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Peace Starts Now: Religious Contributions to Sustainable Peacemaking

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The Parable of the Quarry

In Italian folklore, there is a tale about an individual who visited a marble quarry to learn how the stone workers understood their daily toils. Each laborer responded quite differently to a simple question: "What are you doing?" The first laborer answered in a direct, matter-of-fact way. "I'm earning a living. I rise early to come here every day. It's a difficult job, but the sweat of my brow provides for my family's needs and keeps a roof over my head." Upon hearing this, the visitor was impressed. Here is a person, she thought, who is meeting a basic life challenge in an uncomplaining, mature, responsible manner. She proceeded on to another part of the quarry, and posed her question to a second laborer: "What are you doing?" This worker responded differently, with a spark of passion. "I'm dressing stones!" In contrast to the first laborer, he was totally absorbed in his work, present in the moment. With each blow of his pick, he aspired to greater proficiency with his equipment. He possessed obvious enthusiasm for the technology of quarry work, and was clearly dedicated to the task at hand and to refining his skills. Once again the visitor was impressed, but her curiosity persisted. She walked on to a third laborer in another dusty corner of the quarry, and offered her question in the same manner as before: "What are you doing?" The third laborer paused for a moment, put down his pick, and wiped the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. Meeting his visitor's inquisitive gaze with a pleasant look and unexpected inspiration, he stated, "I'm building cathedrals."[1]

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[1] A version of this story can be found in Roger Fisher et al., *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), 67.

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This simple story conveys meaning at multiple levels, not all of which relate to spirituality or religious architecture. In relation to tonight's lecture, however, I find that it provides a compelling allegory – a parable, if you will – for religious contributions to peacemaking, while also conveying a valuable message about the potential for complementarity between religious approaches to peace and other approaches. Just as the third laborer's inspiration and sense of purpose have the potential to sustain efforts over time and lighten the load of co-workers, so too does religion have a remarkable capacity to motivate and enhance peacemaking action. At its best, religious vision can support and indeed improve peacemaking in a number of significant ways – for example, by enlarging our understanding of what peace means; by deepening peacebuilding processes, placing techniques and methods in a more profound existential context; and by broadening the processes of peace, providing expanded possibilities for individual and grassroots participation.

For various reasons, however, religion's potential contributions to peace are not always realized. Religious leadership in conflict situations is not invariably positive and socially engaged. Religious terms and symbols can be misused or understood in ways that preclude community among people who tread different paths. In many cases religion becomes an adversarial identity marker, a prop for the status quo, or even an instrument for pursuing extreme worldly ends. Sadly, religion can be either a barrier or a bridge, either tinder or water. And in our modern world, the religious impulse is not always granted sufficient scope to play a positive role in social life.

If we return to the parable, it seems that the three laborers in the peace quarry are not always in harmony. At times they may even be at odds with one another, preoccupied with fundamental disagreements about how to run their enterprise, what methods should be used, who should defer to whom, and so forth. Who is best qualified to be the foreman – the man with the vision, the man with a zest for technical skills, or the man with his feet on the ground and a penchant for personal finance? Is the cathedral builder an escapist daydreamer who should keep his ideas to himself, or a necessary and inspiring presence? And does it really matter who has the better technique or the superior vision, if demand for the quarry's product

is unstable and what the place really needs is a good advertising campaign orchestrated by the ever-practical first laborer to ensure everyone still has a job at the end of the year?

Such questions may seem to deviate from our parable's original intent, yet they help to bring key issues surrounding religious peacebuilding into focus, in ways that can help us situate this field of research, reflection, and practice in relation to the needs of the contemporary world. In this lecture, I propose that the academic study of religious peacebuilding is undergoing a renaissance, and that there is growing intellectual as well as practical interest in what used to be considered a niche activity of peace churches. Though not universally appreciated, the "cathedral builder's" craft is in demand, and those who are committed to such work now face exciting opportunities to share their passion with a larger audience and to tell new stories about it – stories which neither denigrate non-religious approaches to peace nor sell religious approaches short. Stories which heartily affirm the value of the third laborer's contributions without begrudging the particular virtues of the first two laborers. Stories that celebrate opportunities for fruitful secular-religious and indeed inter-religious collaboration, and that frame such collaborations as sources of new theoretical and applied insights into religion's role in peace work.

Religion and What?
As obvious as it may appear to adherents of peace church traditions, the notion that religion has something to contribute to peace – that there is a place for "cathedral builders" at the quarry – is far from uncontested in today's cultural and intellectual milieu. There is, indeed, a pervasive skepticism about religion's peace potential, and it is not difficult to grasp the reasons for it.

During the first session of my "Religion and Peacebuilding" class, I like to explore overarching student attitudes toward the subject. As you might expect, there is a wide range of perceptions and beliefs within the classroom, and different attitudes toward religion and its capacity to contribute to peace. Some students enter my class hoping to hear what they consider to be the truth about religion and peace: religion is the only reliable source of peace, therefore peace in the world must pre-eminently be sought through

religion. Other students are more attuned to the shadow side of religion and religious politics: self-righteous absolutism, social exclusivity, hostile mythologies about the "other," apocalyptic inflation of mundane issues, and amplified conflict dynamics. They see many stumbling blocks to religious peacebuilding. Divergent views in the classroom mirror the larger society, revealing different positions and worldviews. I encourage students to reflect on their personal relationship to religion, and even to think how they might translate this relationship into the terms of a Facebook "relationship status" update: "in a relationship," "married," "divorced," "seeking," "it's complicated," and so on. This exercise is partially humorous in intent but it can provide genuine insight into the experiences behind different views in the classroom – and perhaps even encourage self-awareness and humility.

Intellectual views of religion's role in conflict and peace are highly fragmented. Advocates of religion's positive contributions to society and to peacemaking must often contend with the strong skepticism of those inclined to see religion more as a problem than as a resource for peace – a view that is quite conventional in the social sciences. Among public intellectuals, an influential genre of opinion – I call it "peace without religion" – identifies religion as a primary cause of contemporary conflict and violence, and enjoys a high rate of success on the bestseller lists. This perspective has various formulations, but the general argument is that public religion constitutes a threat to peace. Religion is seen as divisive and predisposed to intolerance or even violence unless safely confined to the private sphere. This perspective points to historical abuses of religion as a tool of power – a means of exclusion and oppression – and calls for the inculcation of secular ethical principles that do not discriminate between "us" and "them" and that enjoin individuals to care for this world rather than to strive for access to another one.

These views have not come out of nowhere. They owe much to the European Renaissance and Enlightenment as well as to the French Revolution and Marxist thought, and have profoundly shaped views on peacemaking since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Peace of Westphalia ended the sectarian and geopolitical turmoil of the Thirty Years War in Northern Europe by reframing religion as a matter of internal state politics. In addition, it began the shift toward a more explicitly secular model for international politics,

within which unvarnished national interest was increasingly regarded as a safer, more appropriate guide to state policy than religious conviction, with its presumed conduciveness to ideological crusading. This legacy has left a profound mark on thinking in the field of international relations, and parallels comparable trends in society and popular culture – trends that eventually produced these memorable lyrics from John Lennon:

> *Imagine there's no countries*
> *It isn't hard to do*
> *Nothing to kill or die for*
> *And no religion too*
> *Imagine all the people*
> *Living life in peace*[2]

These lyrics from "Imagine" convey an idea that would have been (and still is) quite counterintuitive in most of the world's traditional cultures but is not out of place in a modern context: less religion means more peace.

As easy as it might be to dismiss pop-culture formulations of "peace without religion" as simplistic or fanciful, the messenger has things to say that deserve a fair hearing. By challenging abuses of religion and exclusive reliance on religious epistemology, spokespersons for "peace without religion" have mounted critiques of many genuinely problematic practices through which religious institutions, interpretations, and identities become entangled in conflict. While we would be unwise to interpret the works of poets and songwriters literally, we can benefit from words such as Lennon's if we hear in them a call for reflection on religion's historical entanglements with (and co-optation by) political power, ideological extremism, and various forms of in-group favoritism.

Much has been written on the subject of religion and violence in recent years, and some of the key findings can be summarized in a paradoxical insight: religion, understood holistically as an embodied social experience as well as a guiding doctrinal framework, is both a source of peace and a source of conflict. Religious institutions, for example, are

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[2] "John Lennon – Imagine Lyrics," Lyrics007, accessed at http://www.lyrics007.com/John%20Lennon%20Lyrics/Imagine%20Lyrics.html on June 13, 2011. "Imagine" is the title track of John Lennon's *Imagine* album (Apple, EMI: 1971).

undeniably necessary for preserving religious tradition and community over time, but the actual performance of these institutions often mirrors that of non-religious institutions, with comparable imperfections. Religious doctrines point to the transcendent and define the particularity of distinctive religious communities, but interpretations and ideological formulations of these doctrines can significantly raise the stakes of conflict, giving added importance to seemingly more mundane rivalries and disputes, while providing overzealous or unscrupulous political leaders with an enriched rhetorical basis for dehumanizing adversaries and justifying imperial ventures. Religious identities make communal experience of the sacred possible, yet in many instances of protracted conflict religion serves as just one more boundary marker between communities struggling for material gain, position, and security. While protagonists of "peace without religion" are often guilty of over-generalizations and rhetorical posturing, they have unmasked real tensions and contradictions in religious behavior.

The "peace without religion" perspective nonetheless has a number of profound limitations. First, many of its advocates tend to scapegoat religion as the primary cause of social and political conflicts[3] – a posture resulting in simplistic, often erroneous understandings of complex conflict dynamics and unwarranted stereotyping of religious teachings, institutions, and individuals. Second, in scapegoating religion, advocates frequently overlook ways in which secular identities and ideologies can also take on fanatical and destructive forms. Just as fundamentalist[4] interpretations of religion may lead to divisiveness and conflict, any ideological system – including secularism – can be used as a basis for asserting hegemony over others or mobilizing a population against resented "outsiders." Indeed, while a remarkable range of autocratic governments in virtually every world region have sought to

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[3] A range of "new atheist" literature perhaps best exemplifies this attitude. See, for example, Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004) and Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

[4] R. Scott Appleby explains fundamentalism as "a religious response to the marginalization of religion and an accompanying pattern of religious activism with certain specifiable characteristics." He differentiates this mode of assertive religion from ethnoreligious extremism and religious nationalism. See Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 101, 107-108.

use religion as a justifying ideology, some of the most destructive regimes in history – such as Stalin's USSR and Nazi Germany – were at their cores profoundly irreligious, even anti-religious.

This tendency to overlook the potential violence of secular belief systems has problematic consequences in the present world historical context. As William Cavanaugh argues, much scholarly treatment of religious violence overlooks the potential for crusading in the name of a secular or modernist belief system, and underscores the otherness of non-Western peoples whose cultures have a strong religious component.[5] The result is a tendency to view their violence as inherently irrational, while allowing Western thinkers to frame violence emanating from their own countries' policies as a civilizing force, as a force for peace. For Cavanaugh, this harmful double standard contributes to a sanitized view of contemporary Western political systems (which attempt to regulate the role of religion in state affairs while operating on the basis of alternative ideologies) and their interactions with the larger world.

Beyond this blind spot for secular ideology, one of the greatest flaws of the "peace without religion" perspective is that by focusing exclusively on the conflict potential of religion, it does an injustice to religion's peace potential and to the many ways religion can and does serve as a powerful resource for peacemaking. Religions have both strengths and weaknesses with respect to peace and conflict, but these strengths and weaknesses are not unique and are shared by many other communal, institutional, and ideological forms of association. One-sided antagonism toward religion throws the baby out with the bathwater, while substituting new absolutes for old ones. Further, despite the tendency among many past scholars to predict a global decline in religiosity, religion is decidedly here to stay. What is needed, then, is a more nuanced approach to studying religion and its relationship to peace and conflict, one that better accounts for the complexities of an era characterized not just by globalization, democratization, and human rights discourse, but by religious revivals and the emergence of multiple modernities (Western and otherwise).

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[5] William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

Bringing Religion Back In, For Peace

Although in many respects support for "peace without religion" has increased in recent years, new ways of thinking about religion's role in conflict and peace have also been gaining strength, constituting a soft-spoken yet promising counterpoint to hyperbolic secularism and religious extremism alike. These new ways are at the core of the emerging literature on religious peacebuilding that is taking shape at the interface of peace and conflict studies, religious studies, and several other disciplines. This approach, which I call "peace with religion," acknowledges religion's potential contributions to conflict while also affirming and encouraging religion's contributions to peace. It accounts for the paradox that religion both unites and divides: religion evokes universally resonant ideals such as peace even as it underscores the importance of particularly and irreducibly distinctive meanings, truth claims, and symbols. Religion can provide virtually unrivalled motivation for peacemaking activity, but it can also be interpreted in ways highly problematic for those aspiring toward a more cohesive world community.

One need not be religious to recognize that religions have great potential for peace. At their best, the world's religions have much to say on the subject and much to offer. Multiple religious traditions have provided exemplars of peacebuilding who transcend sectarian boundaries and inspire respect for their moral courage and uncommon humanity. These committed religious peacebuilders have often helped to foster public spirituality – spreading inspiration far beyond the circle of coreligionists – and have often been at the forefront of efforts to address pressing social concerns. In a broader sense, religious visions and vocabularies have contributed greatly to the theory and practice of reconciliation, and socially engaged religious intellectuals are often among the most perceptive challengers of new orthodoxies and subtle idolatries, from the often ambiguous "national interest" of power politics to the "invisible hand" of economics. At an institutional level, religious decisions to devote resources and leadership capacity to peace and justice advocacy are highly consequential and have the potential to catalyze broad-based mobilizations as well as sustained grassroots efforts. In these and many other ways, religion can and does provide a vital source of inspiration and support for peace. To get the best out of religion, however, we need new ways of thinking about what "peace

with religion" might look like.

"Peace with religion" is premised on open acknowledgment of religion's ambivalent relationship to conflict and peace, tempered by a strong affirmation of the spiritual and practical resources that religion brings to peacemaking. This approach therefore embraces positive contributions of religion to peace – and indeed welcomes religious efforts to define precisely what peace means – while appreciating the need for balance between secular claims to inclusive public space and the religious need to express particularity. Thus, scholars and practitioners taking this approach remain mindful of religion's conflict potential while proactively eliciting and fostering its peace potential. To this end, they investigate how beliefs, values, rituals, and practices from a wide range of traditions have contributed to peacebuilding, and seek to clarify the constructive roles that religious individuals and institutions can play in transforming conflict.

The New Story of Religious Peacebuilding

The emergence of the "peace with religion" approach has been facilitated by post-Cold War developments, including the growing interest among peacebuilding practitioners, peace researchers, and some international relations specialists in creative responses to "identity conflict" – that is, responses to "new" dynamics of intergroup confrontation that politicize and polarize ethnic and religio-cultural forms of belonging.[6] Increasingly, scholars and even some policymakers affirm the need for religious leadership and activism in order to break down "us vs. them" polarization and nurture rapprochement.[7] At times this has boiled down to a hope that "good" religion

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[6] Cynthia Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Peacemaking in International Conflict,* ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 273-316; Gerrie ter Haar, "Religion: Source of Conflict or Resource for Peace?," in *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3-34; Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover, eds., *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

[7] Chadwick Alger, "Religion as a Peace Tool," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1.4 (June 2002): 94-109; Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Mixed Blessings: US Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict-Prone Settings* (Washington: 2007).

might drive out the bad, grant "in-group" legitimacy to peace processes, or help effect a divorce between religious faith and pernicious forces of ethno-nationalist extremism such as those witnessed in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Nonetheless, the interest has sometimes gone deeper, to include genuine receptivity to religious conceptions of peace and their challenges to secular orthodoxies, including those promising perpetual peace or an "end of history" if only we will trust the magic of the marketplace and the triumphant march of technological progress.[8]

The study of religious peacebuilding is now a serious research program pursued by scholars in many countries, and marks a refreshing shift in focus from the more common preoccupation with religiously sanctioned violence. Though especially well supported at Peace Church schools and religiously identified institutions – Eastern Mennonite University, Notre Dame, the Irish School of Ecumenics, and the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium come to mind – scholars conducting research on religious peacemaking are also found at secular institutions. While attentive to unique dynamics within particular religious traditions, these scholars also explore comparative and generic questions in their research, sometimes with support or encouragement from organizations like the United States Institute of Peace, the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, or the International Peace Research Association.

The growing interest in religious peacebuilding has prompted many scholars to begin looking at the history of peacemaking through new lenses, devoting attention to the religious and spiritual motivations of peacemakers and "discovering" the intensive peacework of organizations like the Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the Community of Sant'Egidio. The potential of the religious impulse for peace has been duly noted by the likes of Douglas Johnston, an American security studies expert who abandoned a high-profile, high-status, and high-access executive position at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on K Street in Washington in exchange for a much leaner, more spiritually rewarding job at the head of a small NGO called the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy.[9]

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[8] Richard Falk, *Religion and Humane Global Governance* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
[9] For more information on the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, see www.

Writers in this field have identified a number of strengths and resources available to religious peacebuilders. Johnston, for example, notes that religious individuals and institutions can make a difference for peace because (1) they are deeply rooted in communities and at the center of day-to-day life; (2) they are viewed as value-driven, not politicized, actors: (3) they have "unique leverage for reconciling [conflicted] parties, including a capacity to rehumanize relationships" and break cycles of violence; and (4) they have a "capacity to mobilize community, national, and international support for a peace process."[10] Other authors point to similar sources of influence and effectiveness, while noting that religious peacebuilders can "fulfill tasks for which traditional diplomacy is not equipped."[11]

Research on religious peacebuilding is offering fresh support for the premise that religion can be a force for peace, revealing that in many cases protagonists of change find it hard to imagine peace without a spiritual dimension. Religion played an important role in the Moral Re-Armament movement, which helped bridge the divide between French and German societies after World War II.[12] It provided a bond between black and white South Africans, and gave life to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[13] It has provided invaluable motivation and much-needed endurance to peacebuilders in Liberia, Uganda, the Congo, Sudan, Nicaragua, India, and the Philippines, to name but a few examples.[14] A study by the Oxford Research Group observes that "again and again, the factor named by participants as

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icrd.org/.

[10] Douglas Johnston and Brian Cox, *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 14.

[11] Luc Reychler, "Religion and Conflict: Introduction: Towards a Religion of World Politics," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 2.1 (1997): 35-36.

[12] Edward Luttwak, "Franco-German Reconciliation," in *Religion, the Missing Dimension in Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 37-57.

[13] Megan Shore, *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

[14] For examples pertaining to these and other cases, see David Little, ed., *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007); Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy*; Johnston and Sampson, eds., *Religion, the Missing Dimension in Statecraft*.

being central to their effectiveness is a sense of direction inspired by some connection with a source of strength greater than their own ego."[15]

Engaging religious actors and communities undoubtedly serves to widen opportunities for engagement in peacebuilding work, to link otherwise disconnected parties, and to recognize different kinds of endeavors and roles. Not only do religious communities have both grassroots support and (in some settings) political clout, but religious institutions are often well positioned to mediate between adversaries in divided communities as well as between grassroots communities and elite political processes.[16] Scholars have identified a remarkably diverse range of roles that religious actors and institutions play in conflict situations, ranging from mediators, educators, and reconcilers to direct participants in political negotiations or monitors of sensitive human rights situations.[17] Unlike many external third parties and international NGOs, faith-based actors tend to have a well-rooted presence in conflict settings and are often advantageously situated to seek international support for local work.

As a relatively new sub-field within Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) and its partner disciplines, the study of religion and peacebuilding holds great promise. It presents rich opportunities not just to enhance understanding of how peace can be made, but to support more balanced and constructive public discourse and to contribute to ongoing applied efforts on the part of organizations and individuals.[18] There are many areas for creatively multi-

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[15] Dylan Matthews, *War Prevention Works: 50 Stories of People Resolving Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford Research Group, 2001), 111.

[16] See John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford Univ. Pess, 2005), 75-86.

[17] Cynthia Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding."

[18] To take advantage of these opportunities, Conrad Grebel University College recently launched the Centre for the Study of Religion and Peace (CSRP), which aspires to advance scholarly knowledge and public awareness of religious contributions to peacemaking. Through research, dialogue, and broader educational activities, the Centre seeks to enhance understanding of the peace potential inherent in religious commitment, and actively explores ways this potential can be tapped to constructively and creatively manage differences in a complex, diverse, and interdependent world community. The CSRP aims to serve as a resource centre for religious peacemaking efforts, while creating a forum for dialogue and relationship-building among people of diverse faiths, cultures, and nationalities. It will also attempt to increase the College's capacity to equip students with the tools they need to bridge

disciplinary research on religion and peace, encompassing interrelated matters of theology, culture, politics, and social practice.

Religious Conceptions of Peace

What do religious experiences, scriptures, and theological systems have to teach us about the nature of peace and how it is to be sought? A starting point for many scholars is to identify religious teachings, values, beliefs, and practices that may contribute to building and sustaining peace. This is a vast area of knowledge to which much has been contributed, yet, despite the rich peace resources in religious traditions, the scholarship has not always been organized to make these resources accessible. There is much room for further contributions and for meaningful dialogue within and across traditions.

While peace concepts are found in every world religion, each religion has its own particular understanding of what peace means in spiritual, theological, conceptual, ritual, practical, and relational terms. Comprehending how peace is construed within different traditions can provide a meaningful bridge to interreligious understanding while clarifying the sources of inspiration available for building peace in different political and cultural contexts.

Significantly, definitions of peace within a given tradition can offer insight into keynote themes that often resonate with major accents of other traditions while maintaining their unique character, "overtones," and correlations with sets of positive values (e.g., inwardness, justice, wholeness, harmony, community).[19] The three principal Abrahamic faiths, for instance, all stress justice and mercy, and relate these concepts to the advancement of peace. For Muslims, the theme of peace evokes not just a deep sense of safety and well-being but the need for constant striving towards social justice and right relationship with others.[20] For Christians, the teachings of the Bible

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cultural and religious divides.

[19] For an overview of the peace resources in various world religions, see David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr, *Understanding World Religions: A Road Map for Justice and Peace* (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007). See also Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, ed., *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions* (Cambridge: The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998).

[20] For discussion of peace and peace resources in Islam, see Nathan C. Funk and Abdul Aziz Said, *Islam and Peacemaking in the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009),

emphasize justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation as well as nonviolent sacrifice and a search for transformative solutions to conflict.[21] Eastern religious traditions, too, offer rich teachings on peace and how to realize it: *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *kshama* (forgiveness), and *shanti* (peace) are recurrent themes in sacred Hindu texts;[22] Buddhism's core teaching of interdependence gives strong impetus to both social compassion and spiritual empathy, and in recent years a new movement of "engaged" Buddhism seeks to connect the pursuit of inner peace through meditation and mindfulness to social justice concerns.[23] While it is important not to understate variation among religious peace concepts, it is noteworthy that in a remarkably broad range of cultural and religious milieus, true peace, whether in this world or the next, is best sought in conjunction with moving towards transcendence or greater holism that embraces unseen dimensions of reality.[24]

Recognition of recurrent themes in the peace wisdom of most premodern societies can deepen peace and conflict studies scholarship and practice. First, premodern peace concepts tend to view peace holistically, characterizing a peaceful state as much more than a simple absence of war or violence. In numerous cultural and religious traditions, peace evokes motifs associated with wholeness, harmony, or completion, and movement in the

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47-69 [see review in this issue – Ed.]; Huda, Qamar-ul, *Crescent and Dove: Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2010); Frederick M. Denny, "Islam and Peacebuilding: Continuities and Transitions," in *Religion and Peacebuilding,* ed. Harold Coward and Gordon Smith, (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2004),129-46.

[21] William M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Andrea Bartoli, "Christianity and Peacebuilding," in *Religion and Peacebuilding,* ed. Coward and Smith, 147-66.

[22] Rajmohan Gandhi, "Hinduism and Peacebuilding," in Coward and Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding*, 45-68.

[23] Christopher S. Queen, "The Peace Wheel: Nonviolent Activism in the Buddhist Tradition," in *Subverting Hatred*, ed. Smith-Christopher, 25-47.

[24] While definitions of religion are highly contested within the field of religious studies, Leonard Swidler's definition is useful as a basis for PACS-related forms of analysis. According to Swidler, a religion is "an explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly, based on some notion of the Transcendent, with the four C's: Creed, Code of Ethics, Cult of Worship, Community-Structure." See James L. Heft, ed., *Beyond Violence: Religious Sources of Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2004), ix.

direction of peace requires much more than changes in legislation or reform of the status quo.[25] Second, traditional wisdom frames the absence of peace in human societies existentially, not merely in relation to social structures and institutional constructs. In most religious systems, a "peace deficit" is understood as a recurrent feature of the human condition: on a day-to-day basis, typical human beings are not fully at peace with themselves or with others. While vocabulary and specific meanings vary in non-trivial ways, there is nonetheless a measure of consistency in religious characterizations of a human predicament in which something fundamental is lacking, leading to brokenness, suffering, duality, or fragmentation. Third, peacemaking requires transformation, healing, and acceptance of moral guidance and direction – deep changes within individuals and societies, not merely a shift in social policies or an improvement in negotiation skills. Most traditional religious worldviews conceive of peacemaking as a sacred activity based on inspired teachings; this approach calls for community and fellowship, and envisions not only an end to fighting but deep changes in feeling, relationships, and character.

Religious Peace Positions
Even as we analyze the distinctive characteristics and keynote themes of different religious peace concepts, we also must understand the wide range of potential peace positions within most established religious systems. While keynote themes do indeed differ, there are rich internal debates within every major tradition. Most believers tend to follow what we might call "central tendencies" or "mainstream positions" (which may themselves vary across time and space), with creative and sometimes disruptive minorities highlighting other possible interpretations. Usually the religious mainstream avoids absolute peace positions and makes an accommodation with "political reality," while nonetheless embracing peace as a positive value and making serious statements about the need to restrain violence.

        In the Christian tradition, for example, theological discussions of peace typically resound with a keynote theme of forgiveness that includes a not always practiced but still strong affirmation of pre-emptive (not

25 Raimon Panikkar, *Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

merely conditional) forgiveness as a bridge to reconciliation. Despite the consistency of this theme, historical experience has yielded a wide variety of Christian peace positions and a rich debate about war. We can imagine a spectrum with Crusaders on one end and practitioners of nonresistance at the other, with a majority of Christian churches distributed throughout an intermediate space between Constantine I's religiously righteous state and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's conditional pactifism. Although there is an exciting contemporary "just peacemaking" movement within which pacifists and just war thinkers engage each other to see what each side is willing to proactively do to prevent war and not just react to violence,[26] Christian ethicists continue to debate the relative merits of absolute pacifism, relative pacifism, just war pacifism, just war, righteous war, and so forth.[27]

In Islam, the keynote theme of peace through justice does not remove pre-emptive forgiveness from the list of options but it does produce a stronger emphasis on conditionality: forgiveness becomes a more realistic and laudable peacemaking option when there is evidence of willingness to repair relations or move in the direction of reform. In religious discussions of war and peace, authorities tend to cluster around a mainstream "just war" position that resonates with many Christian *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* themes, within a larger context that includes righteous struggle and zealous freelancing as well as just war pacifist and actively nonviolent options.[28]

Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism each sound different keynote themes within their peace discourse while producing spectrums of peace positions that significantly overlap with Christian and Islamic spectrums. In Buddhism inner serenity and mindfulness remain constant themes, and in Hinduism spiritual realization is a priority for manifesting peace in the

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[26] Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998).

[27] See, for example, David L. Clough and Brian Stiltner, *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War* (Washington: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2007).

[28] John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007); Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "The Nonviolent Crescent: Eight Theses on Muslim Nonviolent Action," in *Arab Nonviolent Political Struggle in the Middle East*, ed. Ralph E. Crow, Philip Grant, and Saad E. Ibrahim (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), 25-41; S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, *Standing on an Isthmus: Islamic Narratives on Peace and War in Palestinian Territories* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007).

world. Judaism takes a more extroverted approach, with social justice and vigorous disagreement receiving equal affirmation. Nonetheless, peace debates within all three traditions can be complex and vigorous, with central tendencies that seek to regulate or constrain violence by the state without fully eliminating war as an option. Contestation rather than consensus emerges in actual discussions of how to make peace within a situation of escalated conflict.[29]

Religious Contributions to Peacemaking Practice

Drawing on existing peace and conflict studies frameworks, scholars have begun developing detailed arguments as to when and how religious institutions and individuals can be involved in peace processes while also attending to specific, potentially transformative dynamics inherent in religious activism. While some of this work has advocated harnessing the energy of religious activism by using pre-existing strategic peacebuilding templates, much of the new attention is conceptually innovative, leading to new ways of thinking about peacebuilding.

Given the depth and breadth of peace teachings in different religious traditions, we need not look far to find examples of how religious teachings and applied spiritual practices have inspired individuals and communities to work for peace as well as for social and even environmental justice. The best-known examples enjoy almost iconic status – for example, Gandhi's nonviolent *satyagraha* struggle against colonial rule in India, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s application of New Testament teachings on *agape* in the US civil rights movement, and Desmond Tutu's advocacy of truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation in South Africa. Lesser known examples, however, can have similar instructive power: Abdul Ghaffar Khan modeled the mobilizing power of religious commitment by founding a 100,000-strong nonviolent Muslim peace force in colonial India, in the predominantly Pashtun borderlands adjacent to Afghanistan[30]; Maha Ghosananda organized large-scale, symbolically powerful peace marches through landmine-laden

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[29] Coward and Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding*; Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*.
[30] Robert C. Johansen, "Radical Islam and Nonviolence: A Case Study of Religious Empowerment and Constraint among Pashtuns," *Journal of Peace Research* 34.1 (February 1997): 53-71.

war zones in Cambodia.[31] More recently, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa of Nigeria have demonstrated the potential of religion as a healing force amidst profound intercommunal conflict, even in the presence of militia violence.[32]

While it can be noted that in many cases religious peacebuilders draw upon both religious and non-religious sources of inspiration (for example, protagonists of the US civil rights movement invoked both Biblical and constitutional principles), ignoring the role of religion in motivating individuals around the globe to work for peace would be a grave oversight. In recent decades, faith-based NGOs have provided an increasingly salient conduit for religious responses to conflict and its root causes. In the case of organizations such as the Mennonite Central Committee,[33] this work is often low-profile, long-term, and different in many respects from the work of organizations operating out of a non-religious mandate.

While some scholars approach religion primarily as a means of countering religious extremism and supporting government-led peace processes, others have begun to highlight ways specifically religious teachings and practices can expand our understanding of what building peace entails. Not only do religious peace teachings add moral, ethical, and spiritual significance to the work of individuals and communities – sustaining people through difficult situations and resonating with individuals more deeply than strictly "secular" approaches – engaging religious traditions and making space for religious peacebuilding also helps expand the peacebuilding "toolbox."[34] In many respects, religious teachings, practices, and actors have led to innovations in how scholars and practitioners conceive of both the content and processes of peacebuilding. Table 1 (see below) provides an overview of diverse practices and methods that religion can add to peacemaking processes.

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[31] See Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 123-37.

[32] James Wuye and Muhammad Ashafa, "The Pastor and the Imam: The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria," in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren et al. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 226-32.

[33] Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000).

[34] Chadwick Alger, "Religion as a Peace Tool," in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David Smock (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002).

Table 1 : Some Practices of Religious Peacebuilding

• Prayer for peace • Preaching peace • Personal spiritual development/transformation • Interfaith dialogue (theological) • Interfaith dialogue (community based) • Joint study of scripture • Visits to another community's places of worship, "sharing the sacred" • Peace pilgrimage	• Faith-based social service and advocacy (peace, social justice, restorative justice, poverty alleviation) • Multifaith projects • Vigils, demonstrations • Direct nonviolent intervention/witness • Public repentance/apology • Symbolic gestures of atonement, reconciliation, or commemoration • Spiritually informed conflict resolution practice/training

Religious Contributions to PACS

The entire field of peace and conflict studies would be greatly impoverished without the contributions of religiously or spiritually motivated scholars. Gently scratch a peace scholar, and just below the surface you will frequently find a religious pacifist or a person who readily acknowledges spiritual interests and influences. A survey of some pioneers of peace studies illustrates this point. Among "first generation" peace researchers, Kenneth Boulding and Elise Boulding – an eclectic economist and a sociologist, respectively – were both Quakers, as was Adam Curle, a leading British peace scholar and founder of the peace studies program at Bradford University. Johan Galtung, perhaps the most prolific and well-traveled of peace researchers, was an iconoclastic Norwegian trained in mathematics and sociology. Though not conventionally religious – humanistic values and medical metaphors characterize his discourse – he repeatedly invokes Gandhi and manifests an interest in Buddhist psychology. John Paul Lederach, a highly influential innovator in cross-cultural peacebuilding practice, readily points to his Mennonite roots and overseas service experiences as sources of insight into

conflict and its peaceful transformation. Many more scholars credit religious worldviews as sources of vitality in their peace theorizing and conflict resolution practices.

Spirituality and Peace Leadership

Another provocative area for inquiry is spirituality and peace leadership. It would be fascinating to conduct large-scale studies on the various reasons individuals in different parts of the world become involved in grassroots peacebuilding activities. My hunch is that spiritual motivations would come up again and again, even where secularization has had a profound impact. Religious understandings of peace, it seems, can be profoundly healing in ways that other conceptions of peace are not. In one of my classes, I ask students to "draw peace" – to tap their internal vocabulary of images, and then see what comes up and reflect on where it came from. I suggest that, while many of our peace images are contemporary secular or commonsense constructs, others have religious roots and spiritual resonances. They have resonance because they connect with human needs in a profound way.

If we think of qualities that make for peace and peace leadership, we find additional spiritual resonances:

- Vision, creative imagination
- Discipline, transcendence of self
- Staying power, long-term motivation
- Wholeness
- Transformation
- Empathy
- Concern for the weakest and the poorest.[35]

Discussions of how these qualities relate to one another and can infuse peace practice are arguably essential for peace education programs. Insofar as they resonate with the spirituality of various world religions, religion would appear highly relevant to explorations of peace as a vocation – and to conversations about how students can foster their own personal peace processes.

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[35] For reflections on spiritual qualities and their relationship to peacefulness as a personal discipline, see Monika Helwig, *A Case for Peace in Reason and Faith* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 77-89.

Religion, Local Culture, and Peacebuilding Capacity Development

An additional area for study pertains to the growing recognition that peace needs roots in the values and traditions of a given locale if it is to be viable and sustainable. Attending to the role of lived religion "on the ground" and in people's lives can be vital if peacemaking efforts are to be genuinely empowering. Within highly religious cultural contexts, "peace with religion" provides far more adaptive and culturally appropriate responses than a purely secular approach to peacebuilding.

Significantly, religion never jumps straight from the pages of a holy text and into people's lives, as there is always at least some mediation by culture and tradition. The same religion can be inflected in different ways in different places, adding to the richness and variety of potential peacebuilding models. A detailed template for barnraising, for example, cannot be found in the Bible, and most North American Christians have never practiced it. Nonetheless, barnraising provides a powerful metaphor for the values of some Christian (and especially Anabaptist) communities, underscoring community, mutual aid, and brotherly love, among other principles. In the Middle East, traditional rituals of reconciliation similarly reflect scriptural principles of justice and forgiveness, while also expressing local cultural traditions.[36] In both cases, unique articulations of religion and culture provide reference points and resonant metaphors for tapping the wisdom of communities.

Community in Multi-Religious Societies

Multi-religious societies are by no means an historical novelty, yet current processes of globalization, mass migration, and digital communication are foregrounding issues of coexistence in new and challenging ways. World cultures are mixing at an unprecedented rate, and not always harmoniously. Insofar as violent clashes ultimately undermine the most sacred values of all communities and a homogeneous mass culture is generally regarded as undesirable, practical questions are increasing in salience: How can we

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[36] George E. Irani and Nathan C. Funk, "Rituals of Reconciliation: Arab-Islamic Perspectives," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20.2 (Fall 1998): 53-73; Elias Jabbour, *Sulha: Palestinian Traditional Peacemaking Process* (Montreat: House of Hope, 1996).

manage our differences with creativity and integrity, in a shrinking and increasingly "mixed-up" world? What sort of processes – within as well as between particular religious communities – are most conducive to coexistence within the same public spaces, schools, and neighborhoods? What different positions have specific religious communities taken on issues of pluralism and the expression of respect for "the other"? Where can we find positive models as we move forward into a highly consequential century for humanity as a whole? Can we identify sets of values that, while not representing any one religious community's complete moral vocabulary, nonetheless express meaningful principles that can be shared?

Religion and Global Ethics
When transposed to the global level, questions about diversity and community suggest a final topic, religion and global ethics. A number of years ago the theologian Hans Küng called for a global ethic.[37] Many religious leaders embraced his call; others did not.

Though some people focus the conversation about a global ethic on outcomes and master documents, there is a good case for stressing research and practical initiatives that emphasize process and sustained engagement with specific issues. Major forums such as the Parliament of the World's Religions have a role to play, but there are definite limits to what can be accomplished at vast, heterogeneous gatherings. There are, however, virtually unlimited opportunities for particular communities to convene specific dialogues – to keep vital issues on the table, positive religious voices involved in public debates, and lines of communication open. Perhaps there is a modest role for the Centre for the Study of Religion and Peace, newly set up at Conrad Grebel University College, in convening such dialogues – within the Mennonite constituency as well as within the larger Christian ecumenical and interreligious contexts – on some of the great issues of our time:

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[37] Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (London: SCM, 1993).

- Climate change and environmental degradation
- Global poverty
- Civil and international wars
- Ethno-religious and intercultural conflict
- Human security and human rights.

Conclusion: An Agenda for Research and Dialogue

The advent of religion as a significant topic in the peace and conflict studies field opens tremendous new opportunities not only to make the field more relevant to the world in which we all live but to make religious perspectives on peace more accessible to scholars, students, and peacebuilding practitioners. Given the longstanding public debates and anxieties surrounding religion, politics, and peace, developing the field further will require a delicate balancing act. Nonetheless, an inviting horizon for peace research has opened, with commensurate prospects for extending the range of peacebuilding practice.

Religious peacebuilding is not new – it is older than quarry work – but there are new ways of studying it and talking about it in the contemporary academy and in public forums. There is a distinct opportunity to move beyond stale dualities – hard religion versus hard secularism, for example – and to appreciate more profoundly how religious peace resources can transform lives, rendering peace not as a distant goal dependent on the decisions of statesmen and stateswomen but as a vitalizing, renewing, and sustainable dynamic that starts now, with personal and communal peace processes. Religious peacebuilding may not be the only game in town or the only story, but it is an important game and it is a crucial story, accessible to all who approach their work with the eyes and attitude of a cathedral builder.

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THE BENJAMIN EBY LECTURESHIP

Established at Conrad Grebel University College in the 1980s, the Benjamin Eby Lectureship offers faculty members an opportunity to share research and reflections with the broader College and University community. Benjamin Eby (1785-1853) was a leading shaper of Mennonite culture in Upper Canada from the 1830s on. He and his wife Mary arrived from Pennsylvania in 1807. By 1812 he was an ordained bishop, and by 1813 the first Mennonite meetinghouse in the Waterloo area had been erected. About 1815 Eby saw to the building of the first schoolhouse. He continued his outstanding leadership in the church and in education throughout his life, all while supporting himself as a farmer. A lover of books, Eby wrote two primers for public school children, compiled the *Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung*, a new hymnal for Mennonites in Ontario, and edited a volume of articles by Anabaptist and early Mennonite authors. The latter is noteworthy especially because it preserves in a ministers' manual the traditional worship practices of the (Old) Mennonite Church. The Lectureship honors Eby's belief that the motivation to learn is a response to the Christian gospel.