms of recognition. There are some prizes for interfaith work and interfaith organizations have been nominated for prizes as distinguished as the Nobel Peace Prize.



The Niwano Peace Prize recognizes work for peace inspired by faith and several prizes have gone to interfaith actors or have highlighted interfaith dimensions of honorees' work.⁷⁵ The 2016 Prize is awarded to the Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Among awardees are the Community of Sant'Egidio, Scilla Elworthy, Sulak Sivaraksa, Ella Bhatt (SEWA), and Bishop Gunnar Stalsett. The Paul Carus Prize for Interreligious Understanding is awarded by the Parliament of the World's Religions and explicitly focuses on interfaith dialogue.⁷⁶ Winners have included the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and the Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA). The James Parks Morton Interfaith Award,⁷⁷ named in tribute of The Interfaith Center of New York's founder and active board member, recognizes individuals or organizations that exemplify an outstanding commitment to promoting human development and peace—values shared by the world's great religious traditions. Winners have included President Bill Clinton, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Hon. Judith Kaye, Dr. Mohammed El Baradei, and Awraham Soetendorp. Catholic Relief Services has recognized interfaith work in the Central African Republic, and Pax Christi awards⁷⁸

emphasize work for peace, often with an interfaith dimension. The Global Business & Interfaith Peace Awards are planned to be presented in the host city of each summer and winter Olympics, beginning with Rio 2016 in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact and its Business for Peace platform. On August 19th, 2015 World Humanitarian Day, at the U.N. Geneva, the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation⁷⁹ granted its annual Award to the Interfaith Peace Platform of the Central African Republic (CAR). The imam and the pastor who work together for peace starting in Nigeria have also received a series of recognitions. URI Africa and the Interfaith Peace-building Initiative have established a Peace Award.

29. Culture as a salve and a bridge: The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

Musicians and entertainers have long supported peace efforts in different parts of the world, speaking out, giving concerts, and engaging in activism to support peace initiatives. None is more improbable and publicly acknowledged than the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra whose aim is to show that young Palestinian and Israeli musicians (often of different religious backgrounds) could collaborate to produce world-class classical music even as a violent conflict swirled around them.

Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said founded the West-Eastern Divan in 1999.⁸⁰ Initially a one-time workshop for Israeli, Palestinian, and other Arab musicians in Weimar, Germany, it quickly evolved into a legendary orchestra. It gathers individuals from groups who previously only interacted through war and conflict, who then live and work together through music. Despite divisions in beliefs and past histories, this group works peacefully, thus contesting assumptions about the religious-political divides of the Middle East. Three years after its establishment, the West-Eastern Divan gained a home in Seville—a city known for its history of peaceful religious coexistence—given to them by the regional Spanish government of Andalusia.

The orchestra was inspired by the friendship of Said, a Palestinian author/scholar and Barenboim, an Israeli conductor/pianist. They looked for new ways to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Divan sets out to play in the home nation of every musician in the orchestra. Despite conflicts

throughout the years, such as the Lebanon War in 2006 and the war in Gaza in 2009, the orchestra has continued to play, putting aside tensions.

The orchestra was named after a series of twelve poems, *The Divan*, by Goethe, written in the early nineteenth century. Many were put to music by a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century classical composers, including Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Schoenberg. The work can be seen as a symbol for a stimulating exchange and mixture between Orient and Occident. The phrase “west-eastern” refers not only to an exchange between Germany and the Middle East, but also between Latin and Persian culture, as well as the Christian and Muslim cultures.

Barenboim spoke thus about the orchestra: “The Divan is not a love story, and it is not a peace story. It has very flatteringly been described as a project for peace. It isn’t. It’s not going to bring peace, whether you play well or not so well. The Divan was conceived as a project against ignorance. A project against the fact that it is absolutely essential for people to get to know the other, to understand what the other thinks and feels, without necessarily agreeing with it. I’m not trying to convert the Arab members of the Divan to the Israeli point of view, and [I’m] not trying to convince the Israelis to the Arab point of view. But I want to...create a platform where the two sides can disagree and not resort to knives.”⁸¹

30. Practical Information: The Indonesian Interfaith Weather Station (IIWS)⁸²

The Indonesia Interfaith Weather Station (IIWS) was created in October 2014 by the Indonesian Consortium for

Religious Studies (ICRS) to predict and prevent inter- and intra-religious tension and conflict in Indonesia.⁸³ This prototypical system is designed to detect religious interactions, ranging from peaceful to violent, just as weather stations detect storms. The IIWS represents an academic exploration of an early warning system that forecasts religious tension using social analysis and digital technology intervention. A grant from the United States Department of State provides support. IIWS goals include: raising awareness and enhancing sensitivity among government officials and civil society activists; building capacity of relevant government authorities, such as the Coordinating Ministry for Social Welfare and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to increase peace dividends; developing new theories, concepts, and techniques on interfaith relations using time series data and geographic spread analysis; and furthering the utilization of social science automation in the study of religion, interfaith relations, and religious conflicts. Challenges to pre-social analysis include types of technology used and the definition of religious conflict itself. IIWS hopes to see success in preventing “stormy” outcomes in Indonesia, and eventually to use this technology globally.⁸⁴

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APPENDIX C

Foundational Documents

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): References to religion

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

...without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Declaration on the relation of the Church to Non-Christian religions: *Nostra Aetate*. Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965.

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.¹ One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,² until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.³

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man?

What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing “ways,” comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the

way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.⁴

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,⁵ who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of Judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith⁶ are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded

the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.⁷ Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.⁸

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,⁹ nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.¹⁰ Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle.¹¹ In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).¹²

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;¹³ still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,¹⁴ so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.¹⁵

The Charter for Compassion

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies. We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

The Earth Charter (extracts)¹⁶

Preamble

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

...

The Challenges Ahead

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is

creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

Universal responsibility

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

...

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

Executive Summary of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities

WHEREAS, conditions in various parts of the Muslim World have deteriorated dangerously due to the use of violence and armed struggle as a tool for settling conflicts and imposing one's point of view;

WHEREAS, this situation has also weakened the authority of legitimate governments and enabled criminal groups to issue edicts attributed to Islam, but which, in fact, alarmingly distort its fundamental principles and goals in ways that have seriously harmed the population as a whole;

WHEREAS, this year marks the 1,400th anniversary of the Charter of Medina, a constitutional contract between

the Prophet Muhammad, God's peace and blessings be upon him, and the people of Medina, which guaranteed the religious liberty of all, regardless of faith;

WHEREAS, hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh on this date to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina at a major conference;

WHEREAS, this conference was held under the auspices of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and organized jointly by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies based in the United Arab Emirates;

AND NOTING the gravity of this situation afflicting Muslims as well as peoples of other faiths throughout the world, and after thorough deliberation and discussion, the convened Muslim scholars and intellectuals:

DECLARE HEREBY our firm commitment to the principles articulated in the Charter of Medina, whose provisions contained a number of the principles of constitutional contractual citizenship, such as freedom of movement, property ownership, mutual solidarity and defense, as well as principles of justice and equality before the law; and that, The objectives of the Charter of Medina provide a suitable framework for national constitutions in countries with Muslim majorities, and the United Nations Charter and related documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are in harmony with the Charter of Medina, including consideration for public order.

NOTING FURTHER that deep reflection upon the various crises afflicting humanity underscores the inevitable and urgent need for cooperation among all religious groups, we AFFIRM HEREBY that such cooperation must be based on a "Common Word," requiring that such cooperation must go beyond mutual tolerance and respect, to providing full protection for the rights and liberties to all religious groups in a civilized manner that eschews coercion, bias, and arrogance.

BASED ON ALL OF THE ABOVE, we hereby:

Call upon Muslim scholars and intellectuals around the world to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of "citizenship" which is inclusive of diverse groups. Such jurisprudence shall be rooted in Islamic tradition and principles and mindful of global changes.

Urge Muslim educational institutions and authorities to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos, and results in the destruction of our shared societies;

Call upon politicians and decision makers to take the political and legal steps necessary to establish a constitutional contractual relationship among its citizens, and to support all formulations and initiatives that aim to fortify relations and understanding among the various religious groups in the Muslim World;

Call upon the educated, artistic, and creative members of our societies, as well as organizations of civil society, to establish a broad movement for the just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim countries and to raise awareness as to their rights, and to work together to ensure the success of these efforts. Call upon the various religious groups bound by the same national fabric to address their mutual state of selective amnesia that blocks memories of centuries of joint and shared living on the same land; we call upon them to rebuild the past by reviving this tradition of conviviality, and restoring our shared trust that has been eroded by extremists using acts of terror and aggression;

Call upon representatives of the various religions, sects and denominations to confront all forms of religious bigotry,

villification, and denegration of what people hold sacred, as well as all speech that promote hatred and bigotry;

AND FINALLY, AFFIRM that it is unconscionable to employ religion for the purpose of aggressing upon the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries.

Marrakesh January 27th, 2016.

Notes

1. Cf. Acts 17:26
2. Cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6–7; 1 Tim. 2:4
3. Cf. Apoc. 21:23f.
4. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18–19
5. Cf. St. Gregory VII, letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (Pl. 148, col. 45of.)
6. Cf. Gal. 3:7
7. Cf. Rom. 11:17–24
8. Cf. Eph. 2:14–16
9. Cf. Lk. 19:44
10. Cf. Rom. 11:28
11. Cf. Rom. 11:28–29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20.
12. Cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11–32
13. Cf. John. 19:6
14. Cf. Rom. 12:18
15. Cf. Matt. 5:45
16. <http://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/>.

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