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Interfaith Imperatives Post 9/11: Sovereign Value of the Golden Rule

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On the Casuarian Coast in the flat mangrove swampland of Indonesian New Guinea, where water and land intermingle with a rhythmic ebb and flow, a tribe of about 20,000 people live in harmony with the environment. They call themselves the Asmat, "the people—the human beings." Everyone else is called Manowe, "the edible ones." They are cannibals.

Saadi, the Persian poet of the thirteenth century, sang:

> The human family is one body with many parts
> Creations arising from one unseen essence
> Any harm to any part summons an awakening
> a dis-ease and a healing response from all parts
> You who fail to feel the pain of others cannot be called truly human.

The Asmat do not organize for total war. Their killing practice is ritualized, limited, and controlled. We ignore at our peril the fact that the civilized nations of the world since World War II have spent astronomical fortunes, in excess of ten trillion since the end of the cold war alone, organizing killing apparatus capable of destroying all life on the planet many times over. Today, conflicts rage in over twenty killing fields driven by religious, ethnic, and racial bigotry. In good conscience, religions permit these horrors where the vast majority of victims are innocent women and children—noncombatants.

Coupled with weapons of mass destruction, this modern capacity for organized carnage, if guided by religious bigotry, could easily lead to the unspeakable.

Al-Qaeda utilizes religious symbols and language in its attempts to rationalize the crime against humanity of 9/11. But they are not alone in such abuses of religion. Many economic and social justice disputes remain unresolved; the responses to these can potentially be inflamed with religious passions, leaving no place on earth in a secure peace.

Europe suffered population decimation through thirty years of chaos when Protestants and Catholics slaughtered each other between 1618 and 1648. The Treaty of Westphalia, in which the basis of the modern nation-state system was formally established, deftly divested political process from the capacity of religions to stimulate endless war. What Europe experienced in the seventeenth century cannot be tolerated on a global scale with today's technologies.

Yet, in the face of the current crisis, many recognize a growing global awareness of the power of universal compassion nested within each religious tradition, and this awareness does not diminish the knowledge that each tradition has the ability to dehumanize and destroy the "other" either by conversion or genocide. We come together as a human community when we awaken the unity expressed by Saadi in the quest to fulfill our own humanity. For us who are aware of the power of universal compassion, there are no "edible ones."

Unrestricted market forces can feed unlimited greed at the cost of immeasurable human suffering unless they are informed and guided by moral and legal constraints based on the values upon which the world's religions are inspired. Globalization without a heart and conscience is a fearsome prospect for the poor. Spiritual values inform us that globalization must be based on ecological sensitivity and the implicit recognition that people, and indeed all life, contain the sacred and must be treated with care. The universality of these values is discoverable through interreligious dialogue and authentic sharing. But forums for this process must become the norm, not the exception.

We have learned in very recent times that for the human community to survive we must live together with the natural world, and that ecological consciousness can be taught, universally and effectively. We must now learn that coexistence between and among peoples can be taught, universally and effectively. The old model of competitive and dialectical discourse where one attempts to refute the claims of the other must now grow into a new model of cooperation and dialogue.

Professor Leonard Swidler, one of the world's most respected theologians and proponents of interfaith dialogue, has proposed ten "ground rules" for this process, the Dialogue Decalogue, which I will paraphrase in part:

1. The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.

2. Interreligious dialogue must be at least two-sided—within and between religious communities.
3. We must participate with complete honesty and sincerity.
4. We must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our practice with our partner's practice, our ideals with our partner's ideals. (We must always reflect on the concordance of our own ideals with our own practice for therein is found the basis of personal integrity.)
5. We must each define our own identity on our own terms. Only the Jain can define what it is to be a proper Jain.
6. We must come to the dialogue with no hard and fast assumptions of where the points of disagreement are.
7. Dialogue can take place only with equals coming to learn from each other.
8. Dialogue can take place only when there is mutual trust.
9. We must be open to self-criticism both of ourselves and of the tradition with which we identify.
10. We must strive to experience the other's religion "from within"—in ourselves and from within the integrity of the other tradition.

These ground rules help the process of discerning a shared essence in all religions. Our goal should be to make such dialogical process normative, local, and rich. Scriptures of the major religions, from the Bhagvad Gita, through the Bible and the Quran, are replete with explicitly acceptable violence as well as admonitions upon which to base universal love, justice, and appreciation. We must find ways of institutionalizing the loving dimensions so that "loving one's neighbor as oneself" can become the norm. In the Quran (Sura 49:13) we find "O humanity, God has created you male and female, and has made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The noblest of you before God is the one with deep piety and good deeds. Behold, God is all knowing and all aware."

How can such directions be fulfilled unless we really come to *know* each other? We need not come to agreement about theology in order to seek mercy and justice. Why should there be fear of the "tribe" with whom we might disagree? Abraham, with the most profound insight into the nature of justice and as an example of fulfilled humanity, pleaded passionately for mercy for those with whom he did not agree—the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. We need not agree on theology to address cooperatively global crises of human rights, justice, poverty, hunger, ecological destruction, and nuclear annihilation. Compassion and helping those in need are universally recognized spiritual principles, but we need to communicate to learn this.

Who is the beneficiary of today's Good Samaritan and to whom do we owe a sense of responsibility in an interconnected world? Why should the imam not visit the temple and share and the rabbi not visit the mosque and

share? Will someone be diminished or confused? Why should the priest not share with the minister? How else will we really learn what is profoundly held as truth by our neighbor so that we might love one another?

Some problems arise if we should attempt to mirror representative models of political democracy. Some religions are far more numerous than others. Some are not, by principle, organized along hierarchical structures. Some have spokespersons, some do not. Yet clearly, forums need to be generated that will allow sharing of experiences and the discovery of common ground, in the deepest sense. There are many global problems that religious institutions can help solve only through cooperative efforts.

Can there be peace in the world without peace among its religions? Can there be peace among religions without peace within religions? Can there be peace within religions without peace in our hearts? Sharing the suffering of others, feeling compassion for them, actively caring for their concerns, loving them, reaching out to demonstrate the beauty of the mystery of the divine, witnessing one's faith—these are some of the highest ideals of the world's major faiths. They bring self-mastery, harmony among the human community, and inner peace when practiced. We may not have the option to disregard such practices in the post-September 11 world. We may be required to understand each other better, not just to obtain our spiritual heritage but to demonstrate our rational capacities for survival.

Numerous viable initiatives are being discussed to advance cooperation and sharing among the faith traditions: creating local resource centers; developing web sites; rotating secretariat structures; expanding the interfaith constituency; networking with all interreligious initiatives; consulting with institutions of global impact like multinationals, banks, and governments as well as counsels of elders and sages; engaging in public interfaith celebrations; creating adult curricula for faith-based institutions, and many more. A vibrant task lies ahead.

The contemporary Sufi master Bawa Muhaiyaddeen with whom I lived and studied for over fifteen years until his passing in 1986 often said: "Separate from yourself that which separates you from other lives." The same qualities that separate us from other lives—anger, fanaticism, falsehood, pride, jealousy, greed, hatred, hastiness—separate us from the immeasurable power of goodness, beyond name, gender, and form called God. The same qualities that bring harmony with other lives—love, compassion, tolerance, peacefulness, patience—bring us into harmony with God. That harmony ultimately awakens wisdom that reveals that we live within God and God lives within us. How glorious, unifying, and full of justice is this mystery known only to those who open their hearts fully to other lives.

If we do not learn such principles of harmony and put them into practice, we face a world ruled by the law of power rather than the power of law; a world ruled by the love of power rather than the power of love.

ACKNOWLEDGE OUR LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

The mystery of the source of life and creation itself from which we come, toward which we return, and in and through which we live and are sustained cannot be measured nor can it be fully described by symbols or the intellect. In fact, even the great religions are only means of honoring, remembering, and describing—sacred metaphors, but not the actual reality itself. Thus, exclusivity based on the elegance of the metaphors does an injustice to the primacy of the unbounded foundation. The founders of the world's great faiths reached out with good news and a universal embrace, particularly holding the outcast, the downtrodden, the rejected—quite the opposite of today's exclusivists.

Today's exclusivists have turned their backs to the power of the original embrace of love and compassion upon which each of their traditions rests. This attitude is caused by ignorance, fear, and arrogance. It leads to the quest for unlimited power based on insecurity. Exclusivism cannot effectively open hearts, a precondition of the wisdom needed to understand the divine mystery, nor address adequately the three evil dynamics of this modern age—unnecessary pandemic poverty, irresponsible selfishness that leads to environmental degradation, and the irrational hazardous reliance on the threat to use nuclear weapons as a means of pursuing security.

On the contrary, exclusivism will only exacerbate our present inadequate levels of cooperation. Its main characteristic is the belief, "Our way of thinking and pursuing reality is the only good way." What does it mean to say that the way to the Father is through Jesus unless His quality of love is pursued? What does it mean to be one of the Chosen People without treating one's neighbor as one wishes to be treated? What does it mean to follow the dharma without seeking refuge in the power of compassion? What does it mean to honor Allah without affirming the quality of mercy by which He is known? The characteristic of the founders of each faith has been extraordinary immeasurable kindness, mercy, compassion, love, and wisdom.

Many exclusivists actually believe that the divine has ears for only their language. Others believe that his messenger(s) require a building at a particular location in order to save souls. Others believe that establishing real estate boundaries is more important than cultivating love and understanding. They are incapable of imagining that blessings can be universal. They all believe that their method of explaining the origins of the universe and the end of days are the only true way. Although none of them have ever actually seen the creation of their holy scripture, they all believe that it is the unique word of truth and that all others are wrong. Many are willing to kill for their ideas about the divine mystery and many others are willing to die for these ideas. Few have experienced, integrated, and are capable of sharing divine love, mercy, or compassion. All have strongly held ideas.

Exclusivism is most dangerous in the potential short-term political advantage its passions can provide a political leader. Imagine the temptation to politicians to cater to the mythology that exclusivists propound. Imagine what can happen in a modern state with global influence when its leaders are identified with such passions. Imagine the dangers if leaders in a country with weapons of mass destruction become subject to the interests of exclusivists in their society.

Even if a person believes a stone is the Lord, his beliefs should pose no concern to the political order; however, if he wants to throw the stone or condemn those who believe the Lord is formless, then concern is warranted. Likewise, those who believe God is formless and want to stone those who believe in stones can hardly be considered models of mercy, love, and compassion. It is not the fundamental beliefs of any religion that is a problem; it is the exclusivist arrogance of those who use religion to acquire power over others that is the problem.

The quest to enforce any one faith that derogates all other beliefs will surely fracture the peace of the world.

HOT SPOTS

Without even addressing the extremely hot conflict over real estate in Jerusalem, where exclusivists in three faiths believe that the Savior of humanity requires their group to possess a particular piece of real estate (the present location of the Dome of the Rock where the Temple of Solomon used to be located) in order to save humanity, it is easy to see that in the post 9/11 world numerous extremely volatile regions are flamed by religious misunderstandings. Let's just list a few:

Bosnia: Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians and Muslims
Cote d'Ivoire: Muslims, Indigenous, and Christian
Cyprus: Christians and Muslims
East Timor: Christians and Muslims
India: Animists, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs
Indonesia, Ambon, and Halmahera: Christians and Muslims
Kashmir: Hindus and Muslims
Kosovo: Serbian Orthodox Christians and Muslims
Macedonia: Macedonian Orthodox Christians and Muslims
Nigeria: Christians, Animists, and Muslims
Northern Ireland: Protestants and Catholics
Pakistan: Suni and Shiite Muslims
Philippines: Christians and Muslims

Russia, Chechnya: Russian Orthodox Christians and Muslims
Serbia, Vojvodina: Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholics
South Africa: Various Animists
Sri Lanka: Buddhists and Hindus
Sudan: Animists, Christians, and Muslims

This list does not purport to be complete. (For a much more complete analysis of the crisis in religious intolerance please seewww.religioustolerance.org)

In each instance, terrorists target civilian populations. In the developing world there is a history of fortunes squandered buying weapons, almost exclusively from one of the five nuclear weapons powers—the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, or China. In each of these cases, killing is performed in good conscience, with the blessings of religious figures.

Thousands were needlessly killed at the World Trade Center. But what about little Rwanda, a tragedy of epic proportion which could have been stopped. It could have been prevented had there been concerted efforts to bring intercultural understanding into the lives of the people in a systematic and sustained fashion. It could have been prevented had there been a political will to look at the depth of the hatred and address it squarely. It could have been prevented if there had been a rapid deployment international force available to the UN. The risks of tribalism, like religious exclusivism, must not be ignored.

September 11 shows us that low technology can be leveraged to cause tremendous injury, and the risks of tribalism, whether ethnic or religious, cannot be permitted to overtake the world. This is especially so when there are literally tons of inadequately safeguarded nuclear materials in Russia and inadequate resources being allocated to protect them. Yet we cannot throw up our hands and surrender the future to a world riddled with untenable risk, where identity politics could drive us into an abyss whose horror Dante alone could describe. Can we expect unilateral militarism of one superpower to save us? Can we sit back and watch a slow fragmentation by new fault lines of religious bigotry? Do we have any choice but to strengthen multilateral cooperation for security building based on the rule of law?

Nuclear materials, for example, can be safeguarded if the United States and Russia decide to do so. Russia lacks the resources and America lacks the present political will. This is foolish. They should lead in eliminating weapons of mass destruction and, while doing so, take extreme precautions to ensure that nuclear materials are not available to terrorists. But the passions that drive ethnic and religious violence must be addressed at a community level. Changing hearts cannot be accomplished by the application of technology nor by diplomacy and the stroke of a pen. It is far too subtle and subjective.

Yet we can and must establish institutional structures to systematically address prejudice and hatred. We must demonstrate at a public level that interfaith understanding is to be promoted. I believe we can because we can easily discern the ethical foundation to accomplish this task in each faith.

Here are some statements of the basic ethical principles upon which every faith tradition rests:

Bahá'í World Faith

"*Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not.*" "Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself." Baha'u'llah

"*And if thine eyes be turned toward justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.*" Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

Brahmanism

"*This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.*" Mahabharata, 5:1517

Buddhism

". . . *a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?*" Samyutta NIkaya v. 353

"*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.*" Udana-Varga 5:18

Christianity

"*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*" Matthew 7:12

Confucianism

"*Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.*" Analects 15:23

"Tse-kung asked, 'Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?' Confucius replied, 'It is the word "shu"—reciprocity. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'" Doctrine of the Mean 13.3

"*One should not behave toward others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself.*" Mencius Vii.A.4

Hinduism

"*This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.*" Mahabharata 5:1517

Islam

"*None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.*" Number 13 of Imam "*Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths.*"

Jainism

"*Therefore, neither does he [, a sage,] cause violence to others nor does he make others do so.*" Acarangasutra 5.101–2.

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." Lord Mahavira, 24th Tirthankara

"*A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.*" Sutrakritanga 1.11.33

Judaism

". . . *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Leviticus 19:18

"*What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary.*" Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Native American Spirituality

"Respect for all life is the foundation." The Great Law of Peace

Roman Pagan Religion

"The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves."

Shinto

"The heart of the person before you is a mirror. See there your own form."

Sikhism

"*Compassion-mercy and religion are the support of the entire world.*" Japji Sahib

"*Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone.*" Guru Arjan Devji 259

"*No one is my enemy, none a stranger and everyone is my friend.*" Guru Arjan Dev: AG 1299

Taoism

"*Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.*" T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien

Yoruba (Nigeria)

"One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."

Zoroastrianism

"*That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.*" Dadistan-i-dinik 94:5

"*Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others.*" Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29

Following are some philosophers' statements:

Plato

"*May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me.*" (Greece; fourth century BCE)

Socrates

"*Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you.*" (Greece; fifth century BCE)

Seneca

"*Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors.*" Epistle 47:11 (Rome; first century CE)

When this rule of reciprocity is violated, instability follows. When states with nuclear weapons fail to abide by their pledge contained in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, created to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons, this failure is the single greatest stimulus to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For some to say nuclear weapons are good for them but not for others is simply not sustainable. I would thus like to add two new rules:

First, the rule of nations: "*All nations must treat other nations as they wish to be treated.*"

Second, the rule of the powerful: "*As one does, so shall others do.*"

Once we realize that there is an underlying ethical foundation upon which to build understanding and international legal norms and regimes, then the belief that interfaith dialogue can be fruitful will help embolden the timorous to experience the richness that is brought to one's own tradition by such interactions. For that reason there has been a very positive explosion of such pursuits in recent times.[1]

PRACTICAL PROPOSAL

There is a critical need to promote interfaith understanding through interfaith dialogue. The United Nations is in a unique position to help create structures where greater utilization of the faith-based traditions in the pursuit of preventive diplomacy could be achieved. Many people are today inspired by key United Nations documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its premise that those rights we wish for ourselves shall be granted to others as well.

Imagine the great universities of the world with UN Centers for Nonviolent Conflict Prevention where intercultural and interfaith dialogue and experiences could be promoted. The cost would be very low for the UN and the prestige and value high for the participating institution. Such centers could help create a critical mass of educated people who are committed to greater levels of interfaith and intercultural understanding and who are able to help ensure a global norm of tolerance and an appreciation for the value of pluralism.

Franchising businesses are successful by licensing a method of operation associated with the goodwill of a trade name. Franchisors guarantee consistent quality wherever their trade name is used. Franchisees gain the knowledge of the method of operation and the benefit of the goodwill associated with the trade name. The UN has methods of operations that are associated with its high profile and valuable trade name. Universities could enhance their services to their students, communities, and nations by utilizing a UN license to operate Centers for Nonviolent Conflict Prevention. The UN and the world would benefit from this increased outreach and the participating universities would benefit with heightened prestige and excellent useful programs.

Such Centers could serve to strengthen understanding of global challenges the UN addresses, such as the need for sustainable environmental practices, ending gross poverty and gender inequities, and the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. These Centers could educate students and the general public about the mission and programs of the UN and thus help create a constituency that can see beyond mere national interests. Such persons are able to address the underlying problems that give rise to terrorism.

Preventive diplomacy aims to prevent disputes from arising between parties, stop current disputes from escalating into violence, and limit the spread of conflict. Governments alone cannot accomplish this. In fact, religious institutions, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, businesses, and professional communities all need to see the value of greater levels of intercultural and interfaith understanding. They need to participate and feel a sense of responsibility to help accomplish goals of peaceful coexistence.

Additionally, a Center for Nonviolent Conflict Prevention and Resolution as part of the UN headquarters could utilize all available means of mediation, negotiation, conciliation, and nonviolent conflict prevention and resolution in addressing current and potential conflicts. The Center would utilize fully the goodwill of so many of the world's religious leaders.

Over 1,000 religious leaders gathered at the UN for the Millennium Peace Summit and nearly every one expressed a willingness to help in such an endeavor. The United Nations Center for Nonviolent Conflict Prevention and Resolution could also serve as a place for the following to occur:

1. To utilize the great religious traditions of the world as a resource for promoting transnational ethical values. Thus we recommend an ongoing forum in which religious leaders can dialogically address the pressing need to establish common values and serve as a resource to advise the Secretariat and the Member States.
2. To explore the promulgation of programs that teach tolerance, cultural appreciation, and harmony at a profound level by creating forums for authentic interreligious dialogue and the experiential sharing of the different methods of

prayer, contemplation, and meditation. We suggest the promotion in UNITAR and among UN personnel and the personnel of missions actual retreat-like experiences on prayer and meditation of each of the world's religions. Such shared understanding will function as preventive diplomacy at the deepest level, for when there is authentic spiritual sharing, trust and confidence are easier to accomplish. Also, the UN community will begin to actually be a model of intercultural respect and tolerance to which the Member States can look for guidance.

3. To provide experiential courses on each of the religions' prayer and meditation methods. Each of the world's religions utilizes prayer and contemplation to help achieve inner peace and harmony. Such experiences lead people to a greater ability to perform inspired public service. We thus encourage such methods to be made explicitly available to all in the UN community in the form of ongoing regular events designed to enrich multireligious, ethnic, and cultural development and understanding. With such enrichment of the UN personnel, greater inspiration in documents and programs might be forthcoming from the UN.
4. To engage religious communities in service to the suffering. Charity, service, and compassion are universally recognized values in all religions and areas of social development that can be more fully utilized by the UN. Religious communities, as a world resource, have been underutilized and could help in coordination of resource distribution.
5. To create a true vocation of service at the heart of UN work, forums need to be created in which spiritual and moral shared values and experiences can be expressed by UN personnel to one another.

This United Nations Center for Nonviolent Conflict Prevention and Resolution will utilize all available means of mediation, negotiation, conciliation, and conflict resolution techniques. This Center will reinforce the regional offices at which ongoing multicultural, interreligious, and inter-ethnic dialogue can take place as a method of preventive diplomacy. It could take full advantage of the world's religions and could, in this context, be utilized to preempt cycles of misunderstanding, fear, and violence. The extraordinary waste of resources on armaments and the suffering caused by their uses simply cannot be overlooked when addressing poverty. As long as resources are disproportionately diverted to pursuing peace and stability through military means and fortunes are expended on weapons, ending poverty will remain beyond reach. The costs of these Centers is miniscule compared to military expenditures.

By finding ways of promoting openly the process of interfaith appreciation, the quiet study of our common humanity is stimulated. One of the greatest gifts received by the open-hearted is the gratitude of being part of the human family, a sense of joy in its variety of expressions of awe, love, and the sacred. Those who have this sense of gratitude are the ones who can step forward to assert our common ground, the place where

exclusivism and fanaticism cannot flourish. Where our common humanity is affirmed and love is expressed, fear, the breeding ground for fanaticism, is overcome. Where our common humanity is affirmed, the precondition for justice is established. Justice is the foundation for peace.

September 11 has shown us that a fractured world where fanaticism is allowed to grow, where grievances find no peaceful means of redress, where people demonize innocents who do not believe as they do, could, if not halted, be catastrophic. Clearly, when compassion leads to actions that give hope based on a sense of justice without regard to religion, race, or national situation, the environment where visions are based on hate, hopelessness, and fear will disappear. Let us be warned and plant places where our higher nature is affirmed.

Whether garbed in extremist political ideology, racial or tribal identity, or religious dogma, the exclusivist's vision diminishes our common capacity to work cooperatively, reason together, identify our common interests, and establish rules and laws of governance. The successes of the modern world have demonstrated that Hobbes, who believed life to be short, brutish, and nasty, was trumped by Locke and his philosophical stepson Jefferson, who viewed our fate with the faith that we are blessed with inalienable rights, regardless of our religious beliefs, that no state can remove, and that we are capable of establishing institutions to protect those rights. This optimistic view is the basis of the United States, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the UN System. It challenges all fanatics who deny civilized give and take. The best way to discover that all people possess such human capacities is through direct interfaith interaction.

We no longer have the luxury of living in religious ghettos. We must come into the open space of our greater humanity and there assert the highest ideals that the founders of every faith proclaimed. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

NOTE

1. Joel Beversluis lists literally hundreds of interfaith initiatives and resources in a thorough research project of only one continent in "A Portrait of North American Interfaith Organizations." <http://www.pluralism.org/affiliates/beversluis/portrait.pdf> Here are several international initiatives that are of value:

Council for a Parliament on World Religions <http://www.cpwr.org>;

Mideastweb.com <http://www.mideastweb.org/index.html>;

Global Dialogue Institute <http://global-dialogue.org/>;

The United Religions Initiative <http://www.uri.org>;

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance <http://www.religioustolerance.org>;

Millennium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders<http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/aboutframe.html>;

Interfaith Center of New York <http://www.interfaithcenter.org>;

Global Dialogue Institute <http://www.global-dialogue.org>;

International Interfaith Centre <http://www.interfaith-center.org/oxford>;

World Conference on Religion and Peace <http://www.wcrp.org>;

Temple of Understanding <http://www.templeofunderstanding.org/>;

North American Interfaith Network <http://www.nain.org/>