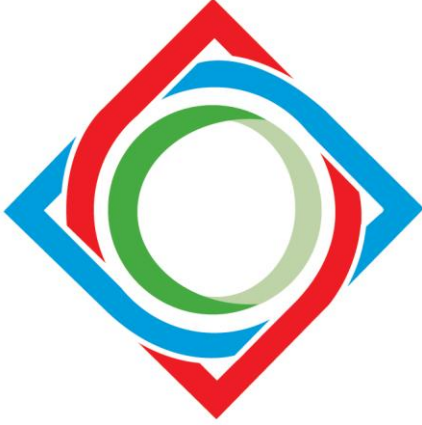


Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> Doha Interfaith Conference



**DICID**

مركز الدوحة الدولي لحوار الأديان  
Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue

***Key Theme: Raising the new generation with a  
foundation of values and tradition: Religious  
Perspectives  
October 19 - 21, 2010  
Doha-Qatar***

***Publications of Doha International Center for  
Interfaith Dialogue (DICID)  
1432 A.H./2011 A.D.***

## **In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**

Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue Message

Distinguished sheikhs, eminence, scientists, professors, researchers and students

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings, Asalamu Alikoum.

It is a pleasure to greet and welcome you all in Doha. I wish to thank you for your participation in our annual distinguished gathering which brings together the leaders of global communities, famous personalities, scholars, heads of the three divine religions, and those interested in issues of upholding the rich values of mankind, and the noble endeavor to strengthening peaceful coexistence among the inhabitants of the globe.

We are pleased to offer you these proceedings which contains the scientific papers and the sober researches which were presented during the "8th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue" that was held on October 26 to 28, 2010. The summaries of the proceedings are in both Arabic and English languages.

What differentiates the Doha annual interfaith dialogue is the variety of themes that touches our real lives. During the "7<sup>th</sup> Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue", held in the year (2009) we discussed an important topic, namely "Human Solidarity", where the participants presented their views on possible ways to support cooperation between the followers of different religions to reach a

human society based on equality and improvement of the lives of human society and the consolidation of religious principles that promote cooperation, unity and solidarity.

This year, 2010, the title selected for the conference "Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspective" brings interfaith dialogue in close proximity to education.

Through the conference sessions, we reviewed many of the issues that affect the upbringing of the children, the role of the family, and the effect of family life education and the impact of the breakdown of family on the religious and moral values of the youth. The participants discussed the role of educational, instructional and social institutions and media played in this matter. They focused on the role of the school and the importance of the curriculum to inculcate decent religious values, and update the educational system to build a religiously balanced global society.

The participants reviewed a number of successful experiences about the impact of media and modern communication technologies in the proper upbringing of the young generation.

Finally, participants discussed a number of papers that emphasized the role of worship places (mosques, churches and temples, etc.) and its effective role in the upbringing of the new generations and the consolidation of proper religious principles. A

number of young people shared their visions about the importance of interfaith dialogue in this era and the role of religions in the upbringing of the young generation.

The main role of “Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue” is to serve as a mean to influence a constructive dialogue between followers of different religions in order to improve the lives of human society, and the upbringing of generations to accept and respect others with building of the child’s personal etiquette. It also encourages the development of a religiously, culturally and socially balanced new generation that can cope with a world affected progressively by alien values, which negatively impact some communities.

I wish to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for the great value of efforts in participation made by the participants from inside and outside the State of Qatar during the sessions of this conference. In particular, I wish to thank His Excellency Dr. Ghaith Al kuwari, Minister of Endowment and Islamic Affairs at the State of Qatar. I wish to thank “The Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences” at The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by His Excellency Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Rumaihi, Chairman of the Committee and his assistant, Ambassador Abdullah Fakhro and the members of the committee for their outstanding work and continuous support to DICID in organizing this annual event. Also, I would like

to thank the members of the “Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies” at Qatar University and the Dean, Professor Aisha Al Mannai, for their support and constructive participation in this conference and all the previous conferences for interfaith dialogue. I express my deep gratitude to the Advisory Board of the Center, and my colleagues in the Board who shared their ideas and opinions continuously before and during the conference, and finally to the DICID team, who have worked tirelessly for long hours to prepare all materials and documents for this global gathering.

I hope that you enjoy reading the contents of the conference proceedings, which is undoubtedly rich with topics written by religious scholars from the three monotheistic religions. The booklet is an achievement due to the great efforts of the writers and it should be valuable to those interested in the dialogue between the followers of the three Abrahamic religions.

Allah Almighty says in the Quran “Do deeds! Allah will see your deeds, and so will His Messenger and the believers”.

**Prof. Ibrahim Saleh Al Naimi**

**President, Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue**

## **Contents**

### **I. Opening Session**

HE Mr. Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanim	10
Dr. Ibrahim Bin Saleh Al-Naimi	12
Dr. Tayseer Al-Tamimi	17
Professor A'isha Yusuf al-Mana'í	22
H.E. Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata	24

### **II. Subsequent proceedings of the conference**

<b>Family disintegration and weakening of Religious values of Children: The Effects of Religiosity on Marriages, Families, &amp; Children</b>	
Andreas G. Philaretou	29
<b>Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives</b>	
Carole Reich	37
<b>Role of schools in raising children and acceptance of the other</b>	
Dr. Armando Bernardini	44
<b>Visions of Religious scholars to the role of educational and social institutions in raising generation</b>	
Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Ph.D.	54
<b>Role of <i>Masaajid</i> and Other Islamic Religious Institutions in Promoting Just and Peaceful Co-existence</b>	
Jamal A. Badawi	62
<b>Children/youth's media between grooming and persuasion: religious vision</b>	
Kirsten Bystrup	70
<b>Influence of Family in Raising the Next Generation</b>	
Msgr. Matthew Hassan Kukah	76
<b>Maryam: An Icon for Catholic Jesuit Universities, the Philippines</b>	
Dr. Renata Oliveros	83

<b>Immigration, Encountering Modernity and Transmitting the Core Values of the Faith</b>	
Rabbi Bob Kaplan	92
<b>Building a Partnership of Compassion and Love between the Generations</b>	
Rabbi Soetendorp	101
<b>Media placement in building personality of a child and raising him/her religiously, culturally, and socially</b>	
Sanaa Petersen	105
<b>Religious upbringing and contemporary challenges in a globalised era</b>	
Revd Donald Reeves	114
<b>Teach your children well</b>	
Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky	125
<b>The Importance of School Curricula in Implanting Religious Values</b>	
David J. Michaels	133
<b>The Role of Religious Education in the Development of Society</b>	
Hegumen Philip Riabykh	142
<b>Religious contents in information flow and technology revolution: They chose the medium; let us choose messages</b>	
Joshua M. Z. Stanton	147
<b>Religious Teaching and its Influence on Liturgy or Worship for raising new generations</b>	
Dr. Jean-Pierre Lafouge	159
<b>Media placement in building personality of a child and raising him religiously, culturally, and socially</b>	
Nico Wattimena	170
<b>Bridging Differences at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School</b>	
Rabbi Anne Ebersman	181
<b>Worship leads to Devotion</b>	
Rabbi Shlomo KÖVES	188

<b>The social role of the Family</b>	
Richard G. Wilkins	194
<b>Protecting Children from the Harmful Effects of Media: A Survey of the Literature with Proposals for Action</b>	
Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development	211
<b>Role of educational, social and media institutions in raising the new generation</b>	
Fr Christophe Roucou	233
<b>Religious upbringing and contemporary challenges in the Globalized era</b>	
JUDr. Ivana Hrdlickova	241
<b>Places of Worship: supporting and influencing the new generation</b>	
Dr. John Taylor	244
<b>The influence of the family in raising the next generation</b>	
Oliver Leaman	251
<b>The Importance of School Curriculum in Implanting Religious Values</b>	
Prof. Dr. Abul Hasan M Sadeq	261
<b>Children’s Media between Grooming and Persuasion: Religious Vision in the Case of Korea</b>	
Jeong-Min Seo	268
<b>The family: the heart of raising and sustaining the new generation</b>	
Bishop Michael Lewis	278
<b>Transmitting the Religious Tradition and Values to the next generation: Challenges and opportunities for Houses of Worship in America</b>	
Rabbi José Rolando Matalon	282
Rabbi Marc Schneier	285
<b>Concluding Statement</b>	
Dr. Ibrahim Bin Saleh Al-Naimi	290
<b>III. DECLARATION OF THE CONFERENCE</b>	293
<b>IV. ABSTRACTS OF ARABIC ARTICLES (TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH)</b>	296

# **I. OPENING SESSION**

In the name of God, the beneficent the most merciful

**HE Mr. Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanim**

*The Minister of Justice, State of Qatar*

May the peace and blessings of the Almighty God be upon all his prophets and messengers.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may the peace and blessings of God be upon you.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to Doha – the city of dialogue - on behalf of the State of Qatar, the Emir, the government, and the people of Qatar.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Justice, which is also one of the attributes of the Almighty God, is the foundational basis upon which dialogue between followers of different religious traditions should be established.

As God says in the Qur'an:

“Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice.”

In light of this comprehensive vision of justice, we see that human beings across the earth adopt different approaches to achieve this goal. Thus, we all have specific duties and responsibilities to establish a common link and working relationship between all those involved on the basis of good conduct, and mutual respect which minimises negative impact.

There is no doubt that any dialogue which takes place within a religious framework is particularly sensitive. As men and women of law, we often see that Justice is perhaps the only idea or value which emanates from the individual's doctrine of rights in society.

Thus, Justice is God's balance on earth through which the rights of the weak are restored and the oppressed are liberated from their oppressors. God, in a tradition (hadith) in which he speaks through his Prophet (a hadith Qudsi) says:

“O my servants, I have forbidden oppression upon myself and made it forbidden upon you, so do not oppress one another.”

We here in the State of Qatar under the rightly guided leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir, certainly believe in these concepts and values. Qatar’s view of interreligious dialogue is based on the idea that dialogue means, first and foremost, positive encounters, communication, and knowing the ‘other’ (as he or she wishes to be known). Practical and realistic dialogue aims to establish and promote co-existence between people with dignity, justice, peace, and security.

We emphasize that the relationship between Muslims and followers of other religions should not be based on conflict and abuse, but on mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. We also believe that state laws should protect freedom of expression as long as it does not incite hatred towards others.

Excellencies, distinguished guests,

The agenda of this conference is very important: “The role of religions in the upbringing of young people”. The education of the individual, the betterment of his or her cultural and intellectual condition is the key issue and purpose of life. This should be reflected in the educational, social, and legal institutions of society.

We hope that the discussions which will be covered in all the sessions of the conference will contribute to the analytical study and examination of these specific issues.

I call upon you all, especially those who attended previous conferences, to look at the best ways in which the recommendations from both the previous and present conferences can be followed up and implemented if at all these conferences, meetings, and dialogues are to succeed in achieving their goals.

Finally, I am pleased to announce - in the name of God - the opening of the 8<sup>th</sup> Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue. I pray that it will prove to be a connecting link between a series of conferences through which the lofty goal to open the horizons of understanding, cooperation, peace and mutual respect across the globe will be achieved. May the peace, blessings, and God's mercy be upon you.

**In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.**

**Dr. Ibrahim Bin Saleh Al-Naimi**

*Chairman, Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, Qatar.*

May the peace and blessings of the Almighty God be upon all the Prophets and Messengers of God. Your Excellency, the Minister of Justice for the State of Qatar, Mr Hassan Ibn Abdullah Al-Ghanim, respected scholars, and honoured guests. I greet you with the greeting of peace: May the peace and blessing of the Almighty God be upon you!

Once again we meet after a year since our previous conference to discuss and debate yet another important theme which has direct bearing on the well-being of humanity and the preservation of its wealth; human wealth.

Welcome to you all respected participants to this annual event where we meet to listen, analyse, and investigate the future of the young generation, its direction, and our role as religious scholars, academics, and those charged with the education of the youth.

The theme of our conference this year, “The Role of Religions in the Upbringing of the young generation”, did not come about in a vacuum. All of us are well aware of the extent and level to which children are exposed to trends, cultures, and ideas, both beneficial and harmful. Thus, we have done our best at the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue in presenting this topic to experts, religious scholars, educationists, and specialists from the three Abrahamic religious traditions inviting them to share their thoughts and ideas with regard to the impact of different factors and actors in the upbringing of the youth.

We have selected four themes which we believe are major factors in shaping today’s youth.

The first session: “The role of the family in the upbringing of the young generation from a religious perspective.” We believe that the family, under the guidance and leadership of the two parents, constitute the primary and major influence on a child. There can be nothing better in this era than for a child to grow up with a sense of pride in his or her

cultural identity while also at the same time tolerant with and respectful to other communities.

As Qur'an 17:23 states:

Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him,  
and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or  
both of them attain old age with thee, say not "Fie" unto  
them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious  
word.

Thus, the kind of education and upbringing provided by parents, when they do a good job, is unparalleled.

The Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace) is reported to have said:

"Behold! Each one of you is a shepherd, and each one of you is responsible for his [or her] flock."

We then decided that the theme for the second session be, "The role of the school in the upbringing of the child and in the child's acceptance of the 'other'." We try to examine and assess the role of educational institutions (schools, colleges, and universities) in cultivating and instilling noble moral values and ethics in young people. In other words, do the educational institutions consider it their primary role and responsibility to instill such moral and ethical values in children or do they simply see it as a secondary task while they would rather focus on imparting the vocational skills and specialist training.

The third session, and for me perhaps the most important topic of the time, focuses on: "The impact of audio-visual media as well as textual media on the upbringing of young people." The impact of social media like Facebook, Twitter, internet blogs, and YouTube in shaping the cultures of young people is clear and obvious for everyone. Questions can therefore be asked whether such new forms of media and communication promote the value systems and belief upon which young people are brought up or whether they undermine such values. What is the exact impact of them on this generation?

The fourth session discusses "The role of places of worship, mosques, churches and synagogues in cultivating and instilling religious values" in the minds of young people.

Do religious institutions continue to play this role as they did in the past? All messengers of God (upon whom be peace) gave us messages which we are duty bound to preserve and carefully transmit to future generations while protecting the messages' core teachings on decent moral values, compassion, and good conduct.

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen:

The mission of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue which was established in 2007, is to work and strive towards promoting constructive dialogue among followers of different religions in order to establish a better understanding of each religion's basic principles and teachings which can be harnessed in the service of humanity on the basis of mutual respect and recognition of differences, in cooperation with individuals and relevant institutions. We have made relentless efforts over the past years to play a significant and effective role in this area.

This work would not be possible was it not for the "Board of Directors" and its meticulous approach in choosing and deciding on the important themes and topics for global conferences such as this one which mobilise and bring together many scholars from the three monotheistic religions: Muslim, Christian and Jewish. Similarly, the "International Advisory Board" of the centre has always played a pivotal role in selecting speakers and participants.

The great enthusiasm demonstrated by the State of Qatar under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir and his Crown Prince, to support and provide patronage to all forums and projects that aim at establishing interfaith dialogue and an alliance of civilizations is conclusive evidence that the State of Qatar has always and continues to lead and pave the way for openness between all cultures and religions of the world, and to do all that is humanly possible to establish a world that is based on security, stability, and dignified and honorable life for all who live in it.

The center has set its sights on presenting conferences, seminars and round table discussions, student excursions and through the Scientific Journal. Through and along with all these methods, we also work towards promoting a culture of peaceful

coexistence and dialogue with others to reach the ultimate goal of a decent life for all human beings. The Qur'an 17:70 declares:

“Verily we have honoured the Children of Adam.”

We will therefore be holding a seminar immediately after this conference with various sections of the local Indian community in Qatar in conjunction with the Center for Cultural Friends, under the title: “From familiarity to convergence.”

At the end of this month we shall be holding a seminar in the Arab Republic of Egypt with the Program for Civilization Studies and Dialogue of Cultures at University of Cairo on “The role of women in dialogue.” We expect leading specialists and experts on interreligious, civilisational, and cultural dialogue to take part in the seminar.

Respected guests and audience,

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister HE Sheikh / Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani for his continued support for the “Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue.” My sincere gratitude also goes to the Committee on Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by HE Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Rumaihi, Assistant Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Organization of Conferences, and his assistant, Ambassador Abdullah Fakhro and all the staff committee and my colleagues and my brothers and sisters, members of the Board of Directors at “Doha International Center for interfaith Dialogue” and the center’s administration and all the volunteers. I extend my sincere thanks to them for all for the hard work they have always done and continue to do in organising and preparing the conference in the form that you see before you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is our hope that we will come out of this conference with a set of ideas, proposals, and recommendations which can be submitted to the responsible and specialist authorities or bodies in order for us to have and leave practical and significant impact on human progress.

Last but not least, I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to you, our dear guests visiting from outside of Qatar, for all the trouble you went through in your

journey and for accepting our invitation to contribute to and take part in our work. I wish you all a pleasant stay in the city of Doha: “The Doha of Love and Peace”. Kindly accept our sincere thanks, and may the peace and blessing of God be upon you all.

**In the name of God the Beneficent, the most Merciful**  
**Dr. Tayseer Al-Tamimi**

All praise is due to Allah, and may His peace and blessings be upon His Messengers, our master Muhammad and his family, his companions, and those who sincerely follow him until the Day of Judgement, as I pray and greet the other prophets and messengers.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you all.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the State of Qatar which has welcomed and embraced the idea and need for a dialogue between members of the different religious traditions, and to the Doha Centre for Interfaith Dialogue represented by its Chairman, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Naimi and sister Nadia Al-Ashqar who have organised this conference for their kind invitation to us to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue and for taking part in it, and also for the great hospitality and excellent reception we have all received.

Respected guests:

Dialogue is a human necessity which is central to the pursuit of happiness, security, and stability among people of different races, cultures, and religious beliefs. As the Almighty God says:

O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware (Qur'an 49: 13)

This divine call for people to “know one another” cannot be achieved without dialogue and the free exchange of knowledge, ideas, information, and experiences between people in order to achieve true happiness and progress, and in order to have a concerted response to humanitarian crises, wars, poverty, famine, and other issues. Thus, dialogue is the best and only way to resolve disputes and other challenges facing the world today because the alternative to dialogue is violence, bloodshed, and war and disaster in the world.

It is for this reason that I should, right at the outset, express my admiration for the State of Qatar which has given the issue of dialogue the special attention and importance it

rightly deserves and has always worked tirelessly to resolve conflicts and facilitate reconciliation in different parts of the region. I would like to register here and mention in particular the hard work done so far under the most able leadership of the Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in resolving conflict and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation in many countries including Lebanon, Sudan, Palestine and others.

The Quran has always stressed that true cooperation is achieved through a form of dialogue whose aim is to build relationships in a way that respects the ‘otherness’, religious pluralism, and accommodates and respects dissenting voices and opinions.

This year’s theme for the 8th Doha conference which focuses on “The role of religions in the upbringing of young people” is one of the most important topics addressed by this conference. Religion is a solid foundational basis for the consolidation of the values which can reform and shape our world. This can be achieved by disseminating such noble values through sound education and upbringing. Education plays a pivotal role and function in the pursuit of human happiness by cultivating religious and moral values, and by facilitating relations between individuals, groups, and nations in order to achieve peace, stability, progress, and in order to promote the language of dialogue, tolerance, peace while also preventing bloodshed and wars. The Almighty God states:

Let them worship the Lord of this House, He who fed them from hunger and gave them security from fear. (Quraysh 3 – 4)

In order for us to achieve this, the conference should come out with proposals and recommendation which suggest ways to improve religious education so that it can be effective in building bridges between peoples and followers of different religious traditions. The proposals should also suggest ways of strengthening family ties and of protecting families from breaking down since this is the cause of social and moral problems among the young. Thus, the family plays a very important role in the life of young people in every period. It facilitates and provides for them the basic needs, security, and sound education which shape their identities, build their self-confidence,

and guide them towards religious values which in turn improves and broadens their intellectual, cultural and scientific worldviews.

In order for this to succeed, the educational institutions and the media must support and compliment the role of the family in upbringing young people. This is particularly important since modern advancement in communication, the proliferation of satellite channels, and Internet sites are now playing a very big role in shaping the identities of children while also exposing them to ideas and values which are far removed from religious and moral values. This presents the greatest challenge and danger to the social fabric of all peoples anywhere in the world.

In conclusion, please allow me, as someone who is coming from Jerusalem, to convey to this conference, which includes the elite of the followers of different religions, a message from Jerusalem; the land of prophets and the cradle of civilizations, the city of peace that lacks peace:

\*Interreligious dialogue faces its greatest challenge in addressing the problems that Jerusalem faces, and its historical and religious position in human life. The success of this dialogue is central and directly linked to the preservation of its status. If we overlook and ignore how the occupation has and continues to violate all religious and moral values this will undermine the whole notion and concept of interreligious dialogue between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The occupation is violating the teachings of all divine religions, international treaties and conventions by attacking Palestinian human rights. For example, we are being deprived of our right to freedom of worship by being prevented from entering Jerusalem to pray at Al Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Resurrection. Even Jerusalemites have not been immune and free from such violations since the occupation authorities are restricting the ages of people allowed to pray. Children and young people are not allowed to pray. This is happening as we (here at the conference) discuss the role of religions in the upbringing of young people.

\*There is a whole generation of the Palestinian people who have never been to and do not know Jerusalem except via television screens. The Israeli occupation has completely isolated them by building a racist Apartheid wall from the east, south, north, with military

checkpoints at every entrance. The situation is now such that it is easier for a Palestinian Muslim and Christian to travel to Mecca or the Vatican than it is to walk to and from Jerusalem.

\* Moreover, there has also been a radical process of the Judaization and effacement of all historical traces of Arab Christian and Islamic cultural heritage from the Holy City by demolishing historic buildings, archaeological sites, and building synagogues on a large scale while also seizing houses from Palestinian families and giving them to foreigners, demolition of thousands of houses in order to confiscate land for the establishment of settlements, preventing Palestinians the right to build accommodations, this, in order to further restrict their movement and freedom, displacing them, withdrawing identities, using poverty and hunger as a weapon by preventing Palestinians from working and imposing heavy taxes on them. The Judaization of Jerusalem has also been done by imposing an educational curriculum which does not reflect the values and culture of Arab children (whether Muslim or Christian). Instead they are being encouraged to engage in drug trafficking and drug abuse.

**\* Israeli plans for Judaizing Jerusalem, as ratified by the Government of Israel and as it is implemented:**

1. Draft 2020, which seeks to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem to include all the settlement blocs around an area of more than a hundred square kilometres and to expand the population of settlers by 2020 to a million settlers so that Arabs are a minority of not more than ten percent of its population.

2. Plan for “Jerusalem First” which was ratified by the Israeli government, and began its implementation through the establishment of projects in the Old City of Jerusalem (the Holy Basin) to efface its Arab Islamic and Christian sites by destroying historical buildings and stealing their artefacts, and constructing synagogues on a large scale in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the continuation of the excavations under its foundations in order to pave the way for its final destruction. The biggest proof of this can be seen in the courtyards and pillars which are collapsing and falling apart. The Judaization of the Al-Buraq wall and Salwan on the South of Al Aqsa Mosque is at the

expense of civilization and the human heritage of Arab and Muslim Jerusalem which is being converted into a Jewish city.

May the peace and blessings of God be upon you all.

**In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**

**Professor A'isha Yusuf al-Mana'i**

*Dean of the Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies*

*University of Qatar*

May the peace and blessings of the Almighty God be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his brothers; all the other Prophets and Messengers of God.

Your Excellency, the Minister of Justice for the State of Qatar, Mr Hassan Ibn Abdullah Al-Ghanim.

The Most Honorable former Chief Justice of Palestine, Sheikh Dr Taysir Al-Tamimi.

The Most Reverend Father Pier Luigi Chilata, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the President of Bishops at the Vatican.

Your excellency, Rabbi Herschel Gluck.

Ladies and gentleman:

Excellencies, Royal Highnesses, respected representatives, government ministers, ambassadors, guests of Qatar, and honoured guests. May the peace and blessings of the Almighty God be upon you all.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to this auspicious gathering. I hope and pray that the Almighty God shall shower down his infinite mercy upon this gathering, and protect it under the shelter or peace, and that the discussions will be based on justice and objective analysis with respect to others' perspective and position.

People who subscribe to religious traditions have always been conscious of the importance of religion in the protection and preservation of both spiritual and human values in all categories and stages of the individual's life. When childhood and adolescence set in – the stage in which an individual is shaped by his education and upbringing – a person will always acts and behaves in accordance with how he was brought up or educated.

Thus, it is here that we agree with and affirm what all religious traditions as well as the United Nations Convention on the rights of the children and the youth have established that it is a fundamental right to bring up children and younger generations on moral and ethical values, and to educate them to respect religion which has the capacity to remove selfish individualism from a person while instilling a great sense of care for and acceptance of others and those different from him. A person is then able to empathize with them, collaborate with them, feel that he and them are brothers and sisters in humanity, and that their creator and God is one as stated by the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him:

O mankind! Your Lord is one, your father is one, you are all descendents from Adam and Adam was created from clay, the most honourable among you is the one who is most conscious of God!

It is for these reasons that all religious traditions have placed great emphasis and importance on the social upbringing of child starting with the family, nursery, and school. Similarly, perspectives on and approaches to education curricula can no longer overlook the need for a culture of dialogue, education on human rights, .. the respect for religious beliefs of others, prophets, and sacred places as well as icons of others, and the need not to insult or offend other people's religious beliefs.

Each of these concerns and issues form part of the main aims and objectives behind the 8<sup>th</sup> Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. We do hope that we will have a meaningful and constructive debate.

Welcome to you once again, and welcome to join in the discussions!

**H.E. Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata**

*Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*  
*Vatican City*

Your Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

At the very outset, I would like to thank the Chairman of Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, Prof. Ibrahim Saleh al-Naimi for his courteous invitation to take part in this Conference, where I have the honour of representing the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the central body of the Catholic Church for relations with believers of other religions.

The theme of this Conference is of great importance for the entire society. As a matter of fact, we are witnessing today, an erosion of values that constitute the very fabric of any society and are truer sources of its vitality. Religions, with their specific educational capacity can make a significant contribution towards assisting the new generations to know and to make a choice of values that will render the individuals and the entire community more human.

The inalienable right to education as well as the corresponding duty to educate are enriched by faith in God because it offers motives that affect moral consciousness giving profound meaning and special strength to the engagement of those who are involved in the educational process.

The first and the most responsible persons for moulding their children are parents. Through the testimony of their love for God and charity for all human beings, they accompany them, in a unique way, towards full maturity.

Undoubtedly, adequate education requires the contribution of the whole society. It is the duty of the State, first of all, to provide suitable educational means directed to achieve the “common good” and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

At the same time, let us not forget the valuable work carried out by non-Governmental organizations of different natures - cultural, religious, humanitarian, etc., - which may be effective in promoting important values.

Religious institutions also are responsible for formation both when offering a training specifically religious, and, particularly so when they offer suitable educational opportunities for the integral development of young people and for the good of the society. To this end, the school remains a privileged means, but in no way the only one. In fact, the specific educational work of religious institutions takes place, in many ways: I think of the sermons and homilies in places of worship; publications and courses with religious-educational character; interventions on the media; the work of counselling etc. As regards the Catholic Church, she is conscious – as is evident from her long history - of her rights and duty to contribute towards the integral formation of her children so that their lives may be penetrated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, she offers her services to all people to promote their integral development, for a more humane world.

In the context of the young, we must keep in mind that an educational process that truly responds to their needs, must take into account the socio-cultural realities of today that they are influenced by and from where they draw ideas and behaviour patterns. I deem it sufficient to point out here only some phenomena characterizing this reality: individualism, relativism, materialism, consumerism, hedonism, technicality, recourse to violence etc.

Some of these trends are related to fundamental existential option through which human beings either open themselves up to the presence of God in their lives or shut themselves off.

The spread of these trends goes hand in hand with the growing phenomenon of secularism, in the sense of prejudicial exclusion of reference to God or even any kind of openness to the Transcendent.

Cultural operators and those responsible for the society have started to realize that, in the absence of reference to God, people become devoid of a solid ethical foundation for their

living together. It is also to be noted that new attention is being paid to the religious dimension both in the life of individuals and of the society. There are also civil initiatives aimed at giving space to religions so as to attain certain positive goals such as strengthening the social-ethical behaviour, affirmation of the rule of law, commitment to justice and solidarity, overcoming corruption, combating of terrorism, etc.

Religious institutions can definitely contribute to these goals. Their services, however, will be all the more effective if they can function in due autonomy.

The teaching of religions, especially to young people, cannot neglect the importance of human reason because it is precisely this faculty that gives human beings a sound basis for accepting the gift of faith. Moreover, it is reason that can safeguard the religious experience from an excessive psychological and emotional influence, as well as from the temptation of fundamentalism and violence. Faith and reason are two gifts, from the one and the same God, that are required to interact in the educational process of young generations. We must therefore not be afraid of the criticism by the youth; instead, we should encourage them so that, with the help of reason, they address their doubts while considering the call of the faith seriously.

Similarly, with regard to freedom, so longed for by young people, we must not be apprehensive about it, but rather should respect it with sincerity and, through proper education, help them discover the truest meaning of freedom as a means towards responsible choices for truth and for personal and common good.

Lack of respect, theoretical or practical, to the freedom of each individual in adhering to the call of the religion, to the change of his or her religious choice or not to embrace any religion, would only contradict the very nature of true faith and also any genuine educational work.

Bearing in mind the realities of the contemporary world, I would like to mention here some faith based human values offered by religious education in the light of the teaching of the Catholic Church, like: the sacred character of human life; the inalienable dignity of every human being; the vocation of every person to search and to follow the truth; justice; universal brotherhood and solidarity; forgiveness and reconciliation; peace.

Our different religious traditions are called upon to take up the challenge and to draw light and strength from their specific heritage to help young people act responsibly in the society with all their potentiality.

In this context, it is worth recalling what Pope Benedict XVI noted as ‘emergency in education’. He said: “it is an urgency that stems from attentive and loving care for the expectations of the new generations and the duty to those who are called by God, through their faith, to offer, with their testimony, a credible proposal of mankind based on authentic values” (*Address to the diocese and the city of Rome, January 21, 2008*).

Looking at the youth today and our shared future with them, the educational commitment in their favour strengthens our courage to look forward with sure hope.

## **II. SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE**

# **Family disintegration and weakening of Religious values of Children: The Effects of Religiosity on Marriages, Families, & Children**

**Andreas G. Philaretou**

*European University Cyprus*

*Nicosia, Cyprus*

*[aphilare@hotmail.com](mailto:aphilare@hotmail.com) or [A.Philaretou@euc.ac.cy](mailto:A.Philaretou@euc.ac.cy)*

*This exploratory literature review study attempts to investigate the micro level effects of religiosity on interpersonal, intrapersonal, and familial relationships. Religiosity is hereby defined in terms of church attendance, prayer, and, most of all, the degree of internalizing the socialized expectations of fellow parishioners from an individual's or family's congregation. Various research findings point to the enduring positive effects of religiosity in buffering individual spouses and children against the deleterious effects of crime and delinquency, addictions, family violence and abuse, sexual promiscuity, etc. In addition, family members who lead an active religious lifestyle tend to enjoy higher levels of marital stability and well being compared to those who don't. On a macro societal and cultural level, religiosity tends to prove beneficial to the functional operation of various institutions, mainly those of the family, through lower divorce and illegitimacy rates, as well as the judicial system, through lower crime and delinquency rates.*

**Key Words:** Religiosity, Family, Crime, Well Being, Illegitimacy, Social Support

## **Introduction**

There has been a relatively recent increased interest in the effects of religion on families (Dollahite, Marks, & Goddman, 2004; Jenkins, 1991; Thomas, & Cornwall, 1990; Thornton, 1985). The topic of religion and families has generated academic interest from various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, religious studies, family studies, social work, child development, medicine, etc. Religious oriented family research examines such topics as fertility, dating, mate selection, religious intermarriage, and child rearing practices (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson, & Klein, 2005).

The strength of the family unit is intertwined with the practice of religion. Religious individuals are more likely to be married, less likely to be divorced or single, and more

likely to be satisfied in their marriage. In fact, religiosity is consistently found to be the most important predictor of marital stability and happiness. Religious belief and practice contribute substantially to the formation of personal moral criteria and sound moral judgment, such that regular religious practice preventing individuals against a host of social problems, including suicide, drug abuse, out-of-wedlock births, crime, and divorce. The benefits of leading a religious lifestyle also include promoting beneficial effects on mental health in terms of less depressive symptomatology, higher self-esteem, and greater family and marital happiness. Moreover, in ameliorating the negative impact of alcoholism, drug addiction, and marital breakdown, strong religious belief and practice are a major source of psychological and emotional support, strength, and recovery. In addition, regular practice of religion is good for personal physical health in that it increases longevity, improves one's chances of recovery from chronic and debilitating illnesses, and lessens the incidence of many acute killer diseases. The overall impact of religious practice is illustrated dramatically in the three most comprehensive systematic reviews of the field. Some 81 percent of the studies showed the positive benefit of religious practice, 15 percent showed neutral effects, and only 4 percent showed harm. Religious practice appears to have enormous potential for addressing today's social problems. Some religious influences have a modest impact whereas others tend to have a considerable influence. Considerable evidence exists indicating that religious involvement reduces such problems as sexual permissiveness, teen pregnancy, suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism, and to some extent deviant and delinquent acts, and, on the contrary, increases self esteem, family cohesiveness, and general well being. More generally, social scientists are discovering the continuing power of religion to protect the family from the forces that would tear it down.

### **Religion and Happiness**

The practice of religion has a significant effect on happiness and an overall sense of personal well-being. Religious affiliation and regular religious attendance are near the top of the list for most people in explaining their own happiness and serve as good predictors of who is most likely to enjoy a high sense of well-being and lower psychological

distress. Those pursuing a personal relationship with God tend to have improved intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

A large epidemiological study conducted by the University of California at Berkeley in 1971 found that religious commitment played a significant role in lowering psychological distress. Stark (1971) also found a similar result primarily that religious attendance had a buffering effect on personal adversities. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of 720 adults conducted by Williams (1990), regular religious attendance was found to significantly lower psychological distress.

religion and family well being

There is a growing consensus that individuals from different religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds need revert to traditional values and to this end, various governments and organizations need to implement policies aimed at re-strengthening the family thereby bringing about family stability and well being. All family members, young and old alike, are in constant search for meaning and love in their lives both earthly and divine. As Darwin and Gwendolyn point out:

Research on love clearly indicates that for many, love in the social realm cannot clearly be separated from love that contains a vertical or a divine element.... Young people see love as the central aspect of the meaning of life; they believe that religion is still important in helping form judgments and attitudes.

Family and religious institutions need to be studied simultaneously in our efforts to understand the human condition better.

Couples in stable and relatively happy and satisfied long-term marital unions indicate that the practice of religion is an important factor in marital well being. Larson, Larson, & Gartner (1990) research indicates a strong correlation between church attendance and marital stability. Oddly enough, a number of studies conducted in the past two decades showed that very religious wives tend to experience greater sexual satisfaction due primarily to the positive effect of religion on spirituality and the latter on sexual well being (Billy, Tanfer, Grady, & Klepinger, 1993; Michael, Gagnon, Lauman, & Kolata, 1995; Shrum, 1980).

Regular church attendance tends to play a significant role in marital stability and low chances of divorce and this effect tends to hold well across all religious denominations and faiths. Furthermore, when marital partners separate, reconciliation rates tend to be higher among highly religious couples. Conversely, a 1993 national survey of 3,300 men aged 20-39 found that male spouses of low religiosity tend to change marital and relational partners the most (Larson, 1985).

Regarding cohabitation before marriage—a far less common phenomenon among individuals of high religiosity—it has been supported by various studies that such phenomenon tends to lower marital stability for those cohabiting couples who choose to marry later on. This is especially applicable to couples who cohabite for long periods and not as a means to an end, that is, as a way to test their compatibility on an everyday basis before marriage but rather as an end in itself (Thorton, Axxinn, & Hill, 1992). As Carlson (1988) points out: “Social scientists are discovering the continuing power of religion to protect the family from the forces that would tear it down” (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1989). Overall, a stable married family life can potentially shield family members from such problems as addictions, criminal activities, illegitimacy, etc. A stable family life tends also to be closely associated with an active religious life thereby rendering the peace and prosperity of any society or culture on promoting and renewing existing religious practices and beliefs (Comstock, & Partridge, 1972).

religion, SOCial support, and Social Breakdown

Religiosity, through its positive effect on social support, tends to bear beneficial outcomes on social relations by reducing illegitimacy, crime and delinquency, welfare dependency, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, generalized addictive and depressive symptomatology, and by improving self-image, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. For instance, there exists a strong correlation between religiosity and adolescent virginity, sexual restraint and control, and low frequency of out-of-wedlock births (Beck, Cole, & Hammond, 1991). In their study, Miller, Higginson, McCoy and Olson (1987) found that a significant contributing factor to problematic adolescent sexual behaviors and attitudes is—in addition to the presence of dysfunctional family dynamics and processes—also the absence of a strong religious ethic among family members. The researchers further noted

that the presence of healthy family dynamics and practices are positively correlated to the presence a strong religious ethic in the family (Miller, Higginson, McCoy, & Olson, 1987).

Research on the relationship between crime and religion shows a reciprocal effect. Various studies had shown that religious involvement significantly decreased drug use, delinquency, premarital sex, and, instead, increased self-control. In addition, youths from strong religious backgrounds were found in a number of studies to be less likely to use or sell drugs, gamble, or vandalize public property. Furthermore, the buffering effect of religion on juvenile delinquency also applies for adults (Cochran, 1989; Lester, 1987; Rohrbaugh, & Jessor, 1975).

#### Some Concluding Remarks

Overall, religious content, meaning, and behaviors tend to be very important in defining family role identities, relationships, and behaviors. Religious doctrines and scriptural teachings provide guidance regarding the appropriate attitudes and behaviors associated with healthy and functional family roles. Religious values affirm and validate positive norms and role models both of which are of paramount importance in preventing juvenile delinquency. As Ellison (1997) points out, scriptural teachings provide important social and moral norms and behavioral role models for family role identities (e.g., father, adult child). At the same time, the successful enactment of family roles and relationships is associated with the attainment of highly valued spiritual qualities and moral characteristics. On the other hand though, spiritual materials also provide warnings and sanctions about the negative consequences of family conflict and of neglecting family duties and responsibilities, as well as of unrestraint individual involvement in hedonistic behaviors (Bengtson, et. al., 2005).

Finally, it should be noted that the power of prayer as a personal and interpersonal healing tool is widely recognized as the most significant religious coping behavior. Prayer, being a complex process, involves a range of orientations, motivations, expectations, and positive outcomes, such as reductions in worry and anxiety, promotion of personal and spiritual growth, forgiveness, threat and stress reappraisals, and stress

reduction from life crises and personal hassles (Ellison & Taylor, 1996; Krause, Chatters, Meltzer, & Morgan, 2000; Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004).

## **Bibliography**

- Bengtson, V.L., Acock, A.C., Allen, K.R., Dilworth-Anderson, P., & Klein, D.M., (2005). *Sourcebook of family theory and research*, (Eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Beck, S.H., Cole, B.S., & Hammond, J.A., (1991). Religious heritage and premarital sex: Evidence from a national sample of young adults. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30:2, 173-180.
- Billy, J.O., Tanfer, K., Grady, W.R. & Klepinger, D.H. (1993). The sexual behavior of men in the United States. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 25, 52-60.
- Bumpass, L.L., Sweet, J.A., & Cherlin, A. (1989). *The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage*. NSFH Working Paper No. 5, Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin.
- Carlson, A.C. (1988). Religion and the family: The troubled and enduring bond. *The Family in America*, 2, p. 7.
- Cochran, J.K., (1989). Another look at delinquency and religiosity. *Sociological Spectrum*, 9:2, 147-162.
- Comstock, G.W., & Partridge, K.B. (1972). Church attendance and health. *Journal of Chronic Disease*, 25, pp. 665-672.
- Darwin, L.T., & Gwendolyn, C.H. (1985). The religion and family connection: Increasing dialogue in the social sciences. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 369-370.
- Dollahite, D.C., Marks, L.D., & Goodman, M.A., (2004). Families and religious beliefs, practices, and communities: Linkages in a diverse and dynamic cultural context. In M. Coleman & L.H. Ganong (Eds.), *Handbook of contemporary families: Considering the past, contemplating the future* (pp. 411-431). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellison, C.G. (1997). Religious involvement and the subjective quality of family life among African Americans. In R.J. Taylor, J.S. Jackson, & L.M. Chatters (Eds.), *Family life in Black America* (pp. 117-131). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Ellison, C.G., & Taylor, R.J., (1996). Turning to prayer: Religious coping among Black Americans. *Review of Religious Research*, 38, 111-131.
- Jenkins, K.W., (1991). Religion and families. In S.J. Bahr (Ed.), *Family research: A sixty-year review 1930-1990* (Vol. 1, pp. 235-288). Lexington, MA: Lexington.
- Krause, N., Chatters, L.M., Meltzer, T., & Morgan D.L., (2000). Using focus groups to explore the nature of prayer in late life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 14, 191-212.
- Larson, D.B. (1985). Religious involvement. In G.E. Rekers Ed., *Family Building*, pp. 121-147. Ventura, CA: Regal.
- Larson, D.B., Larson, S.S., & Gartner, J. (1990). Families, relationships, and health. In Danny Wedding Ed, *Behavior and Medicine*, pp. 135-147. Baltimore: Mosby Year Book Inc.
- Lester, D., (1987). Religiosity and personal violence: A regional analysis of suicide and homicide rates. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 127:6, 685-686.
- Miller, B.C., Higginson, R.J. McCoy, K., & Olson, T.D., (1987). Family configuration and adolescent sexual attitudes and behavior. *Population and Environment*, 9, 111-123.
- Michael, R.T., Gagnon, J.H., Laumann, E.O., & Kolata, G. (1995). *Sex in America: A definitive survey*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Rohrbaugh, J., & Jessor, R., (1975). Religiosity in youth: A personal control against deviant behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 43:1, 136-155.
- Shrum, W. (1980). Religion and marital instability: Change in the 1970s? *Review of Religious Research*, 21, 135-147.
- Stark, R. (1971). Psychopathology and religious commitment. *Review of Religious Research*, 12, 165-176.
- Taylor, R.J., Chatters, L.M., & Levin, J.S., (2004). *Religion in the lives of African Americans: Social, psychological, and health perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, D.L., & Cornwall, M., (1990). Religion and family in the 1980s: Discovery and development. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 983-992.
- Thornton, A. (1985). Reciprocal influences of family and religion in a changing world. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 381-394.

Thorton, A., Axxinn, W., & Hill, D. (1992). Reciprocal effects of religiosity, cohabitation, and marriage. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98, 628-651.

Williams, R.W., Larson, D.B., Buckler, R.E., Heckman, R.C., & Pyle, C.M., (1991). Religion and psychological distress in a community sample. *Social Science Medicine*, 32, 1257-1262.

# **Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives**

## **Carole Reich**

*Coordinator “Antidiscrimination Campaign”*

*“Teaching remembrance of the Holocaust” Manager*

*In charge of the “2010 Exchange on the religious dimension of the intercultural dialogue”*

*Tel: +33 3 88 41 22 45*

*E-mail: [carole.reich@coe.int](mailto:carole.reich@coe.int)*

*In 2008, the Council of Europe took four main initiatives in the area of intercultural dialogue:*

- 1. Adoption of the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue", a compilation of standards for the management of cultural and religious diversity which also provides new answers to the questions causing unease in an increasingly multicultural Europe.*
- 2. Launch of the "Speak out against Discrimination" campaign, based on the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" and pursuing three interdependent objectives: training media professionals; writing, seeing and hearing diversity in the media; and producing and disseminating information through the media.*
- 3. The Recommendation to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.*
- 4. The introduction of annual exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.*

It is a great honour for me to represent the Council of Europe here today at this 8th Annual Conference of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue.

The conference theme, “Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives”, struck a particular chord with the Council of Europe, which has placed intercultural dialogue, including its religious aspects, at the heart of its

concerns and its work on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which are the Council of Europe's fundamental values.

2008 was an especially rich and productive year for the Council of Europe in the area of intercultural dialogue. It took four main steps in this field:

The first was the adoption by the Committee of Ministers, the Organisation's highest authority, of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The sub-title of this document – "Living Together as Equals in Dignity" – sums up in a few words the idea of a peaceable democratic society in pursuance of which the Council of Europe offers its sixty years of experience, expertise and exchange.

The White Paper sets out standards for the management of cultural and religious diversity and describes how our governance bodies, our education and youth policies and our policies on social and cultural affairs, civil society, religious communities and the media might provide new answers to the questions that are being raised by an increasingly multicultural Europe.

The White Paper has become a kind of bestseller as it already exists in 15 language versions including Arabic and Hebrew, which is very symbolic. The main keys to establishing a dialogue are to understand one another then to understand what we are talking about.

The second step in 2008 was the launch of the "Speak Out Against Discrimination" Campaign, of which I am the co-ordinator and which has been running in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe for the last two years. The campaign draws its mandate from the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and its distinctive nature from the target group it addresses, namely media professionals, with the aim of combating discrimination and fostering intercultural dialogue.

The main aim of the Campaign is to work with, for and through media professionals, with the Council of Europe chiefly acting as a facilitator in this process. It was conceived of, and is run, as a genuine partnership with the journalists and media organisations of the 47 Council of Europe member states, and it supports the media sector's own efforts to play a constructive role in an increasingly multicultural environment.

“Fighting discrimination is a collective responsibility but it is also down to individuals”. This is the message of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The broad consultation which preceded the preparation of this document endorsed the firm belief that the media has a decisive role to play in combating discrimination and fostering intercultural dialogue, as they are directly involved in keeping the public informed and forming public opinion.

While fully respecting the independence and autonomy of media professionals and media organisations, the campaign pursues three interrelated objectives, namely training media professionals in cultural diversity and an intercultural approach, writing about, seeing and hearing diversity in the media and producing and disseminating intercultural information through the media.

It can never be repeated too often that in the 47 Council of Europe member states “Discrimination is a crime”. Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is one of the Council’s fundamental documents, includes a general prohibition of discrimination on any ground. The first step to combating discrimination is to open up one’s mind and thoughts to others, whatever their ethnic, religious or social background, and ultimately to overcome one’s prejudices.

The Campaign was intended to serve as a discussion forum centring on its “Speak Out Against Discrimination” slogan. As such it has provided us with some excellent examples of the benefits of dialogue leading on to activities fostering mutual understanding such as the International Journalism Symposium, which the Council of Europe is due to host again this year for the second time, the workshop in Coimbra at the beginning of September, where an education pack for teachers at European colleges and institutes of journalism was finalised, and the “Differing Viewpoints” media production workshops launched in Seville in 2009, the much anticipated last one of which will be held in Istanbul from 29 November to 3 December under the Turkish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

The media industry has a duty to reflect the diversity of the society in which it operates. More so than any one-off campaign, the media can make daily contributions to social

cohesion by alerting the public to examples of discrimination and creating the conditions for a public debate which can foster mutual understanding between communities.

This Campaign is the first of its type at the Council of Europe. Every contact we have with our partners in the media sector shows us both how urgent it is to come up with a suitable response to the enormous expectations in this field and the energy that is being put into the process, both by the authorities and by the media themselves.

Another reason why the partnership has been working so well over the last two years is that the Council of Europe has, since its very foundation, been such an ardent advocate of freedom of expression and the freedom of journalists to do their job. This aim is echoed here in Doha, where a Centre for the Freedom of the Media was established in 2007.

For 60 years, the Council of Europe has been the home of freedom of expression. It is so precious to the Council that in 1950 it was enshrined in our fundamental text, the European Convention on Human Rights, forming the subject of Article 10. Since then, it has been consistently reiterated in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. From their day-to-day experience, media professionals are fully aware of how fragile the balance is between rights and responsibility in the news industry. In the Council of Europe's view quality information is information which respects both the freedom of the person providing it and the dignity of the person receiving it.

I would now like to talk about a third measure taken by the Council of Europe in 2008, which was the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.

This Recommendation is a reference framework for the implementation of the concept of "living together" and its social aspects. It refers in particular to schools and the conclusions of the Steering Committee for Education's (CDED) project of 2002-2005 on "The new challenge to intercultural education: religious diversity and dialogue in Europe", but also implies a lifelong approach to education.

Focusing mainly on school, the Recommendation suggests some practical ways of dealing with the issue of religions and non-religious convictions at school:

promoting a model of schooling that is inclusive, open to all and free from discrimination; the kind of school that sees diversity of belief not as a problem but rather as part of the solution; introducing new teaching methods and approaches, such as co-operative learning, the phenomenological approach, multiperspectivity, the dialogical approach and the contextual approach; developing intercultural competences as a key part of the in-service training of teaching staff (such as the “Pestalozzi” programme).

The Recommendation takes an innovative, pragmatic approach to education policies. It calls for religious diversity and non-religious convictions to be treated as components of intercultural dialogue. This contribution may be summarised in the form of five key messages:

Moral, civic and religious convictions have a decisive influence on social cohesion, civic participation and democratic citizenship. Comparative studies and European surveys (such as EVS, ESVS and Eurobarometer) show that young people have little interest in social issues and/or are disinclined to become involved in the democratic process. Likewise, research and public opinion indicate that there are problems in terms of commitment to values, and the adoption and development of these values through curricula (unlike in the case of the quest for knowledge).

The core values of the Council of Europe (respect for human rights, pluralism and the rule of law) are valid reference points, universally accepted in Europe, and the experience acquired and institutional system built up by the Council of Europe should be the starting point for any attempt to develop values education (including activities to clarify values).

World views and moral, civic and religious values are transmitted gradually, within a social fabric of which school forms an integral part. It involves individual stories, shared experiences and a gradual understanding of the world. Educating people about beliefs requires more than simply formal didactic transmission. In this personal development process, convictions are not entirely predefined by one’s family or community.

Religion and non-religious convictions are a dimension of intercultural education, in the sense that they are important factors in affiliation and identification, in the same way as other sources of identity such as language, history and cultural heritage. In this sense, religious, humanist, philosophical and moral convictions are a cultural phenomenon, a

separate aspect of culture and social activity. This approach allows a common basis for intercultural dialogue to be found, one that transcends the usual divisions between theories and doctrines.

The Recommendation is aimed at a range of stakeholders and educational institutions. These include not only school, of course, but also NGOs, families, cultural institutions, youth centres, the media and other “spaces for intercultural dialogue” (as referred to in Chapter 4 of the White Paper).

Religious communities are invited to participate in this process, particularly as parties to the “institutional partnerships” recommended by the Prague Forum (November 2007) and the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Ljubljana, May 2010).

The last, and by no means the least, step taken in 2008 was the launch of the annual Exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, which was organised by the Council of Europe with a view to enhancing the democratic management of cultural diversity and establishing open, transparent and regular dialogue between the Council of Europe, the main religious organisations and communities and representatives of non-religious convictions in Europe.

The first and second Exchanges, held in 2008 and 2009 focused on teaching about religion and non-religious convictions as part of intercultural education. The 2010 Exchange was held in Ohrid in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” from 12 to 14 September, and its theme was “The role of the media in fostering intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding: freedom of expression of the media and respect for cultural and religious diversity” – a subject which was in keeping with, and took account of the results of, the “Speak Out Against Discrimination” Campaign.

The 2010 Exchange had two main aims. The first was to raise awareness about the standard-setting and legal framework of the Council of Europe, in which dialogue between the religious communities, representatives of non-religious convictions and the media can be established today. Particular reference was made in this connection to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The second aim was to highlight the ways in which media practices, particularly those in the training and production field, can enhance the media's role in fostering dialogue and tolerance.

In conclusion, I would like to point that as early as 1950, the basic principles of "freedom of thought, conscience and religion" were set out in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In Europe, this freedom has been transformed into an elaborate concept of religious pluralism based on tolerance and broadmindedness – ideas which are, to quote the European Court of Human Rights, "acknowledged hallmarks of democratic society".

The Court has repeatedly stated that this freedom is one of the most essential components in the process of constructing individual identity and the full development of society, which is of equal importance to believers, atheists, agnostics, sceptics or even to the indifferent.

The Council of Europe's work in this area enables us today to use the term "European secularism", which is a form of secularism based on dialogue and recognition. It is viewed as a separation of the profane and the sacred, the secular and the spiritual, the state and religions and other currents of thought, and the public and private sector, and is based on the following basic principles: the principle of freedom of conscience, thought and religion or, in other words, the right to have a religion or not, to practise it or to be able to change it (Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights); the principle of non-discrimination (equal rights and duties, entailing respect for others regardless of their convictions or religions); the principle of the clear separation between religion and politics; the principle of neutrality and impartiality vis-à-vis religious matters on the part of the authorities.

I will finish by saying that dialogue is what all of the Council of Europe's work in the intercultural field is based on. And this dialogue is intended to be an open, sincere and, we hope, lasting exchange between the main religious organisations and communities, representatives of non-religious convictions and all other stakeholders, whether from an institutional or civil society background.

## **Role of schools in raising children and acceptance of the other**

**Dr. Armando Bernardini**

*President : “International Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Education  
IFIIE”*

*Rome , Italy*

*In this presentation, I shall briefly cover some basic principles and the rationale for educating children to the acceptance of the other. The outcomes, which an effective teaching program on cultures and religions should achieve, are also reviewed.*

*The paper discusses some documents which have been produced during the recent past by the different religious traditions which should become part of the curricula to be studied and commented. They are powerful documents which foster reconciliation and respect among religions. However, perhaps because of their innovative nature, they are regretfully not yet fully utilized.*

*It briefly discusses some “difficulties” which can be encountered and which should be transformed in opportunities for achieving acceptance of the other. It also provides some examples of good practices,*

### **Rationale**

Most of the nations nowadays are the result of a millennium of interweaving of disparate people. Likewise, Modern Europe has witnessed interactions of religions within a cradle molded by Christianity and other religious-cultural traditions (in particular Judaism and in Southern Europe Islam). During this period Europe has experienced civilizations alternatively fighting each other as well as prospering together, thus exhibiting examples of both tolerance and intolerance.

Muslims in Spain were to leave a legacy which still endures in the arts and architecture. Furthermore, they aided the transmission to Europe of classical texts from Ancient Greece. Nowadays, Islam is the second largest religion in Europe. The presence of Muslims (coming from many different countries, traditions and cultures) and other religious traditions makes the teaching about religions and cultures very significant. This

is particularly important to raise individuals able to accept the other and to diminish the risk of misconceptions about the other. In fact it is widely recognized that there will be no peace among the nations without peace among religions.

In this presentation I shall cover some basic principles which have to be considered in establishing an effective teaching program on cultures and religions. These principles I am sure are shared by everyone and can be considered as obvious in many cases. In addition however I shall also make a special emphasis on some concrete applications and examples of good practices.

### **Aims and purpose of an effective religious education**

Fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding requires to raise new generations with an improved understanding of world's religions and cultures.

What is the foundation of a good religious education? I am sure we all agree on the fact that the foundation of a good religious education rests at first in the knowledge of one's own religious tradition. This responsibility belongs in many countries to the schools (public or religious) and in addition – in every society – a fundamental role is played by the families and religious organizations.

This basic and fundamental rooting in one's religious tradition should neither be conceived nor conveyed in opposition to the religion of the other. In fact, within each religious tradition, it is possible to find the seeds for mutual respect and dialogue. Effective educational programs should therefore endeavor to make sure that the following outcomes will be assured: increased respect for human dignity and for everyone's right to freedom of religion reduction of harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes an appreciation of the role of religions in the literature and arts.

### **Some concrete applications**

The preparation of curricula, textbook and other educational material for teaching about religions should take into account religious views of the other in a way that is inclusive, fair and respectful. Special care should be taken to avoid inaccurate material or prejudicial material which could reinforce negative stereotypes.

The implementation of curricula – developed in accordance with professional standards – should also include the opportunity to offer comments and advice.

In my view curricula should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and interreligious dialogue and reflect global and local issues.

In particular some documents which have been produced during the recent past by the different religious traditions should become part of the curricula to be studied and commented. They are powerful documents which foster reconciliation and respect among religions and unfortunately and perhaps because of their innovative nature they are not yet fully utilized.

I would like to mention here just a few of them listing them chronologically and quoting selected salient parts in order to illustrate the tremendous potential they offer for reconciliation and acceptance of the other:

“Nostra Aetate (*In our times*)” Declaration on the relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions – October 1965

The declaration – issued by the Vatican II Council - was originally intended to deal with the Catholic theological standing towards Judaism but became in the course of the works of the bishops during the Council the significant document which challenges Roman Catholics to rethink their attitudes towards all other religions, and consider that all human beings are "but one community". The declaration is considered therefore the first significant step in promoting the culture of dialogue and respect of the religions. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, *Nostra Aetate* is the *magna carta* of the Catholic Church in terms of Muslim-Christian relations. I shall quote below what it says in regard to the Moslems:

*“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, 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.”*

And in regard to the Jews it says:

*“ 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. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles..... God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; .... 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... ”.*

As the title of the declaration implies other religions are also covered in the declaration and I shall not mention other details here in the interest of time.

#### “Dabru Emet (speak the truth)” Statement - September 2000

A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity which represents the most positive affirmation of Christianity ever made by a committed Jewish group. It states unequivocally that Christians worship the God of Israel and legitimately draw on the Hebrew Bible: contradictions notwithstanding. The statement affirms Christian ethics and praises the possibility of a Judaic-Christian partnership for justice and peace. It assesses Christian guilt in the Holocaust while correctly separating Christianity from Nazism. This

document has been signed by 220 rabbis and intellectuals from all branches of Judaism as individuals.

It says *“Jews and Christians worship the same God. Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshippers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; creator of heaven and earth. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel... .. Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace. Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognize the unredeemed state of the world as reflected in the persistence of persecution, poverty, and human degradation and misery. Although justice and peace are finally God's, our joint efforts, together with those of other faith communities, will help bring the kingdom of God for which we hope and long. Separately and together, we must work to bring justice and peace to our world. In this enterprise, we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel”*

#### “Amman Message” - November 2004

An initiative of the King Abdallah of Jordan, the Amman Message is a consensus document that has sought to tackle the theological basis of religious extremism in the Muslim world. Over 500 of the most senior Islamic scholars from around the world, representing all the major branches and schools of Islamic thought, have endorsed the Amman Message and its *Three Points*, which clarify, among other things, who is a Muslim and who has the right to issue fatwas (legal rulings).

Organizers of the Amman Message describe it as good news not only for Muslims, for whom it provides a basis for unity and a solution to infighting, but also for non-Muslims. It thus assures balanced Islamic solutions for essential issues like human rights, women's rights, freedom of religion, legitimate jihad, good citizenship of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, and just and democratic government. It also exposes the illegitimate opinions of radical fundamentalists and terrorists from the point of view of true Islam.

*“We are aware of the dangers and challenges the Islamic Nation is facing today at this difficult juncture of its course. Evils threaten its identity, incite disunity, tarnish its*

*religion and assail its tenets; they attack fiercely the very message of Islam. Some who attack Islam imagine it is their enemy. But it is not their enemy. Others, who claim to belong to Islam, have done gruesome and criminal acts in its name. The message that is under attack is the message of tolerance, revealed by the Almighty to His prophet Muhammad, God's prayers and salutations be upon him, and carried after him by his orthodox successors and household members: a message of brotherhood and humanity; forming a righteous religion that embraces the entire sphere of human life, upholding what is good and forbidding what is wrong, accepting of others, and honoring all human beings”*

“A common Word between Us and You” – October 2007

In this letter 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals – from more than 40 countries - have unanimously come together for the first time to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam. The signatories to this message come from every denomination and school of thought in Islam. Every major Islamic country or region in the world is represented in this message, which is addressed to the leaders of all the world’s churches, and indeed to all Christians everywhere.

*“Whilst Islam and Christianity are obviously different religions—and whilst there is no minimizing some of their formal differences—it is clear that the Two Greatest Commandments are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur’an, the Torah and the New Testament. What prefaces the Two Commandments in the Torah and the New Testament, and what they arise out of, is the Unity of God—that there is only one God. For the Shema in the Torah, starts: (Deuteronomy 6:4) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! Likewise, Jesus said: (Mark 12:29) “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one’”. Likewise, God says in the Holy Qur’an: Say: He, God, is One. / God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all. (Al-Ikhlās, 112:1-2). Thus the Unity of God, love of Him, and love of the neighbor form a common ground upon which Islam and Christianity (and Judaism) are founded”.*

## “The Mecca Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue” - June 2008

The Appeal is the result of an initiative of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia who gathered, in

Mecca, in a conference Muslims from around the world to exchange views related to the legitimacy for Muslims to engage in interreligious dialogue. The King’s intention was to initiate dialogue not limited to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but extended as well to the followers of other religions who are concerned about humanitarian and ethical issues. In this sense, the Mecca Appeal is broader in scope than the “Common Word” initiative, which consciously chose to limit its appeal to Christian leaders and called on their Christian counterparts to recognize with them the basic elements of love for God and neighbor that characterize the two religions.

*“The conference discussed the legitimacy of dialogue, Islam’s promotion of dialogue and the numerous texts that promote dialogue and set forth its rules and manners:*

*First - The cause of the differences between nations and peoples, as well as their religious and cultural distinction is the will of God, the Most Exalted and His profound wisdom. This requires that they know one another and cooperate in order to serve their interests, solve their problems and cause them to live under good manners and vie with one another in constructing the earth and performing good deeds. (The Holy Quran, 5:48)*

*Second - Dialogue represents an authentic Quranic methodology and a Prophetic tradition through which the Prophets communicated with their people. The biography of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) presents a clear methodology in this regard through the dialogue of the Prophet and the Christians of Najran and his correspondence with great emperors and monarchs”.*

### **Additional concrete opportunities**

I would like to briefly discuss some “difficulties” which can be encountered and which can and should be transformed into “opportunities” for achieving acceptance of the other.

*Negative Moments in History* - In the course of a teaching program it might be necessary - for sake of objectivity - to raise issues concerning a negative role that members of a

religious group may have played at certain moments of history. The case must be dealt with by encouraging critical awareness based upon objective and well confirmed historical data. In this manner the case will be positively dealt by making the students aware of patterns of behavior which can lead to intolerance, conflict and violence.

*Opt-Out Situations* - Another situation might arise when there are compulsory courses organized within the schools based exclusively on one religious tradition which is not part of the background of all the students. In this situation a suitable opt-out right must be recognized to the students who desire so. The opt-out must be structured in a manner which does not discriminate against the students opting out and must avoid the risk of labeling them as “different”. A solution for this case can be found by providing positive alternative curricular activities.

*Religious holidays* - There are many instances where religious holidays represent an issue. Since religious freedom should be taught not only by curricular offering or during the course of religion teaching, but also by teachers of disciplines other than religion. They should seize the opportunity to illustrate the particular festivity in a culturally sensitive ways. This will demonstrate to the students the school’s implicit respect of differences of religion.

### **Examples of Good Practices**

I would like to briefly mention here some practical examples of good practices which – in my opinion – represent a good contribution towards the search of common and shared values amongst different religions. In different ways these initiatives do produce documents, reviews or web programs which can be of great help to educators. I shall list them chronologically starting from the most recent ones. There are many which could be quoted but I limit myself to only a few which are *multilingual* and could therefore be utilized in different countries

“Adyan Understanding Program” is an Intercultural initiative awarded by the *Anna Lindh Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures* and supported by *Feed the*

*Minds Foundation.* It joins together six academic and NGO partners from the Arab world (Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon) and Europe (France, Italy and Poland).

Its aim is to promote a better mutual understanding regarding cultural dimensions of religious issues between and within Arab and European societies. Once fully developed, this program will offer courses on the web - <http://www.understandingprogram.net/> - in Arabic and English covering the following issues:

1. Christian Diversity in the Middle East,
- 2 History of the Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue,
- 3 Muslim Diversity in Europe.

A draft of the courses are already available at the web address mentioned above.

*“International Foundation Oasis”* Venice. An institution initiated by the Dioceses of Venice assisted by a wide International scientific board of scholars, theologians and journalists which promotes the mutual knowledge and encounter between Christians and Muslims, by organizing Symposia and editing a bi-annual publication *“Oasis/Al-Waha/”*. The aim of the review is to become a bridge between West and East. It offers contributions on integration, coexistence and interreligious dialogue. It is published in four distinct editions (Italian, Arabic-English, Arabic-French and Urdu- English).

*“ABC to understand the Muslims”*. This 63 pages booklet has been written by Fr. Maurice Borrmans, Professor Em. of the PISAI, founder of the review “Islamochristiana” and well-known promoter of the Islamo-Christian Dialogue. It offers with a simple language the basic information to know the history, the religion and tradition of the Muslims. The author is a guarantee of a correct and scientific value of the content. Because of its format this publication is suitable for educators and cultural mediators. It is published in Italian. The French edition will appear in October 2010 and future edition in English is under planning.

## **Conclusions**

Our globalized world requires harmonious relations which would promote understanding of religious differences, acceptance of the other thus promoting peace. The contribution to this effort, represented by education programs and initiatives, is of foremost relevance in delivering consistent dividends in terms of social cohesion.

## **Visions of Religious scholars to the role of educational and social institutions in raising generation**

**Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Ph.D.**

*Professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam*

*Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*

*Co-Director, Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement*

*University of Southern California [www.usc.edu/cmje](http://www.usc.edu/cmje)*

*3077 University Ave.*

*Los Angeles, CA 90007*

*(213) 749-3424.ext.4239*

*[rfirestone@huc.edu](mailto:rfirestone@huc.edu)*

*<http://huc.edu/faculty/faculty/firestone.shtml>*

*Religions include both particularist and universal concerns, meaning concern for the members of their own religious communities and concern for all humanity. These two areas of concern should not clash with one another. Unfortunately, however, many current studies prove that religious education in most regions of the world denigrates other religions. This is a critical problem that leads to resentment and ultimately to violence, but it can be resolved by proper curricular reviews and revisions. Effective revision requires that curricular review boards and committees include within them members of other religions*

For the purposes of this paper, I am not concerned about the notion of “truth” as applied to religion. All religions seek the truth, and all religions consider their own path to be the upright path to the truth they believe derives from God.<sup>1</sup> I am not concerned about whether religion “x” or religion “y” is closer to or further from the divine truth than any

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Bruce Marshal, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Abraham Joshua Heschel, *A Passion For Truth* (New York, 1973); Abul-Walid Ibn Rushd, *Fasl al-Maqal* ed. A. Nader (Beirut, 1961); and a counter-position in Bradford Hinze and Irfan Omar (eds.), *Heirs of Abraham: The Future of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Relations* (NY: Orbis, 2005).

other. This is a question that we cannot resolve in this setting, and I believe that we should not waste our time trying to do so.<sup>2</sup>

I concentrate, therefore, on a different question. That question is about the function of religion in contemporary societies – how religion can contribute positively to the larger human community with which it is engaged. Positive religious engagement in society requires that religious institutions work toward the harmony of all of society’s members. This requirement is codified in all of our scriptures. I will cite from the three “Abrahamic” scriptures to demonstrate this point.

Deuteronomy 10

<sup>18</sup>Do justice for the orphan and the widow, and love the stranger, giving him food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>You must love the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt.

Acts 10<sup>3</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Peter began: ‘I now understand how true it is that God has no favorites,<sup>35</sup> but that in every nation those who are god-fearing and do what is right are acceptable to him.

Qur’an 21 (The Prophets)

<sup>105</sup>And We recorded in the Psalms, after the Reminder, that My virtuous servants will inherit the earth. <sup>106</sup>There is indeed in this a message for a people who worship. <sup>107</sup>We have sent you [Muhammad] only as a mercy to all peoples.

The Torah does not restrict its concern only for Jews, the New Testament does not restrict its concern only for Christians, and the Qur’an does not restrict its concern only for Muslims. All three divine scriptures show that God’s universal love embraces all peoples and that the divine goal is harmony and concord within all of humanity. In order to achieve any rudimentary level of harmony, religious scholars must work with educational and social institutions to teach and enable their religious communities to live together with those of other religious communities happily and productively.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Reuven Firestone, *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims* (NY: Ktav, 2000) and translated into Arabic as ذرية إبراهيم مقدمة عن اليهودية للمسلمين <http://www.altawasul.com/NR/rdonlyres/9052668D-41C6-4B91-8D57-16DD1BE5311C/0/dhariyatibrahim.pdf>; ibid, *An Introduction to Islam for Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> All New Testament translations are from The Oxford Study Bible (REB). Oxford: OUP, 1992. Torah and Qur’an translations are my own.

All religions strive to understand the place of humanity in relation to the divine. Whether monotheist, dualist or polytheist, and whether Abrahamic or non-Abrahamic, religion focuses on helping people strive to do the good amidst the parallel human inclination to succumb to our natural drives toward selfishness and sin.<sup>4</sup> That universal aspect of religion makes all religions, at their core, good. All religions intend to help humanity live in harmony and peace. We need to take all religions seriously and treat them with respect. All religions, even those with which we do not agree theologically or with which we disagree regarding ritual practice, are worthy of our esteem for this reason alone.

Religions contain within them certain tensions. One is the tension between particularism and universalism. All religions, for example, are concerned for the welfare of the community of believers. They express their right to promote their own community and their own interests. Religions always invest great interest and resources in the community that is defined by the religion – Islam for Muslims, Judaism for Jews, Christianity for Christians, Hindu religion for Hindus, and so forth. This is because religions are inherently and particularly concerned for the welfare of their own community in this world and are also concerned for their welfare in the afterlife, at the end of time, or in reincarnation. This emphasis on concern for the welfare of the religious collective is defined by theologians and scholars of religion as “particularism.”<sup>5</sup> It refers to directing energy, resources and concern inward toward the community of believers.

All religions are also concerned for the welfare of the world at large. There is no religion I know of that does not strive, one way or another, for a harmonious world in which peoples of all backgrounds will live in peace with one another and with themselves. This element of concern is directed not only to the community of believers, but to all humans, whether or not believers, in the larger world. This worldwide concern is called by theologians and scholars “universalism.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See Mircea Eliade (editor), *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborg (eds.), *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 437.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

There is an inherent tension between these two. Sometimes concern for the welfare of the religious community comes at the expense of concern for the world at large, and sometimes the opposite. Religions usually try to balance these concerns. Usually, particularism receives a greater emphasis than universalism. Or perhaps, while universalism is discussed quite a bit in religious sources, the resources of religion are usually expended mostly on the particularist interests and needs of the community. The inherent tension between these two trajectories is expressed in religious theology, religious law, and religious education. Because the purpose of this conference is to consider our role as religious scholars in educating upcoming generations, I will examine this tension in terms of religious education.

Religious educators strive hard to inculcate in children and youth a positive image of themselves. We want our young people to feel good about their religious identity and we want to ensure that our children continue to believe and practice the religious norms and traditions that we cherish. Unfortunately, religious education in both the religious and public environments (and in many areas where there is no distinction) has tended to take the easy path of defining the self positively by defining the other negatively. Our children often receive the message that they are good because the other is bad. Careful scientific studies and surveys have chronicled this tendency in many areas of the world, including Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and other regions.<sup>7</sup>

This tendency to portray a negative message regarding the religious other would appear to conflict with the universalist concern of religion just mentioned above. If religions are truly concerned for the welfare of those who do not belong to the religious community, how can they denigrate them? Defaming and maligning the religious other goes against the very universalism that religions claim to teach. How does denigrating the other help

---

<sup>7</sup> Wolfram Reiss, "Obstacles and Chances of an International Dialogue on Curriculum Revision in the Middle East: Experiences of a German Research Project on School Textbooks in Egypt, Palestine, Turkey and Iran," The Center for Values Education (Istanbul) and the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religious Belief (Oslo), 2005 (<http://www.swedenabroad.com/SelectImage/55984/ObstaclesandChancesprint.pdf>); Gamal M. M. Mostafa, "Correcting the Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Universities and Organizations," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 27, Issue 3 (Dec. 2007), 371-386.

the world? Such a perspective is only self-centered and represents an attempt to benefit the narrow community at the expense of the world at large. And in fact, this selfish approach is detrimental to the community of believers as well because it creates a world of anger, resentment and tension that can easily slip into violence that will negatively affect all communities.

Some religious leaders have tried to resolve the tension between the particularist and universalist inclinations through mission, or *da`wa*. That is, they claim that the entire world will benefit from the truth of their own particular faith by *belonging* to their own faith. They believe that they will help the “other” by making the “other” into the “self.” It is an attempt to resolve the tension between particularism and universalism by creating a universal particularism. If the entire world would be Muslim, for example, or Christian, or any other religion, there would be no more religious argument and religious wars. All would obey the same religious moral imperatives that require ethical behaviors, proper religious practice, etc.

This goal, however, is a total illusion. It can never be fulfilled.

From a sociological perspective, whenever a critical mass of people forms, it always begins to split into smaller groups. From a historical perspective, whenever a religion has been so successful that it has collected a large mass of believers it has broken into sectarian groups that argue with one another, fight, and eventually form independent religions. From a theological perspective, if God had willed that all humanity be of one mind about religion, then we would not have such serious differences between religious communities.

Let us come to an agreement that it is normal, even proper, for religious communities to exist side-by-side despite conflicting theologies and practices. Our scriptures support this position without question. I could cite many passages of scripture but will limit to only one each from the Hebrew Bible (Torah), the New Testament and the Qur’an.

Micah 4 <sup>5</sup>Though all the peoples walk each in the names of its gods, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.

Matthew 5

<sup>46</sup>If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax-collectors do as much as that. <sup>47</sup>If you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. <sup>48</sup>There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.

Qur'an 10 (Yunis)

<sup>99</sup>If your Lord had wished, all people in the world would believe as a [single] body; will you then compel people until they become believers?

Given these divine messages, how can we, as responsible religious leaders, allow our educational system to denigrate those believers in religions that are different from our own. By not encouraging our religious curricula to respect the religious other we are refusing to accept God's message. This is a sin and a denial of God.

To fix this problem we must all immediately review our school curricula at all levels because the denigration of other religions occurs in many forms. Not only is it taught in classes about religion, but also in literature, in civics and especially in the teaching of history. There is only one truly proper and honorable way to ensure that our school curricula represent the religious other fairly. That is to include representatives of other religious faiths in the committees or boards that review and create curricular materials. How do I know that when I teach about Christianity in a history class or in a class about religion that I am teaching accurately and without prejudice? How do I know that I am not in some way dishonoring Muslims or Islam in the way in which I teach about Jewish life in the Muslim world?

I will tell you an inspiring story. I am a Jewish educator. I teach rabbinical students – young people who will become rabbis and leaders in their Jewish communities. And I teach professional Jewish educators who teach and administer hundreds of schools that teach many thousands of Jewish children. Never did I consider whether or not our school curricula should be approved by Christians and Muslims, even though we teach modules about Christianity and Islam in many of our schools. Then one day during a period in which I was giving lectures in Singapore, a Muslim company that makes educational curricula for Muslim schools invited me to review the module that they had developed about Jews and Judaism. They wanted me, as a Jew and a rabbi, to make sure that this

group was not inadvertently presenting the materials inaccurately. From that day onward, I have been teaching the necessity of having Jewish curricula approved by member of other faiths before it can be presented to our children.

We want to teach our children to love our religion and our religious tradition deeply. It is unethical and sinful to do this at the expense of other religions. Children must be taught that while they can and should love their own religion and religious tradition deeply and have all the right to believe in the unique truth and extraordinary particularity of their religion, they must also accept that other religious faiths are legitimate expressions of the human quest to understand God and the human condition.

Anyone who is a true believer in one's own religion believes that one's own religion is true or is at least on the path to truth. Most believers earnestly believe that their faith is a better faith than the faiths of others. That is acceptable because it is one's own personal belief. But it is not acceptable to teach that one's faith is right because another faith is wrong. Only after we all accept the responsibility to go beyond platitudes and actually ensure that our school curricula are responsible will we be able to come to a better understanding and promote harmony. This is, after all, one of the major purposes of religion.

## **Bibliography**

Eliade, Mircea (editor), *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1987).

Firestone, Reuven, *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims* (NY: Ktav, 2000); translated into Arabic as ذرية إبراهيم مقدمة عن اليهودية للمسلمين  
<http://www.altawasul.com/NR/rdonlyres/9052668D-41C6-4B91-8D57-16DD1BE5311C/0/dharyatibrahim.pdf>.

Firestone, Reuven, *Introduction to Islam for Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2008).

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *A Passion For Truth* (New York, 1973).

Hinze, Bradford and Omar, Irfan (eds.), *Heirs of Abraham: The Future of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Relations* (NY: Orbis, 2005).

Ibn Rushd, Abul-Walid, *Fasl al-Maqal* ed. A. Nader (Beirut, 1961).

Kessler, Edward and Wenborg, Neil (eds.), *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Marshal, Bruce, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Mostafa, Gamal M. M. "Correcting the Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Universities and Organizations," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 27, Issue 3 (Dec. 2007), 371-386. Oxford Study Bible (REB). Oxford: OUP, 1992.

Reiss, Wolfram, "Obstacles and Chances of an International Dialogue on Curriculum Revision in the Middle East: Experiences of a German Research Project on School Textbooks in Egypt, Palestine, Turkey and Iran," The Center for Values Education (Istanbul) and the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religious Belief (Oslo), 2005 (<http://www.swedenabroad.com/SelectImage/55984/ObstaclesandChancesprint.pdf>).

## **Role of *Masaajid* and Other Islamic Religious Institutions in Promoting Just and Peaceful Co-existence**

**Jamal A. Badawi**

*Professor Emeritus, Saint Mary's University*

*Halifax, NS, Canada*

*Serious and objective interfaith dialogue should not be limited to polite exchange of pleasantries, important as they may be. There are areas of major misunderstandings of sacred texts within faith groups as well as misunderstandings of the sacred texts of others. Like other faith communities, some of such misunderstandings are found even among many Muslim religious leaders and teachers. There are various reasons for this phenomenon, including cultural, political and historical. This paper focuses on some of the methodological problems behind such misinterpretations. It provides also some examples of some of the most common yet questionable notions about Islam's view of the "other". More specifically it seeks to answer candidly some of the following candid questions such as: Does Islam sanction hate, injustice and even violence against non-Muslim through "Holy War", second class citizenship, Jizyah and in the name of spreading Islam? Does the Qur'an teach that non-Muslims are "unclean", "infidels" and that Jews and Christians should be fought against on account of their rejection of the message of Islam? Does the Qur'an teach the Muslims should rule the world so that Islam prevails over all other religions even eliminating them as Islam is the true faith in the sight of Allah? How about some Ahadeeth that forbid Muslims from initiating a greeting of peace with the People of the Book and to force them in the narrowest roads? How about the statement of the Prophet [p] that he was commanded to fight "the people until they accept Islam"? Aren't the Qur'anic verses calling for tolerance abrogated by later revelations when Muslims became powerful? The focus of this paper on methodology of interpretation and discussion of specific popular notions based on some sacred texts is, in my view, the most effective way of changing antagonistic attitudes of the "other" based on authentic Qur'anic and Hadeethic references.*

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praises are due to Allah, the Creator, Sustainer and Cherisher of the universe and may His peace and blessings be upon His messenger Muhammad, upon all prophets and messengers who preceded him and upon all who followed their righteous path until the Day of Judgment.

## **Introduction**

According to the Qur'an, peaceful and just co-existence between Muslims and peoples of other faith communities is the norm and ideal that should be pursued. The key Qur'anic text affirming this norm reads: "As for such [non-Muslims] who do not fight you on account of [your] faith, or drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness [also love and respect] and to deal with them with equity, for God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands or aid [others] in driving you forth. As for those, from among you, who turn towards them for alliance, it is they who are wrongdoers" 60:8-9.

These two verses make it a Muslim's duty to treat peacefully co-existing persons with equity [*Qist*] and [*Birr*]. The term *Birr* and its derivatives are the same expressions used in the Qur'an and Hadeeth to refer to one's relationship with his/her parents. Such relationship is more than kindness, since it includes also love and respect. Many English translation of the Qur'an have translated this Qur'anic term as kindness, a translation that falls short of the richer meaning of the original Arabic term. To ameliorate this problem, the bracketed statement [also love and respect] was added above. The term "*Qist*" has been translated as "justice". Justice, however, is closest to another Arabic "*Adl*". *Adl*, however refers to giving the other his/her rights, no less and no more. Other scholars argue that the Qur'anic term "*Qist*" means going beyond justice by giving more than what is due to others.

This basic guiding norm is often either deliberately ignored or forgotten by both anti-Islam elements, driven by political or other agendas or by extremist Muslim elements

often driven by the rage generated by the sustained injustices inflicted on Muslims in several regions in the world, especially the Palestinian people.

One serious result of the above mindset is to deliberately or inadvertently violate the proper methodology of interpretation. In some instances, it may lead not only to cherry picking certain texts in the Qur'an to support a particular stance. Worse even is to engage in what I call "the cut-and-paste" approach in interpreting the scriptures, the Qur'an and Hadeeth or other previous scriptures for that matter.

### **Interfaith Dialogue and Relating to the "Other"**

In the context of dialogue between Muslims and peoples of other faith communities and other communities as well, serious questions are raised about accepting and respecting "the other" and doing unto him/her what one would want to be done unto him/her.

This results in disregarding common shared religious teachings such as acceptance [not mere tolerance] of "the other", human dignity and equality, acceptance of plurality as a divine will and love of the creation of Allah, especially the crown of His creation; fellow humans. When such ideals are ignored or forgotten, mutual dehumanization even demonization lead to irrational hate and violence, a central malaise of our times.

Now, what does all that relates to the topic at hand? It is legitimate to propose concrete measures to revive and improve the role of Masaajid and other religious institutions in fostering the acceptance of and respect of "the other". It is very likely that this is being addressed by other panels in this conference. It may be helpful to present another perspective and address a related practical and pressing issue; the intra-faith dialogue with Imams of Masaajid and others who are looked up to as religious authorities and teachers. They should certainly be respected for their knowledge and devotion to teaching, inspiring and promoting Islamic values. Such valuable Imams are also humble enough to realize that some of the common notions and interpretations they accept and impart in their teachings are not infallible and may even reflect the views of their own teachers, school of jurisprudence.

On a more candid level, there are certain ijtihaadi opinions of highly respected major classical authorities on the view of “the other” that require re-consideration, even critique. Such critique is not and should not be based on “political correctness” or mere “apology” but on solid scholarly foundation while responding authentically to the challenges of modernity, which is and should be a sustained internal mechanism in Islamic jurisprudence. Among the most senior and highly respected contributors to this Tajdeed [rejuvenation] are authorities such as Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi who is widely regarded as the pioneer of the Wasati [justly balanced] interpretation of Islam, Shaikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, Dr. Abdul Hameed Nada, Shaikh Bin Bayyah, Dr. Abdul Majeed Al-Najjar, Dr. Mohyiddeen Al-Qarah Dhaghi, Shaikh Faisal Maulawi and others. Scholars who pursued this path may not represent the “majority” views in every issue they addressed at this time even though it seems to be a growing school. One thing that is fair to say is that pioneers of this trend do possess the requisite knowledge and tools to offer their own rejuvenating conclusions. None of them claimed infallibility and their views are open for constructive and objective criticism. However, the same thing applies to great Muslim jurists throughout Muslim juridical history. Whatever interpretation is offered, it must abide by the generally acceptable methodological rules that are themselves based on the primary sources of Islam. In the next section a very brief summary of the most pertinent rules is attempted.

### **Some Methodological Issues**

In the case of Islam, there is no dispute about its primary sources; the Qur’an and authentic [or sound] *Hadeeth* [or *Sunnah*]. Hadeeth must be understood in the light of the Qur’an and interpreted in a way that does not contradict any established and definitive Qur’anic principle or value. Errors of understanding and interpretations are possible and do occur. Yet, errors cannot be attributed to Allah and His revelation. It should be noted, however, that some traditional scholarly opinions [*Ijtihaad*] may be rejected, not because of a methodological error, but because of the fact that such opinions were partly shaped by the special circumstances and historical setting of their times. Such circumstances may

differ significantly from those in today's world. In all cases, opinions are to be judged by the primary sources, not the reverse. It may be helpful to note that there is no single person or authority in Islam whose interpretation of any debatable issue is seen or accepted as the only valid one, let alone being viewed on a par with the texts of the Qur'an and *Hadeeth*.

In interpreting these primary sources of Islam, a number of essential and universal rules must be observed. They include the following:

The realization that the Qur'an has been preserved in the original language in which it was revealed [Arabic]. In the process of translation into other languages, nuances of the original language may be lost or not fully communicated.

The Qur'an explains itself. Since the Qur'an is not ordered by topic [like textbook chapters], it is necessary for a scholar to be thoroughly familiar with other texts in the Qur'an, which deal with the same topic or relate directly to it.

In addition to the overall Qur'anic context, consideration should be given to the section in which a particular verse occurs. One of the most common serious mistakes is to quote only a part of a verse or one verse in an interrelated section of a *Surah* [chapter] in such a way as to change its meaning.

Consideration of the occasion of revelation [*Asbab al-Nuzool*] of certain verses, if known and authentic, affects the interpretation of that verse.

If there is an authentic *Hadeeth* dealing with the same topic as the Qur'anic verse, *Hadeeth* takes precedence over mere opinion or speculation.

Keeping in mind that some Qur'anic verses were revealed to deal with certain historical challenges facing the emerging and besieged Muslim community affects interpretation.

The few [texts] must be interpreted in the light of the many [texts].

Even an authoritative and authentic text of the primary sources of Islam may have more than one possible meaning [*Mutashaabih*] and must be interpreted in the light of the more definitive text [*Muhkam*], not the reverse

Any claim of *Naskh* [abrogation or more correctly supersession] must be carefully examined. The entire Qur'an is definitively authentic [*Qat`i Al-Thuboot*]. Any claim of *Naskh* must be definitive, not based on mere opinion or speculation.

Keeping these rules in mind, let us examine some of the popular negative attitudes towards the other and see how some of the “*wasati*” scholars offer authentic alternative explanation that they argue is more consonant with the essential message of Islam while being well grounded in the primary sources of Islam. As each of the selected items may require a considerable length, it is not possible with the limitation of this draft paper to deal with them in any depth. Instead, listing of some of the most challenging statements are offered questioning negative perceptions of the other among Muslims and in many cases accepted as true by people of other faith communities. While mere provocative listing is incomplete, it is hoped that it may generate greater interest to learn more. For the writer it may serve as a road map of a future paper, Allah willing.

### **III. Can the Following Statement be true?**

The Arabic equivalent of “Holy War” is not found anywhere in the Qur'an as a term or concept.

Jihad has nothing to do with “Holy War”. It has many constructive spiritual and social meanings, one form of Jihad is combative [called specifically *Qital* or fighting].

*Qital* is allowed to repel aggression and resist severe oppression, is bound by strict code of ethics and still described as a hated act and if just peace can be achieved without fighting, it is reason to rejoice.

The Qur'an never sanctioned killing or hurting peacefully co-existing sovereign people on account of their different faith.

The Qur'an does not call others “infidel” and the term “*Kafir*” is not always negative. It is used in the Qur'an in a neutral and even positive sense

The epithet “*Mushrik*” was never used in the Qur'an to describe Jews and Christians. Instead it gives them the complimentary title “People of the Book”.

The Qur'an does not teach that Muslims should prevail over all other religions and eliminate them since Islam is the only "acceptable" religion.

The Qur'an does not say that Muslims should never take non-Muslims for friends, that they should not love them if they are true Muslims.

Jizyah is not second class citizenship, punishment for rejecting

Islam or meant to humiliate non-Muslims. It is not necessary in our modern world.

Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] did not teach a general rule that Muslims should not initiate greeting with "the peoples of the Book" and that he was reacting to a specific group in his lifetime.

Restrictions on non-Muslims under Muslim rule in the past were aberrations and in some cases a result of misinterpretations of the primary sources of Islam. The Prophet [P] was not asking Muslims to fight all people [al-Naas] until they accept Islam.

The above statements are not the only ones pertaining to the negative or belittling view of the other that are common among Muslims, even uttered, written and embraced by some.

It is therefore an urgent, challenging and imperative to spread and systematize discussions and debate these issues and to carefully examine many contemporary, profound and authentic interpretations of many of these troubling issues. Common polemics and hate propaganda claim that the problem is not with the vast majority of "good Muslims", the problem is with Islam itself and with the Qur'an. That erroneous mindset stands in the way of fruitful, fair and authentic intra and interfaith dialogue.

Worse even is the deliberate "cut-and-paste" approach to the Qur'an, an approach which enables even a moderately intelligent person to virtually "prove" anything from any source

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper is not intended mainly as an apologetic work. It is intended, in part, to explain the authentic and justly balanced "*Wasati*" Islam to people of other faith communities.

This may constitute its inter-faith element. However, It is meant more for the Imams, religious leaders, opinion leaders and other religious institutions and an invitation to them

to study, reflect on and debate the legitimate and authentic alternative interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadeeth that may call for a more constructive message that may be inculcated in the minds and hearts of the new generations of Muslims. This is the intra-faith element of the paper. In general, it is a message, even a plea to those who are seriously interested in the promotion of just, peaceful and prosperous humanity. It is meant for all who believe that hatred, oppression, hegemony and violence should be replaced by genuine human brotherhood, peaceful dialogue, mutual understanding of common grounds and respectful understanding of areas of differences. Let that be our gift to future generation of all faith [and "non-faith"] communities and a true way of pleasing our creator.

May the peace, blessings and mercy of Allah be with you all.

## **Children/youth's media between grooming and persuasion: religious vision**

**Kirsten Bystrup**

*Librarian at the Danish Centre for Childrens' Literature*

*I will illustrate the topic with examples of recent editions of the Bible addressed to smaller children. We have a tradition in Denmark of publishing the Bible in an adapted, rewritten and illustrated form for children at different ages. You might say that the Bible has become children's literature and as such is published by all kinds of publishing houses. I find it very interesting that we have such a general interest in the Bible and the tellings from the Bible in a secularized society as the Danish one is. Knowledge of the bookmarket is also closely connected with my work as a librarian and this is another reason why I have chosen to talk of books as children/youth's media. There are two reasons why I will focus on the pictures in my speech. The first one is that I find the pictorial representation of the Bible essential when you talk of bibles addressed to smaller children. I think of children who cannot read the text yet but are capable of reading the pictures, while the grown up reads the text aloud. The other reason is that I have a special interest and training in illustrated books and picturebooks. The question I ask in my speech is therefore: "In which way have Danish illustrators depicted the story of Noas ark and The good Samaritan in recent editions of the Bible for smaller children?"*

### **Introduction**

First of all, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting me to speak at The Eighth Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue 2010 and for the hospitality you have shown towards me. I am very honoured having been asked to be a keynote speaker at this conference.

Let me start by briefly introducing myself. My name is Kirsten Bystrup, and I have worked as a librarian for the Centre for Children's literature in Denmark, situated at The Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, for twelve years. Here I have been able to develop my special interest in children's picture books, an interest which has spanned

for more than 30 years. During this time I have passed a Master of Education with special reference to picture books for children as I have taught both librarians and trainee schoolteachers about children's picture books and written on the subject in periodicals, journals, the national press and publications.

### **Mediation of religious texts in form of illustrations/pictures**

When I got the invitation to speak at this symposium with the theme: the role of the religion in the upbringing of generations with a special view at the media and their influence at children and young people, I first of all thought of the mediation of religious texts in form of illustrations/pictures in books. I have worked within this field for many years and my foremost knowledge concerns publications in Denmark. To this I will add an experience I had two years ago, when I visited the exhibition of *The World Award of Monotheistic Religion* in Tehran. I knew beforehand that Christianity and Islam come from the same origins and share many of the same stories, but still it was a great experience for me to see the pictures from for example *Noa's ark* and *Jonah in the belly of the whale* at the exhibition in Tehran. Both are well known stories in Denmark, retold and illustrated in several editions of *The Bible*, adapted and addressed to children of different ages. These pictures by Iranian illustrators seemed somehow well known to me in their joy of telling in an authentic and real way with a view at the child at the same time as they held a great attention to the text.

I saw the similarities between the religions at once, there were no barriers between the story and me as I could easily read the pictures with my eyes. It is this experience I want to share with you by showing selected illustrations from the two mentioned stories partly from a recent Danish edition of *The Bible*, partly with my own photos from the exhibition in Tehran 2008.

*The Bible for the youngest*

Let me start by presenting the edition of *The Bible* I am going to talk about, *The Bible for the youngest*. It was published in 2007 by the Danish Bible Society that also edits the authorized editions of *The Bible*. It is addressed to children at the age 3-6 years, and the intention was to make a retelling of *The Bible* where the text and the illustrations had an equal status. Therefore the book right from the beginning was planned as a team work between the author, the illustrators, the graphic designer and the editor. The cooperation even went so far that the illustrators worked together at the illustrations. During the working process the graphic designer made sure that the text and the pictures fitted in the spread and in the size of the book, and sometimes the author had to shorten the text, or the illustrators had to redraw the illustrations to make everything fit. In this way this edition of *The Bible* holds many similarities to those of the picture book, and in many ways it has been a trendsetting and inspiring edition in Denmark. (fig.1)

### *Noa's ark*

First I am going to show you pictures from *Noa's ark*, and I will start by presenting a picture from *The Bible for the youngest*. The book is as I mentioned a co-operation between Lilian Brøgger, a prominent Danish illustrator and her very skilled and original pupil, Cato Thau-Jensen. When you look at the picture, you will at once notice that the picture fills up the whole spread which is usually significant for the picture book. The picture has the majority in size just as it plays the most important role in the composition. It includes the text as a pictorial element. Here we see the ark in the moment, when the animals are boarding the ship. It is a moment of relatively quietness even if the rain has started to fall. The illustrators make a close-up - we get quite close to the ark, and we can see that some of the animals already are on board, while Noa and his wife are guiding the rest of them in safety on the ship. The really special thing about this edition of *The Bible* is as mentioned that it uses the interaction between text and picture very deliberately. In this spread for example the text and the picture have an equal status in the telling as the picture just continues the telling of the text. While the text refers to a situation just before

the ark is finished, the picture takes over and shows/tells what happened afterwards, that is: Noa and his wife guide the animals on board (fig. 2).

I will like to show a few illustrations of *Noa's ark* from Iran in order to put the Danish illustrators' work into perspective. I saw these illustrations on an exhibition 2008 in Tehran at the Religious Imam Ali Museum. I must apologize for the quality – the reflexes of the glass – and for the fact that I cannot tell the names of the illustrators. I find that these illustrations underline the vitality of the stories and their ability of giving inspiration in the west as well in the east (fig. 3 and fig. 4).

I will also like to show you an older Tunisian oleograph, which my husband bought in Africa in the 70's i.e. because it gives an interesting historical perspective to the above mentioned illustrations. We have it hanging on the wall in our home (fig. 5).

### *Jonah in the belly of the whale*

To underline how the illustrators use the special artistic effects belonging to the picture book in *The Bible for the youngest*, I will like to show you a sequence of illustrations from the story of *Jonah in the belly of the whale*. The story starts on the right side of the spread, and we see Jonah boarding the boat, trying to escape going to Nineve as God has asked him to (fig. 6). Please remark the movement from left to right – this is the reading direction in the western tradition. The illustrators use this movement in two ways. The first one belongs to the story. The movement underlines that the person in the picture is leaving home going out into the world. The second one addresses the reader in inviting him/her to turn the page to see what is happening next, a traditional telling trick from the picture book, called “the drama of the turning of the page”(Note 1). The next scene the illustrators have chosen to show is when Jonah is thrown out into the sea (fig. 7), and in the next picture we see him in the belly of the whale. Please remark that the picture fills the whole spread and that there is no text at all. It seems that this scene has a strong pictorial quality – not only for the Danish illustrators, but also for the Iranian illustrators, which I will clarify later on (fig. 8). First then Jonah regrets his disobedience to God, and

the whale spits him out, and he goes to Nineve (fig. 9). Lastly we see him sulking beyond the palm that God lets die (fig. 10).

This sequential way of making a pictorial narrative has some similarities to a film. Yet it is different as the illustrators leave out moments for the reader's own imagination to complement.

In comparison to this pictorial telling, the Iranian illustrators chose to show the scene when Jonah lies in the stomach of the whale (fig. 11 and fig. 12).

## **Conclusion**

I see two essential potentials in mediating religious stories in pictures.

The first one is what I will call the interfaith perspective. I think it will be a great idea to present children with different pictorial interpretations of the religious texts in their respective different religions. Here I find it essential to mention that I only think of pictures that holds an artistic value and are made in a genuine way. Illustrations that are superficial and/or intend to persuade a child into another religion than the child's own is of no interest. The interesting thing about pictorial interpretations is that they will be able to focus on both the similarities in the given story and reveal different pictorial and cultural ways of telling the story at the same time.

The second potential lies in the media. I think it is essential to mention that the book as a medium invites to a unique situation where a grown up and a child can meet in absorption and dialogue. I think it is very essential to underline this fact in a hasty and hurried society. The book represents a valuable alternative to the superficiality of the TV media. The reading aloud for a child allows a quiet situation where the persons involved can decide the speed themselves. In this situation the book that uses the pictorial telling as an essential part of the story makes it possible to read aloud for even small preschool children. When the grown up reads the text, the child can read the pictures and will be able to "reread" the story in the pictures alone later on.

Note 1: Barbara Bader, *American Picture Books from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p. 3

## References

*De mindstes bibel*, genfortalt af Synne Garff (*The Bible for the youngest*, retold by Synne Garff); illustreret af Lilian Brøgger og Cato Thau-Jensen, designet af Maria Lundén, Kbh., Bibelselskabets Forlag, 2007

“Bibelen for de yngste – et lykkeligt samarbejde”, (“The Bible for the youngest – a happy co-operation”), by Pia Jønsson”, in *The Children’s Picturebook – Insight and Vision*, ed. Kirsten Bystrup et al, Forening for Boghaandværk, 2009, p. 109-114

## **Influence of Family in Raising the Next Generation**

**Msgr. Matthew Hassan Kukah**

*A greater sense of intergenerational solidarity* is urgently needed. Future generations cannot be saddled with the cost of our use of common environmental resources. “We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries; for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us, to enlarge the human family”<sup>1</sup>

My job has been made easy by the caliber of people that this Conference has assembled. I notice that themes to be covered include *Family, Education, Modern Technology* and *Worship*. The challenge of raising the next generation is a challenge over the future of humanity. There is the old time tested saying that *the children are the future of tomorrow*. Another wise saying claims that: *Today is the tomorrow we dreamt of yesterday*. So, in this regard, our children should be seen as a mirror of what our society should aspire to in future. What we make of them today, is what tomorrow will be.

In this keynote address, I will divide this paper into Four Sections. Section 1 will try to clarify what the concepts mean by way of our ordinary dictionary understanding. Section 2 will address the issues of the challenges that families face today in seeking to raise the next generation. Section 3 will look at the opportunities that lie in effectively raising the next generation. Finally, by way of conclusion, in Section 4, I will analyse the implications of raising the next generation in the age of globalization.

### **1: The Family and the Next Generation: Some Definitions and Clarifications:**

According to the New Oxford Dictionary, Family is defined as: *a group consisting of parents and children living together in a household; a group of people related to one another by blood or marriage*: But in terms of every day usage, the word has been expanded to accommodate other dimensions of various networks of relationships. Thus, it

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI: World Day of Peace Message, January 2007.

is common to hear people speak of a complete outsider as member of our family. This does not necessarily mean blood relationships but it one way of saying that some level of intimacy has developed in someone's relationship with a family. On the strength of that relationship, he or she is now considered part of that family's inner circle. We often hear words like *family name, family honour, family tree, family values, family love etc.* This does not denote another definition of family, but it is more an expression of aggregate definitions of attitudes, that bolster and ennoble family life and family cohesion.

On the word Generation, the same dictionary defines it as; *all of the people born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively the average period, generally considered to be about thirty years, during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children of their own.* In its elastic form, we now hear of such expressions as *generation gap* (explaining the attitudinal differentiation in groups based on age differences), *generation X*, an expression used to those who were born in the 60s. They represent the generation that idolized the Beatles, adored drugs and encouraged some very loose lifestyles which came to be known as the *hip culture*.

## **2: The Challenges of Family Today and the Next Generation:**

In his essay, *The Great Disruption*, Francis Fukuyama has argued that.....*The other major social change that has led to traumatic life experiences has been the rise of divorce and family breakdown. Commonsensically, one would think that children who have experienced the divorce of their parents, or have had to deal with a series of boyfriends in a single-parent household, would tend to become cynical about adults in general, and that this might go far toward explaining the increased levels of distrust that show up in survey data.*

The notion of Family is coming under very severe strain today due to many factors. Globalisation has thrown up so many challenges, but by itself, it is not a cause of the problems. Globalisation is so forceful that despite the criticism, arresting its impact is akin to trying to cover the sun with our hands. However, to follow the imagery of the sun, we can argue that even if we cannot stop its heat, we can at least find either an umbrella

or a shade to shelter us from its excesses. Traditional definitions of family have been subjected to various changes with time. It has always been the traditional understanding based on both irrespective of what one believed that the word Family meant a man, his wife and children. But recent developments have placed these notions under strain. Single parenthood is seen by many now as a choice. Lesbianism and homosexuality have now thrown new challenges. Backed by Legislation in the European Union and some parts of the United States, the notion of same sex marriages and is now on the front burner. The international campaign for rights in the areas of housing, taxation, adoption etc, are changing and challenging the face of Family as we know it. But there are other immediate problems even within what one might call the normal family settings. They pose serious problems for how we think about the future generation. It is to these that we shall now turn.

First is Abortion. Today, many forces, from war, disease, pestilence, disaster to hunger, have imperiled human life. Abortion, the killing of innocent life has now been incorporated into the basket of rights to the extent that women see it as an expression of their personal freedom. The influence of feminism, increasing secularization and attempts to limit the role of Religion, came to a climax with the Beijing Conference. Now, women see abortion as a right. This is surely the greatest threat to the human family and it is also at the heart of how any society negotiates the future. Family planning, the spacing of children is desirable, but care must be taken in areas of proper education.

Secondly, is Euthanasia, another life taking strategy. Unable to see human suffering as an act of God and part of His divine will, human beings are now taking it upon themselves to terminate the lives of those they consider to be in grave pain. Similarly, with new technology, some women are now prepared to terminate the lives of their foetuses on the grounds that scans have shown that they are of the wrong gender or that they have some physical disabilities.

Third, is the role of profession and career for women. With more and more women getting education and turning to professions, specializing as Engineers, Doctors, Lawyers, there are fears that this is posing a danger to the family. When husband and

wife have to work, something sometimes has to give and often it is the attention to the children. Women are now being called into public life some as Politicians and others as Ministers and so on. Managing these challenges demands clear policies that take cognizance of the great role that women can, and must play in society. A proper management of this challenge can lead to a more creative and caring society. There are many other challenges but these are enough to illustrate our point.

### **3: Opportunities for the Family and the next generation:**

Fear, suspicion, doubts and anxieties often attend our inter-generational discourse. One generation fears that the other generation does not appreciate or understand its yearnings and goals in life. One generation often thinks that the next generation will destroy the legacy that they have built. The younger generation believes that the older generation is old fashioned and don't understand the modern ways. Parents are often nostalgic about the *good old days*. Usually, those *good old days* are often our own days. The days we were in University, those days when there was order, when children obeyed their parents, those days when we trekked to schools, those days when there was no electricity and so on. Now, we often say, our children have become stubborn, they talk back at their parents, they are experimenting with dangerous drugs, the media has become their new gods, they are only interested in partying, they dress in provocative ways. Parents worry that their children are abandoning their spiritual heritage. They are marrying people of different faiths, races, nationalities and tongues. Naturally these developments breed fear and anxiety. However, with more and more young men and women traveling and studying or working away from home, parents must be prepared to overcome these fears and look at the opportunities that lie ahead.

First, the great progress in the area of medicine and science has continued to offer the world new opportunities of ensuring the survival of humanity. In the wake of earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, epidemics, wars and so on, these advances have helped humanity recover and sustain itself. Therefore, a major advantage that our generations

have is that advances in science are leading to safer births, healthier children and longevity.

Secondly, the availability of learning aids and new technologies like the Computer have now made learning easier for our children. It is not uncommon to discover that today, in most families, it is the five-year-olds who are the wizards and the unpaid resident IT consultants of the mobile phone technology for their parents. This generation therefore has greater potential to really dream big.

Thirdly, there are the prospects offered by the media. The main challenge of course remains managing and effectively using these opportunities well. Parents often lament that the minds of our children are being poisoned by the media especially the electronic Media and the Internet. But it is important to note that we are not totally hopeless and helpless in using these to nurture and guide the next generation. We can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the relevant regulatory agencies to ensure the screening of what our children can access in the media. We shall hear more of this as the Conference unfolds.

#### **4: Summary and Conclusion:**

We have tried to argue in this paper that the family is the epicenter of society. Its survival is the precondition for the continued survival of humanity. Therefore, its stability is the only guarantee of human solidarity. In concluding these comments therefore, I wish to identify a few pointers which I hope will be addressed more comprehensively in the papers by the various experts.

Firstly, the Family as a unit can be treated from the point of view of Religion or Sociology. We must however see the family from the point of view of God's plans for the human race. And, if we are children of the same God, then our aim and hopes should be to create a human family beyond our immediate family, community or sovereign state. What we need therefore is to seek greater harmony and world peace as the ultimate legacy for the next generation. With all its limitations, the United Nations remains the

most visible expression of this solidarity. With all its weaknesses, it is important that the institution be supported.

Secondly, there is the issue of Family history and its implications for the future. Today, the world is caught up in a web of bitterness and hatred as a result of distorted views of perceived and alleged historical injustices among communities and nations. Our societies are endangered by certain grievances which we continue to transmit from one generation to the other. Countries must learn to create coherent accounts of history that focus on shared values.

Thirdly, Religion is a vital tool for ensuring family cohesion. Globalisation has broken down barriers and the movement of humanity has created new challenges for the world. We must collectively ensure the respect and dignity of all believers irrespective of their faith. What is important is to put in place a legal system that ensures religious liberty and the rights of Minorities. In many nations, believers still treat those outside their faith with deep suspicion. At a time when political and economic interests are helping people to build bridges, at a time when intermarriages have reduced racism and bigotry, we believers must do more to show the way by tolerance and accommodation.

Fourthly, increasing secularism is posing a threat to the family due to its corrosive influence on public morality. Religion and religious values are the sole antidote to secularism. Without a clear template of public morality, our societies might return to what Hobbes referred to as the state of nature where, in his words, life was *nasty, brutish and short*. An appeal to our collective sense of universal solidarity is inevitable because, as Pope Benedict XVI said: *Universal solidarity represents a benefit as well as a duty. This is a responsibility that present generations have towards those of the future, a responsibility that also concerns individual States and the international community.... .In addition to a fairer sense of intergenerational solidarity there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity, especially in relationships between developing countries and highly industrialized countries*<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI: World Day of Peace Message (2007).

Fifthly, the Family is where our children, the future generation can experience Love, Trust, Respect, Honour, Integrity etc. It is where they first experience the art of giving and tolerance. This is why we must do everything possible to ensure its security and protection from the vagaries and excesses of daily life. This is why divorce and single parenthood must never be projected as the ideal.

Finally, let me end on a personal note. I wish to thank the organisers of this Conference for inviting me. I commend the Government and people of Qatar for their exemplary openness and hospitality. This small country is gradually emerging as a magnet for the kind of spirit of openness that will drive away fear, ensure human growth and development.

I still have very fond memories of my visit here in 2004 at the invitation of your Emir. I came as a member of the Vatican Delegation from the Council for Interreligious Dialogue. I recall the day that a piece of land was generously allocated for the building of a Catholic Church here. I also still have very fond memories of my visit to Al Jazeera, the television station that is now a reference point for objectivity and professionalism.

Following in the tradition of the country, their openness to new ideas has made them one of the most important voices today.

We hope that in 2022, the world will assemble here to celebrate the great festival of the World Cup. I pray your country wins its bid.

## **Maryam: An Icon for Catholic Jesuit Universities, the Philippines**

**Dr. Renata Oliveros**

*The impetus for the inter-faith and inter-cultural programs in these Catholic Jesuit Universities is rooted in Qur'anic and Gospel imperatives on tolerance. "Tolerance," God's message embedded in the sacred scripture is the moral force that shapes the character of their education relevant to the "signs of the times." If Jesus Christ left behind 'The Beatitudes' (Matthew 5: 3-12, and Luke 6: 20-22) and the narrative of the 'The Good Samaritan' (Luke 10: 25-37) as examples of tolerance, the Prophet Muhammad himself wrote a constitution called the 'Saheefah,' 628 AD, a charter of rights for Christians, known today by Muslims as 'The Promise to St. Catherine.' As tolerance remains a core value in Jesuit universities located in Mindanao, their Muslim and Christian students are responding to new challenges of our time. Of great interest to them is global warming which has wrought devastations, particularly flooding, in many parts of the Philippines, particularly, Mindanao. In my search for a common ground that will inspire and empower both my Muslim and Christian students to face such a monumental task of healing God's creation, I found it in Mary/Maryam: In Mary's Womb: The Birth of Eco-Spirituality. A spirituality for God's khulafah (sing. Khalifah, stewards of God's creation) is needed to sustain and constantly inspire the students' ecological efforts. This Eco-Spirituality is in Maryam, an icon of God's trustee of creation.*

The word "theology" comes from two Greek words (*theos* and *logia/logos*) that combined means "the study of God" as revealed in Sacred Scripture. The "study of God" implies not only knowing God but also discerning His Will. In both Islam and Christianity, submission to God is the ultimate call of every believer. The word *Islam* literally means "submission (to God)," and in the Lord's Prayer of Jesus/Ysa al-Masih, Christians submit to God's Will by affirming "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done." Submission, not in a broad and abstract sense, but more in the concrete as every Muslim or Christian seeks and discerns God's will for oneself; for it is in finding God's Will that

a faithful can submit fully to God. This paper explores an aspect of tolerance in Islam and Christianity as applied to a course in theology I teach at a Catholic University in the Philippines.

Christianity was introduced in the Philippines by Spanish friars in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish Jesuits arrived in 1581. They were custodians of the *ratio studiorum*, the Jesuit system of education developed around 1559. Within a decade of their arrival, in 1595, the Society founded the Colegio de Manila which is known today as the Ateneo de Manila University. The Jesuit educational apostolate expanded in the mission territory of Mindanao where the Jesuits founded three new colleges which today are now full-pledged universities. Founded in 1912 was the Ateneo de Zamboanga University in Western Mindanao, this was followed by Ateneo de Cagayan in 1933, and then the Ateneo de Davao University in 1948.

Today, the Philippines has a total population of 97,976,603 (July 2010 estimate); 79% are Roman Catholics, 11.6% Protestants, 6.9% Muslims, and 2.5% belonging to various religious affiliations. Despite the low population of Muslims in the Philippines, they are concentrated in three major areas in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. The three Catholic Jesuit Universities in Mindanao, true to their Ignatian *charism* of ‘finding God in all things’ have integrated interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue in their vision-mission. Thus this is reflected in the following courses being offered at Ateneo de Zamboanga University’s Religious Studies Department : The Fundamentals of Islam Prayer/Salat , The Life of the Prophet Muhammad, Prophetic Traditions and Islamic Law Commentaries, and Marriage and Parenting in Islam. Seminars on Muslim-Christian Dialogue are regular activities in Ateneo de Davao and Xavier University.

The impetus for the inter-faith and inter-cultural programs in these Catholic Jesuit Universities is rooted in Qur’anic and Gospel imperatives on tolerance. “Tolerance,” God’s message embedded in the sacred scripture is the moral force that shapes the character of their education relevant to the “signs of the times.” If Jesus Christ left behind ‘The Beatitudes’ (Matthew 5: 3-12, and Luke 6: 20-22) and the narrative of the ‘The Good Samaritan’ (Luke 10: 25-37) as examples of tolerance, the Prophet

Muhammad himself wrote a constitution called the ‘Saheefah,’ a charter of rights for Christians, known today by Muslims as ‘The Promise to St. Catherine.’

In 628 AD, a delegation from St. Catherine’s Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai came to Prophet Muhammad and requested his protection. He responded by granting them a charter of rights, known today by Muslims as ‘The Promise to St. Catherine.’ Here in a letter addressed to his emissary, the Prophet Muhammad wrote:

“This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims’ houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God’s covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are declared to be protected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world).”

The message of the Muhammad is supported by these two Qur’anic revelations: “Let there be no compulsion in Religion. Truth stands out clear from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the trustworthiest handhold that never breaks.” (Sura 2:256); and, “To each of you God has prescribed a law and a Way. If God had willed, He would have made you a single people. But God’s purpose is to test you in what he has given you, so strive in the pursuit of virtue, and know that you will all return to God, and He will resolve all the matters in which you disagree.” (Sura 5:49)

The Catholic Church has affirmed the same breath of tolerance to the Muslims in *Nostra Aetate*, a document from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council in 1965, as it proclaimed:

“About the Muslims, the Church regards Muslims with esteem: they adore the one God, living and enduring, the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth who has spoken to people; they strive to obey wholeheartedly His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham did, to whose faith they happily link their own. Though Muslims do not acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, they revere Him as a Prophet. They also honor Mary, His Virgin-Mother; at times they call on her with devotion. Furthermore, they await the Day of Judgment when God will reward all those who have risen. Furthermore, as they worship God through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting, so they seek to make the moral life—be it that of the individual or that of the family and society—conforms to His Will. In the course of centuries, however, not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims. Hence this Sacred Synod urges all not only to forget the past but also to work honestly for mutual understanding and to further as well as guard together social justice, all moral goods, especially peace and freedom, so that all of humanity may benefit from their endeavor.”

As tolerance remains a core value in Jesuit universities in Mindanao, their Muslim and Christian students are responding to new challenges of our time. Of great interest to them is global warming which has wrought devastations, particularly flooding, in many parts of the Philippines, particularly, Mindanao. These devastations, as they say do not choose their victims based on religious affiliations. Both Muslim and Christian communities suffer from flooding, and other weather-related calamities. In my effort to guide them in their response to the environmental crisis, insights are drawn from the Bible and the Qur’an. The Qur’an states:

“We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. But man undertook it (the trust)...” (33:72)

It is clear that humankind has been privileged to occupy a position higher than the angels as stewards and trustees of God. The steward is expected to fulfil the trust in the manner that God, the Giver of the trust, wills it. Humankind’s privilege of stewardship entails a profound responsibility – to care for God’s creation. For it is God’s creation, particularly the earth, that has sustained and will continue to sustain human life. The

whole creation is viewed by Islam as fellow worshippers of God. God's creation, as it were, has become a sacred place of worship, a kind of *masjid* from where humankind can submit, serve, and worship God.

In my search for a common ground that will inspire and empower both my Muslim and Christian students to face such a monumental task of healing God's creation, I found it in Mary/Maryam.

### In Mary<sup>1</sup>'s Womb: The Birth of Eco-Spirituality

For three straight summers (2001-2003), I was a volunteer at "Our Lady Star of the Sea" Parish of Cape May, South Jersey. During the day I would take long walks along the South Jersey shore and in the evenings I would sit by the sea and like Abraham stare at the sky and be absorbed by the beauty of God's creation. During those evenings, I would seek for the most beautiful and brightest star. For me it was a sign from God, an *ayat* (sign) like Mary in the Qur'an. In Cape May, the "Star of the Sea" is Mary. Her very name evokes God's love for his creation. Mary is the mother of the "Word"---"Be" and everything came to "Be." Mary's response—"So Be It", "let it be done unto me according to thy Word." *Fiat*.

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, the Vatican has added "polluting the environment" as a serious sin against God and humanity. The works of Al Gore [Inconvenient Truth], Leonardo DiCaprio [The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour], and National Geographic's Six Degrees—have definitely helped raise the awareness of today's generation to the serious state of God's great gift to humankind—the earth. However, data and scenarios from the scientific community presented in these three films may not

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary (Aramaic: מרים, *Maryām*, Hebrew *Miriam*, Greek *Μαριαμ* or *Μαρια*, Arabic مَرْيَمَ *Maryam*). Mary, *Miriam* in Hebrew, *Maryam* in Arabic and Aramaic and Greek, or *Maria* in Latin. Saint Jerome associated the Blessed Virgin Mary's name with the Latin phrase "Stella Maris," or "Star of the Sea."

be enough in our effort to save the earth from further exploitation. Since this task is monumental, a spirituality for God's *khulafah* (sing. *Khalifah*, stewards of God's creation) is needed to sustain and constantly inspire our ecological efforts. "We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. But man undertook it (the trust)..." (Qur'an. Ch.33 vr.72) Humanity would find in Mary an example, a model to be God's trustee of God's earth.

When the rich young man in the Gospel of Luke asked what he should do to obtain eternal life, Jesus told him to "keep the commandments", but when the young man pressed further, Christ told him: "If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have, and give them to the poor." Jesus said: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt. 5:48). Christianity takes the words of Jesus, such as these, as counsel to all Christians who wish to be "perfect" like their Creator - in imitation of God (Imitatio Dei). In the Catholic Church, the three evangelical counsels of perfection are chastity, poverty (or perfect charity), and obedience. God is the Creator (*al-Khalaq*), and the Blessed Virgin Mary/*Maryam um Eesa* is God's perfect vessel- His wombman. For God's angel greeted Mary: "Rejoice, for you have been found full of grace." [Lk 1:28] God has so graced Mary that made her live the evangelical counsels to perfection. It was her path towards holiness. Mary was formed by God to serve as *ayat*<sup>2</sup> (a sign) to humankind of God's love, mercy, and compassion.

Her Chastity. The greeting of the angel Gabriel (Jibril) to Mary was: *Yaa Maryamu inn Allahas-tafaaki—wa taharaki.* (Q. 3: 42a) "O Mary, God has chosen thee. And purified thee." *Tahara* means clean, pure, chaste, holy, sanctified, unblemished, blameless, and immaculate. With such a distinct virtue in Mary, we are inspired to labor so that the good earth someday be restored to its pure and natural state, unexploited. It is through Mary's

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ayah* (آية *āyatun*, plural *Ayat* آيات *āyātun*) is the Arabic word for sign or miracle, cognate with Hebrew *ot*, means sign.

purity that we desire for an earth that is clean and pristine---garbage-free, zero-waste, and unpolluted.

For nine months, the womb of Mary was the first earth of Jesus. It was Mary's womb that nourished the unborn Jesus Christ (*Eesa al-Masih*). And it was a most fitting womb to be Jesus' "1<sup>st</sup> home-1<sup>st</sup> earth" because Mary is all-pure and without sin. Her womb was a perfect home for the *kalimatul-allah*, the Word of God enfleshed. "In the beginning the Word already was. The Word was in God's presence, and what God was, the Word was. He was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; without him no created thing came into being." (Jn 1:1-3, NEB). In Christianity, Jesus is the "Word," "the eternal creative *fiat* for all things created."<sup>3</sup> It is through the "Word" that all things were made. And it is the Word that would restore what had been lost through the destruction of the first creation.

In the coming of the creative Word—Mary continued to grow in holiness. It was a life of greater submission to God's will. She could not understand God's design but still submitted to His will immersing herself in mystery. "But Mary *kept* all these *things*, and pondered them in *her heart*." (Luke 2:19) She remained faithful to her vocation to be the chosen mother of Christ. It is the way that she cared for Jesus that we are called to care for the earth.

Her Poverty. "She was the most humble handmaid of the Lord ever ready to do His will; she was poor in spirit without the least desire for the goods of the earth; temperate, allowing herself no food or drink beyond what was necessary to sustain her life; she was and remains the shining example of purity; the Mother most pure and chaste, the Virgin of virgins and Queen..."<sup>4</sup> "No food no drink beyond what is necessary." This is Mary. It is her simplicity and contentment to what God offers her. We have created systems (e.g. capitalism, free enterprise, globalization, etc.) that have grown immensely that we ended up being controlled and enslaved by them. Human greed has exacerbated the situation. We are never contented nor satisfied and we want more. Greed is insatiable.

---

<sup>3</sup> Rev. A. Biskupek, S.V.D., *Our Lady's Litany*, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1954, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Biskupek 165.

The more you take the more you crave for it. It is like drinking sea water. It will not quench one's thirst. Greed has over-exploited the earth's resources. As resources deplete, nations will compete for whatever that is left. This competition would eventually lead us to war and destruction. "He has filled the hungry with good things." The recent land controversy in Mindanao is a case in point. Ancestral land and sea should benefit the Moro and lumads. But greed and power have ruled the day. There is a saying in Pilipino: "*Hindi maaaring angkinin ang lupa, ang lupa ang aangkin sa atin.*" (*We cannot own the land, it is the land that will claim us, i.e., we will be buried in it.*)

We, as stewards of God's creation can learn from Mary's simplicity, "...if nations would be content with the Providence has assigned to them in territory or wealth, refrain from enslavement and exploitation of other peoples, be ready to share with others the good things which they possess in abundance..."<sup>5</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, a devotee of the Mother of Jesus, locates the earth as God's gift to humankind. But there is accountability on the manner we "use" the earth's resources. We benefit and are sustained by them but, at the same time, we should be "free" from them.

Free to use God's gifts yet detached from them. "And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man's sake in order to aid him in fulfilling the end for which he was created [which is to praise, serve, and revere God]." (Spex, Principle and Foundation) Furthermore, "For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things." [SpEx, 23] Like Mary, we pray for the grace that we be indifferent to all created things. Not greed but detachment and greater freedom to "use" the resources earth for life, not to abuse them but be contented with whatever is needed by our generation saving and protecting God's gift for the succeeding generations.

Her Obedience. The third of the evangelical counsels is obedience. The perfect obedience for Mary is her FIAT: "I am the servant of the Lord, BE it to me according to Thy will." (Lk 1:38) Mary lived the prayer of her son: "Thy Kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is through obedience to God's will that God's

---

<sup>5</sup> Biskupek, 166.

sovereignty is established on earth. Any deviation from the will of God is a deviation from the way of peace, a manifestation of order on earth. Obedience brings about order. If there is chaos on earth, it is because we supplanted God. God alone is sovereign, and when we make false gods of things that God created—expect chaos. It is by submitting to God and His will that we restore order in the world.

By her FIAT, Mary experienced the mystery of God.<sup>6</sup> A perfect-simple God who is ONE (*Tauheed*). It is by her submission to the unity of God that Mary experienced the simplicity of God. And it is through Mary that we too learn to live simple lives. Mary, after all, is Our Mother. (John 19:27) The mystery of One God that Mary experienced would also deepen our consciousness that there is only One God, One Universe-Earth, and One Humanity.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux once said:

*If the winds of temptation arise;*

*If you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star,*

*call on Mary;*

*If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star,*

*call on Mary.*

---

<sup>6</sup> For Catholics—the Trinitarian-God. *Credo in unum Deum*...We believe in ONE God.

# **Immigration, Encountering Modernity and Transmitting the Core Values of the Faith**

**Rabbi Bob Kaplan**

*Director:*

*CAUSE-NY/Jewish Community Relations Council of New York*

*Worldwide immigration patterns in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have created incredible opportunities and challenges to traditional populations particularly in the arena of transmitting the values of faith and assuring continuity of the traditions and community that have been the foundations to these faith communities. The movement from traditional societies and nurturing cultures to western societies has allowed for a sense of competition for the attention of the younger generation. As these traditional societies encounter western modernity, both formal and informal education plays a pivotal role in allowing these values to be transmitted to the next generation. The Jewish experience in both Europe and the United States has provided many models that can be studied as paradigms for continuity of the core values of a faith community in transition.*

At the City University of New York's City College, I teach a course that examines the Jewish Immigrant experience of New York. City College, or CCNY, the first of the publically established and supported colleges in 1847 was designed to serve the working class of New York. Once the educational portal to being American to a large Jewish student population, following the great Eastern European immigrations of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, CCNY is now home to Latinos, African Americans, Asians, and others who represent New York's *New Diversity*. This shift in the very definition of diversity is being driven by New York's present immigration patterns. In fact according to the New York City Department of Planning",

*"In 2000, New York City had 2.9 million foreign-born residents, the largest number in its history." (1)*

This wave of immigration, hailing from a multitude of nations, has created a definition of diversity perhaps unmatched in any other urban center across the globe. Those students

who have chosen to take this class reflect that complex diversity interestingly few of Jewish faith make up their numbers. Early on in my teaching of this course, now in its seventh year, I would ask this diverse group of students what had attracted them to the course. During their tenure in this class, they examine how the American Jewish community has struggled with the issue of maintaining a connection to its history, traditions and values. They are introduced to a struggle that includes victories and failure. They likewise examine how this community crafted initiatives and institutions designed to specifically address this issue of connection and continuity and how to transmit these values that have been the foundations of their faith and community.

These students are also introduced to what has become a primary focus of the American or Western Jewish faith experience. How this community encounters modernity and the freedoms that are afforded by the American experience while still maintaining an allegiance to, and knowledge of, the tenets and values of its faith. Likewise, what types of educational, formal and otherwise, initiatives were created that have become the primary transmission points for this community's values and faith.

The focus on educating the next generation, so as to effectively assure continuity of the faith and its value system, has been a communal concern since the birth of the Judaism. Towards the end of the last book of the five teachings of Moses that comprise the Torah or the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith, Moses in his role as teacher speaks quite eloquently but forcefully to the issue of teaching the tenets of faith to the next generation. Moses, speaking now at the end of his extraordinary mission, has been engaged in setting the base line of what this new nation, children of slaves, now need to know and do as they make a transition from the insular life of the desert to nationhood. They will now need to interface with others whose beliefs would not always be in concert with their new found faith. Moses admonished the people to:

*"Take to heart all the words with which I have warned you this day. Enjoin them upon your children that they may observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching. For this is not a trifling thing for you: it is your very life..." (2).*

Moses, as a leader, who was not destined to be the one to lead in transition, fully understood that in order for new generations, yet unborn to successfully confront the challenges of continuity there needed to be an imperative of transmitting the divine values and ethics that forms the core of the faith and tradition that he was so instrumental in transmitting to his people. Without this imperative the power and inspiration of this transmission would soon fade into oblivion.

The imperative to “teach your children” has become over the millennia a prime focus of the Jewish people’s faith and its history. While exile and sometimes-brutal oppression all too often presented incredible challenges to this imperative of continuity, the nature of the insularity of living for more than a millennium as outsiders in Christian Europe allowed for the development of a profound system of transmission.

By the opening of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of Jewish males had been put through some form of formal religious education. The most common form was called Heder (Hebrew: room) or a primary format that educated most young Jewish males in the baseline fundamentals of the faith and its tenets. Those few destined for higher learning went on to the academies of Jewish religious learning called Yeshivot.

Ironically, it was the fall of the Ghetto walls in Western Europe and the new ability to enter in the mainstream life of society that most threatened this well-established system. This enlightenment era for the Jewish community of Western Europe was called the *Haskalah*, a term derived from the Hebrew for intellect or reasoning.

Once the walls of the Ghetto began to fall following the French Revolution and the spread of liberalism throughout Western Europe the new challenge for the Jewish communities residing in France, Germany, and Great Britain was how to meet the challenge of a growing desire and focus on a secular education.

The Jewish Encyclopedia, in its exposition on the Haskalah movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, notes:

*As long as the Jews lived in segregated communities, and as long as all avenues of social intercourse with their Gentile neighbors were closed to them, the rabbi was the most influential, and often also the wealthiest, member of the Jewish community. To the offices*

*of religion, he added the functions of civil judge in all cases in which both parties were Jews, as well as other important administrative powers. The rabbinate was the highest aim of every Jewish youth, and the study of the Talmud was the means of obtaining that coveted position, or one of many other important communal distinctions. (3)*

As the Haskalah became the predominant way of life for the Jewish community in Western Europe, religious practice and training also underwent a shift from the traditional and exclusive practices of the Ghetto to an integration of western language and practices.

This movement, most profound in post Napoleonic Germany, found its philosopher in the person of the Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn grappled with the desire and need to meld the enlightenment and newfound ability of the Jewish community of Germany to now integrate into general society. He developed a philosophical basis for melding the culture and language of the host country into the ancient religious practices and values of the Jewish people. Rather than abandon the faith he strove to provide a basis for those who embraced the new found freedoms and culture. Acknowledging the five Books of Moses, or Torah, was the basis for all Jewish tradition teachings and thought, Mendelssohn set about to translate it into German. This act echoed the translation of the Torah into Greek, in the then center of culture Alexandria, nearly 2000 years earlier when the Jewish people earlier encountered a movement from insularity to interface Hellenist culture.

*Mendelssohn strove to support and sustain the Jewish faith while advancing the cause of reason. Towards the end of his life, influenced by [Kant](#) and [Jacobi](#), he became less confident that metaphysical precepts could be subjected to rational proof, but he did not lose confidence in their truth. He was an important Jewish figure of the eighteenth century, and his German translation of the Pentateuch anchored the Jewish Enlightenment, Haskalah. In 1783, Mendelssohn published *Jerusalem*, a forcible plea for freedom of conscience, described by Kant as "an irrefutable book." Its basic message was that the state has no right to interfere with the religion of its citizens, and it suggested that different religious truths might be appropriate for different cultures. (4)*

By this action of making the basis of all teaching available in German, Mendelssohn attempted to stem a movement from tradition that threatened to pull a people from their traditions. Although Mendelssohn is often pointed to as the father of the reform movement that began in Germany in fact, it was his student David Friedlander who led the charge of reform that helped to form the basis for what is now the Reform Movement. A major shift in Jewish practice and education, then adopted by the Reform Movement, was the emphasis on biblical text as opposed to the traditional focus on rabbinical writings. Along with this shift came an understanding by the protagonists of Reform Judaism that biblical text, considered divine by the traditional, or now designated orthodox, community, was human in origin or at best divinely inspired. Therefore, while held to be immutable by the Orthodox world, scripture was now subject to updating in order to meet the needs of a modern and integrative lifestyle. Accompanying this shift was the move away from the focus on rabbinic law and traditional religious strictures and practice. Services were now held in German and other accommodations to modernity were added to synagogue life. Jewish education for youth also shifted from the traditional Heder to a “Sunday School” model. The Reform movement, now emphasizing a value on an interface with and integration into the secular world, developed a complementary system to enable transmission of Jewish values and ethics that mirrored this encounter with modernity.

While the liberalization of Western Europe presented both opportunity and challenge to the Jewish community, in terms of continuity and practice, it was to be the American Experience that would become the laboratory for how this faith community would encounter modernity.

Western European 19<sup>th</sup> century experiences predicated some very important next steps and examples for America and how it was to develop a system of practice continuity and education. Yet , it was the great immigrations from 1880 – 1920 from Eastern Europe that brought the greatest challenge and set of changes for a population whose primarily faith experience was through the lens of insular traditional or Orthodox Judaism.

German Jews had begun to immigrate to America since its origins but the great immigration of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, all be it small compared to the Eastern European flood that followed, brought with it the experiences of the hasakalah. The German Jewish community in America of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century began to develop a system to meet the needs of a transposed European Reform community.

*They began to establish congregational day schools that combined secular and religious education. B'nai Jeshurun, New York City's first Ashkenazic synagogue became the first to organize a day school in 1842. A few years later, Issac Mayer Wise [a luminary of the American Reform movement] founded the Talmud Yeladim in Cincinnati and, in 1851, the Hebrew Educational Society was established in Philadelphia. Despite tremendous initial enthusiasm, these schools did not last beyond the Civil War era.*

*By the 1870s, the Jewish congregation day school movement had collapsed in disarray for a variety of reasons, including the lack of national coordination and the transient nature of the Jewish population. Also, state education systems began to satisfy the needs of many Jewish parents. (5)*

Although the haskalah began to take root in the cities of Eastern Europe in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, those from the small towns know as Shtetels, which formed the bulk of this immigrant population, had little or no interface with this shift. For many of this great immigration, which numbered in the millions, this was their first face-to-face encounter with modernity and most certainly with the wide range of choices and opportunities now available in the American experience.

For the first time, those Jews fleeing from the state sponsored oppression of Eastern Europe, were not only given access to a secular education, they were in fact in this new land, obligated by the state to be educated. The primary force of education was no longer the Heder or even the state influenced Jewish schools but the secular public school. While some did attend newly established religious institutes of learning designed to mirror those of Eastern Europe, these numbers were small with the vast majority utilizing the exclusively secular public school system whose primary mission included integration and assimilation into an American culture and way of life. For the first time the

overwhelming number of Jewish students sat in schools organized by the dominant culture along with their peers from many other faiths, races, and cultural backgrounds. This new and rapidly growing immigrant community had to expeditiously develop a system of religious and cultural education, both formal and informal, that would allow for the transmission of the values and traditions of the faith. This system would likewise have to be in sync with America and the Jewish communities' new ability to become a full part of the majority society. In addition, this supplementary educational system would have to compete for the loyalty of a population new to this unfolding set of new opportunities and ideas readily available to them in America.

The system that developed as this population moved from new immigrant status to being part of the American way of life revolved around four areas of focus to achieve a system that would insure faith, communal and value continuity, Supplementary Education, Day Schools, Camping and Youth Groups.

The Heder model was imported and morphed into an after school system of religious instruction with a primary goal of imparting basic knowledge of the faith, history and traditions. These after school programs became an integral part of the mission of a newly developing synagogue system that was built by this population. While the majority of this population arrived in America with an allegiance to Orthodoxy, by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the move to the suburbs many had adopted Conservative and Reform Judaism. This new form of supplemental Jewish education, sometimes called Talmud Torah or simply Hebrew School initially geared towards boys, up to the age of 13 or the traditional age of entrance into the adult obligations of the faith, added girls by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. These supplementary schools were geared towards providing a connection to and understanding of the basic tenets of the faith and its history as well as provide the necessary Hebrew language education needed for the ceremony of Bar or Bat Mitzvah or the passage into adult religious obligation. While millions were educated through this system, there has been much debate as to the ultimate effectiveness of this system. Ultimately, the success of this form of education depended on the individual school and creativity of its educators.

In response to a fear that this supplementary system simply did not provide a basis for continuity, the community by the 1930's began to develop a series of Day Schools, or educational institutions that ranged from those of the ultra orthodox to the more liberal denominations. This system of orthodox oriented schools grew exponentially after World War Two with the integration of the ultra orthodox sector of the European survivor community into America. Today in America, the overwhelming majority of Orthodox boys and girls are educated in a separate sex Day School or Yeshivah system that pay varying attention to secular studies. Both the Reform and Conservative movements have likewise developed a growing Day School system that provides a comprehensive Jewish education combined with the secular.

In addition to these formal educational systems aimed at continuity and transmission of identity, faith, and values there also developed a profound informal system of Jewish education that included youth groups and summer camping. These intense and age appropriate systems provided a pathway that either supplemented the formal educational system or acted as a primary point of transmission. Both camping and youth groups allowed for emersion into aspects of the culture, faith and traditions that often left indelible lifelong impressions.

The 1990 National Jewish Population Study, conducted by the United Jewish Communities, a national umbrella group of Jewish Federations, noted that Day Schools were the most effective method of sustainable transmission. The study also noted Camping and Youth Groups as effective tools for communal continuity. As this community enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is undergoing a deep examination as to what forms of education need to be emphasized to insure continuity of values and tradition.

The students that sit in my class hopefully at the end of the semester can begin to understand the lessons learned both positive and negative, of the Jewish American faith based educational experience. I likewise pray that as they progress in their becoming American they can adopt some of the best practices and learn form the Jewish community's mistakes in transmitting their faith and its values.

The challenge of teaching a next generation the values and traditions of the faith seems to be a common one in the western world highly affected by immigrant patterns. It is a struggle that is not only necessary but also one that ultimately benefits the individual and the faith group but likewise the community at large.

1: Newest New Yorkers 2000: Department of City Planning of New York, Overview (2010)

2: *Deuteronomy 32:46-47*

3: *Jewish Encyclopedia: Haskalah*, Kopelman Foundation (2002)

4: *New World Encyclopedia: Moses Mendelssohn*, Paragon House Publishers (January 2010)

5: *Jewish Schooling: Jewish education in America, from colonial times to today*, *American Jewish Desk Reference*, The Philip Lief Group, Random House Reference; 1st edition (October 19, 1999)

## **Building a Partnership of Compassion and Love between the Generations.**

### **Rabbi Soetendorp**

*In his address, Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp speaks about the necessity of making creative use of the internet for building a partnership of compassion between the generations, nations, and religious traditions – a partnership that weaves together the wisdom, the life lessons and the moral and spiritual teachings of our elders, as well as the daring visions of our young.*

I am very grateful about the opportunity to participate in this high-level conference and exchange experiences with you about the conference theme of “Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives.”

In our globalized era that has been perpetuated by technological revolutions such as the rise of the internet, of mobile phones and of globally broadcasting media stations, it is crucial that we find new and creative ways to use these new channels to provide moral and spiritual guidance to our young people. Especially as the overflow of information has led to a lack of orientation about what is really important and necessary in life, and as many of our young people are afraid of the major world problems we are inheriting to them, such as massive ecological devastation, climate change and huge social imbalances in the global community that threaten the foundations of life as we know it.

Remarkably, the very last words of the biblical Book of Prophets state that the only way the complete destruction of Earth and all its inhabitants can be averted is when harmony is restored between the generations. “Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Eternal, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents – lest I come, and smite the land with destruction” (Malachi 4:4-6). These words, spoken by an anonymous prophet named Malachi, “my messenger,” about the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., resonate with great force in our age.

An ancient Jewish parable addresses these intergenerational responsibilities in simple terms. In the parable, an old man is planting a fruit tree. A young man passes by and

remarks, “Foolish old man, you will never be able to reap the fruits of the tree.” The old man retorts, “Foolish young man, when I was born I did not come into a desert. My ancestors planted trees for me. And I do not want to leave a forlorn land without trees to your generation.” Is this age old truth self-evident at the beginning of the third millennium following a century which experienced indomitable progress and most cruel destruction?

We, the elders, need to recognize the next generation’s fears and despair. We have not planted the healthy fruit trees, at least not enough, and the threat of destruction is real. We can only together retrieve the moral resources needed to rebuild the inclusive world community of decency in which no one is degraded.

What is desperately needed is the strengthening of compassion and hope. Compassion, in the fine definition of Martha Nussbaum, is to feel the painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person’s undeserved misfortune. Compassion is not hereditary, it is not transmitted by genes, but it can, and, therefore, must be, taught. To this end, the different spiritual traditions, certainly including the Abrahamic faiths, together with faith traditions from the East, can and must contribute to this effort, and need to make creative use of new media to reach out to our young, and tell the stories of the past.

Against this background, I would like to share some experiences of the “Feather Project” that was recently launched in the Peace Palace in The Hague – a new multimedia initiative to encourage intergenerational dialogue and collaboration that seeks to draw upon the wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions to address the major global challenges humanity is facing.

It is the custom of Native Americans to hand the elders a feather and ask them to relate to the young generation what particular lesson they want them to hold to, all through their lives. In my own experience, I have come to realize how important it is also for the elders to hear and learn the ambitions and hopes of the young. Therefore, the Feather Project involves capturing on video the core messages of moral and spiritual leaders of our time, based on the question: “Based on your life experience, what lesson would you like to share with the next generation?”. These messages are being captured in short video clips,

which are being made available on the internet, and are being combined with the visions, dreams, and aspirations of young people, as well as suggested steps to put this inspiration into practice. I believe with all my heart that in the combination of the visions of the young and the wisdom of the elders lies a key to unlocking the immense resources of human imagination, creativity and compassion that are so much needed in our troubled times.

In the course of the Project, we seek to involve religious leaders such as Imam Ilyasi, chair of the All India Organization of Imams and Mosques, the Dalai Lama, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Amma, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Patriarch Bartholomew, and Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs. Just imagine if their life's messages, their stories and their moral and spiritual teachings could become as famous and popular as the music videos of those "pop stars" like Britney Spears or Robbie Williams the young generation is so keen about.

We know in our heart and bones that God who created us in His Image, calls upon us every hour to mend, repair the world, to heed the cry of every single child that is going hungry. As we deeply recognize each other's uniqueness, and celebrate the manifold differences, we at the same time know to the core of our being, that we constitute one human family, bound together in mutual responsibility. We are one body, when one part of the body aches, the other parts feel the pain. When one part is hungry, besieged by violence, and degradation, we all feel deprived. So let us work together to build a global partnership of compassion and love across the generations, nations and religious traditions, and use every possible medium to spread this call of urgency.

Please let me end by sharing my own lesson, the experience of a baby seeking refuge – the story that constitutes the background for all my encounters with the young generation. The man of the resistance, holding me in a suitcase with holes in it, knocked on the door. Ria and Bertus van der Kemp opened the door. In a split second, they had the choice to take care of this Jewish baby, with all the risks entailed, or to close the door. By opening the door widely they gave me life. More and more, I see myself, I see ourselves, holding the doorknob in our hands. The door is ajar. Do we open or close the door? Millions upon

millions of children in desperate need are staring at us with frightened eyes. Do we close the door, or open it widely?

## **Media placement in building personality of a child and raising him/her religiously, culturally, and socially**

**Sanaa Petersen**

*Cape Town, South Africa*

*Western Cape Provincial Parliament*

*The twenty first century saw the rapid development of new technologies, shrinking the globe, uniting us and bringing us closer together, creating a 'global virtual village.' In some instances, its presence is welcomed as a necessary communicative tool, fulfilling functional roles namely, disseminating the daily news, weather and financial indicators, classifieds etc. and in some instances it is lambasted for its role as society's watchdog. Some would argue that the media and its technological tools are shaping the world into a homogenous race, destroying minority cultures and religious identities.*

The twenty first century saw the rapid development of new technologies, particularly the computer chip, satellite and cable communications, digital television, computers, video games, virtual reality and the internet. These technologies are changing our patterns of behaviour, our modes of accessing knowledge, our entertainment, and our ways of seeing the world and interacting with one another (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2004)

It is also rapidly shrinking the globe, uniting us and bringing us closer together, creating a 'global virtual village.' In some instances, its presence is welcomed as a necessary communicative tool, fulfilling functional roles namely, disseminating the daily news, weather and financial indicators, classifieds etc. and in some instances it is lambasted for its role as society's watchdog. Some would argue that the media and its technological tools are shaping the world into a homogenous race, destroying minority cultures and religious identities.

This paper is intended to provide a brief discussion on the impact the media and its technological tools have in raising a child in a knowledge-based society.

### **Historical and Traditional Role of the Media**

Defining the media is not easy as it is constantly evolving with the new technologies. In a media studies resource book authors Shaughnessy and Stadler (2004) define media as a specialist information medium that transcends physical barriers,

‘The media are technologically developed and economically profitable forms of human communication, held either in public or private ownership, which can transmit information and entertainment across time and space to large groups of people’

Predating technology and the printed medium, mass media originated with the speeches of tribal leaders, kings and priests. From the 1800’s newspapers were the primary medium of mass communication and focused predominately on societal affairs namely, marriages, deaths and ‘upper class’ lifestyle concerns, as literacy was limited to the affluent, most newspapers were handwritten and had a retail value.

Initially, the printed media did not have that much ‘power’ in persuading public opinion, but with the development of the railway and the invention of the printing presses its popularity grew. Subsequently, the broadcast radio and television diversified the traditional media characterization and was controlled by the wealthy and powerful namely, governments and corporations.

According to the World Association of Newspapers:

‘Between 1890 to 1920, the period known as the “golden age” of print media, media barons such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and Lord Northcliffe built huge publishing empires. These men had enormous influence within the media industry, and gained notoriety for the ways in which they wielded their power. *‘Iskra* (The Spark), published by Lenin in 1900, is one notable example. On June 21, 1925, *Thanh Nien* made its debut in Vietnam, introducing Marxism to the country and providing information on the revolution’s strategic policies.’

These media developments had no direct impact on the child’s opinion as the child’s development was greatly influenced by the parents, caregivers, society and religious persuasion.

### **Definition and impacts of New Media**

The rapid advancement of the media and its technological tools enables ‘intimate and individualized’ conversations with its audience. Traditionally, media conversation was

one-to-many, leaving the recipient with no control or influence over the content namely, the 'Editor' would communicate his message to the public without any expectation of a reply.

Prof Vin Crosbie, Adjunct Professor teaching New Media Business at Syracuse University defines modern-day media or commonly termed 'New Media' as, '...the evolution of several ostensibly unrelated technologies converged during the past century to create a third and entirely new communications medium – New Media

Among those convergent technologies were:

The invention of digital communications during the late 1940s;

The invention of the Transport Control/Internet Protocol ((TCP/IP) in the late 1960s;

ARPANET's creation of the Internet during the early 1970s;

The invention of the personal computer in the late 1970s

And to lesser degrees of the importance:

The invention of the HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP) in the late 1980s;

The opening of the Internet to the public in 1992;

The invention of the Mosaic browser software in that same year.'

Today, children are equipped with the most advanced media tools, which allow instant accessibility to all sorts of information. They are now able to participate in discussions, share ideas, purchase products, influence public opinion via mobile and website polls and reality television shows. One such example of young persons influencing public opinion is the televised interactive programme, American Idols.

The American Idols interactive show grew phenomenally with its young audiences in America and globally. The concept of the programme was to search for 'undiscovered' talent, create a platform for aspiring singers and to economically improve their quality of life.

According to Cecile Frot-Coutaz, executive producer of American Idols:

'A lot of young, talented people are now seeking careers and representation before they turn 16. 'Lowering the age limit allows us to tap into this talent pool.'

The producers of the programme have recently lowered the age entry limit to fifteen years to capture a much younger audience putting entertainment and singing as life

enriching careers. Their advertising slogan reads, ‘One audition changed the rest of their lives.’ To qualify this slogan the producers have listed the previous winners with their current (dull) employment status before becoming a celebrity namely,

‘Before AMERICAN IDOL, Lee DeWyze worked as a paint store clerk in Mt. Prospect, IL. Kris Allen was a college student from Conway, AR. David Cook tended bar in Blue Springs, MO. Chris Daughtry was a service advisor at a car dealership in Greensboro, NC. Carrie Underwood lived on a farm in Checotah, OK. Jennifer Hudson was a cruise ship performer from Chicago, IL. Kelly Clarkson was a waitress from Dallas, TX.’

The American Idols successfully converge traditional media (television) with new technologies and its products namely, mobile phones, computers, internet, blogs, emails, podcasts, online newsletter, alerts, voting, individualized ringtones, music games and electronic resource library. The phenomenal growth of ten seasons is directly attributed to the convergence of media and technology, without it, the show would be confined to a community and the producers would have had to travel to various locations to find new talent and garner support.

Following the success of the American Idols, South Africa imported the concept and also experienced phenomenal growth. A success story from South Africa is the 2005 Idols winner, Karen Kortje, a single parent who was working as an apple picker on a farm in Grabouw.

Before the Idols competition, Karen from Grabouw a small apple growing town nestled between the Hottentots-Holland, [Kogelberg](#) and Groenland Mountains with a population of 15663 (Grabouw Tourism Bureau) and high illiteracy rates was unbeknown to South Africa. More importantly, her winning the title is attributed to the votes received from the viewers. Karen received over two-million votes. The convergence of the media and technology with its low costs enabled young persons to vote for their favourite singer, giving them the means to actively participate in the show and influence the judging process.

Interestingly, in South Africa, youth make up almost half the country’s population and especially in our new democracy, where their participation is most needed, most young

persons are indifferent when it comes to electing a President to run the country. This apathy could be attributed to the following:

1. The voting process are confined to buildings
2. They are subjected to standing in queues
3. They feel isolated, distant from candidates
4. Subjected to time
5. Need to travel

Perhaps, the South African government and the Independent Electoral Commission should re-look at their educational methodologies and voting criterion to interest and attract youth or perhaps the fourteen to sixteen year olds are much more technologically savvy than we give them credit for.

In the absence of the 'older' generation not fully aware of the new media and it's impact. Children are increasingly shaping their own and public opinion, creating 'new' norms by using the media namely, the changing of the English language from alpha to alpha-numeric, for example, the word *wait* is transformed to *w8*. Increasingly, they are creating their own language to ensure maximum and effective usage of technology, for example, words are reduced to sounds, for example, the words *see you* is transformed into two sounding letters, *c u*.

These new developments are initiated by the users of new media and not its producers, for example, an sms was initially limited to 245 characters per sms prompting the innovation of 'new technological language' as mobile phones usage cost were much cheaper than a landline and allowed the user his/her privacy, it increasingly plays a more functional role, demanding more individualized applications. The main reasons why mobile phones are more popular with young persons are:

It can be transformed into an individual and personalized form of communication

The user has full control over its content

It is convenient, lightweight, wireless and regarded as a fashion accessory

It has useful everyday applications like setting alarms, calendar planning, creating database of contacts and friends, calculator and navigator.

More sociable applications appealing to young persons are the camera, recording of songs, games, easy access to internet and social networks like mxit, forums, chat rooms, video recording and playbacks.

The disadvantages of new media and especially mobile phones are:

The invasion of privacy; many users take unsolicited photographs or manipulate images. Saudi Arabia had banned camera phones through out the country while many countries are concerned about this problem. They have also banned the usage of the Black Berry. Psychiatrists believe that mobile phone addiction is becoming one of the biggest non-drug addictions in the 21st century.

An increase in Cyber bullying, which is a bullying act using offensive words and behavior via online chatting, emails or SMS text messages. Or more serious form is blackmail – users use unsolicited photographs and video to persuade or manipulate users. Many scientists believe that the radiation from the mobile phones may cause the users to have different symptoms such as headache, earaches, blurring of vision and even causing cancer.

Mobile technology is the future and more popular with the younger generation, yet many of them don't understand the dangers of unlimited access to information and social networks. Most young users as young as seven receive their first mobile phone from their parents without any guide as to the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile phones. Many parents are not aware of the dangers and allow children to build and share their individual profile, which contains personal information, to faceless 'friends' of the cyberworld.

According to Jean Piaget, a Developmental Biologist, children under the age of 15 are not capable of reasoning as an adult. They don't have the capability to discern between 'good' and 'bad' information. Seven year olds are not yet responsible for their behavior as they don't understand the principles underlying best behavior, they only understand the do's and dont's as a command. And from the age of 12 upwards the child's thinking becomes more logical and the child begins to tell the difference between the tangible and abstract.

## Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

### The Preoperational Period

(2-7 years)

#### Intuitive Phase

(4-7 years)

Speech becomes more social, less egocentric. The child has an intuitive grasp of logical concepts in some areas. However, there is still a tendency to focus attention on one aspect of an object while ignoring others. Concepts formed are crude and irreversible. Easy to believe in magical increase, decrease, disappearance. Reality not firm. Perceptions dominate judgment.

In moral-ethical realm, the child is not able to show principles underlying best behavior. Rules of a game not developed, only uses simple do's and don'ts imposed by authority.

### Period of Concrete Operations

(7-12 years)

#### Characteristic Behavior:

Evidence for organized, logical thought. There is the ability to perform multiple classification tasks, order objects in a logical sequence, and comprehend the principle of conservation. Thinking becomes less transductive and less egocentric. The child is capable of concrete problem-solving.

## Period of Formal Operations

(12 years and onwards)

### Characteristic Behavior:

Thought becomes more abstract, incorporating the principles of formal logic. The ability to generate abstract propositions, multiple hypotheses and their possible outcomes is evident. Thinking becomes less tied to concrete reality.

These are the ideal cognitive developmental stages of a child that is nurtured in a loving and stable home, yet with modern-day challenges, both parents need to work, the HIV/Aids virus has transformed many homes into child-headed households and the increasing child abuse rates has detrimental consequences on the development of a child. And, whilst the home is not conducive to raising a child with a high self-esteem and equipping them with critical, logical and analytical thinking processes the child is developing their own perceptions of life and acceptable behavior. This behavior might not comply with the religious, social and cultural identity of the family or community as the child has created his/her own identity with their 'virtual community', constantly chatting on their mobile devices, living past the 'real' family. This double life breaks down the family or social unit and creates relations within relations. The child develops a 'sense of belonging' with his/her virtual community, a dependency on new media for its day-to-day living and regards the information posted on the internet or on their mobile phones as true without verifying the source or the content.

In the absence of monitoring the content of 'New Media' and quality educational programmes in schools the child is increasingly becoming vulnerable to the dangers of 'New Media'.

## **Bibliography**

O'Shughnessy M and Stadler J., *Media and Society*, Oxford university press, 2004

Scher M, *Surviving the SA Media – Building bridges to make the media more accessible*, Knowres Publishing (Pty) Ltd, 2009

#### Internet Research

World Association of Newspapers, *A Newspaper timeline*, retrieved from

<http://www.wan-press.org/article2822.html> (accessed August 2010)

Vin Crosbie, *What is New Media?*, 1998 (*revised to include world usage figures and Napster example*, 2002, retrieved from [www.sociology.org.uk/as4mm3a.doc](http://www.sociology.org.uk/as4mm3a.doc))

<http://www.info4cellphones.com/cell-phones-for-children.html#main>

<http://www.trcb.com/technology/mobiletech/disadvantages-of-using-mobile-phone-910.htm>

<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/piaget.shtm>

## **Religious upbringing and contemporary challenges in a globalised era**

**Revd Donald Reeves Ma. M.litt. MBE**

Contact details: [donalreeve@aol.com](mailto:donalreeve@aol.com)

*The paper describes the need to develop the essential practice of 'solidarity' in response to the persecution of religious minorities; it highlights the difficulties religious leaders experience in responding to internal conflicts. 'Dialogue' has lost its currency through overuse, so I describe it as a special kind of conversation. All are invited to participate – those for whom absolute certainty is a prerequisite as well as those, in the West, who have trouble working out their faith in a secular world. The crisis of religious authority, the way sacred texts are read, the recovery of the Imagination, a consideration of the problem around 'segregation and integration' are described. This paper outlines the huge task of challenging the idolatry of management-speak and the market which has trespassed on the territory of religion. The paper ends with a call for opportunities for newcomers to inter-religious dialogue to learn the skills and art of dialogues.*

I have tried to make this difficult subject as manageable as possible. I have therefore chosen a personal and straight-forward approach.

I understand globalization as a world which is being transformed into a universal free market, which transcends national boundaries. I note too that the casualties of this transformation are the weakest and the poorest.

Today we are made aware of each other's religion inconceivable fifty years ago: interfaith activity was regarded as strange, strictly for specialists.

As a boy I had lessons in religion, but they were confined to Christianity and the Church of England. I still have my note books when as an eight year old I had to write down what a church is, what a priest is. There was nothing about Judaism, Islam, Eastern religions, let alone other Christian Churches.

That has now changed. There is considerable awareness of different religions. But awareness is not the same as knowledge. In spite of the internet and, for some, easy access to travel, there is still widespread ignorance, a striking ignorance about religion. A

little knowledge is dangerous. Ignorance fuels prejudice and prejudice fear of ‘the other’. The stranger is not welcome.

My early memories of religious education created a vacuum ready to be filled by caricatures. Up to the time I left Cambridge University I had never met a Muslim or a Jew. My experience is not unique among my generation, nor in younger generations. I want to propose a programme for ‘religious upbringing in a globalised era’. The programme has two elements: The Practice of Solidarity, and Conversation and Study. There is much criticism of interfaith dialogue. ‘Why do you go to these solemn meetings?’ I am often asked. Another asked: ‘What do they achieve?’ (And behind this question lay a further question about measuring: measuring the outcome). Or as I am told frequently: ‘You all sit round the table on some top floor while on the ground floor a fire is raging!’ Most of us are aware of these criticisms but the fires can be brought under control and inter-religious dialogue has to make a significant contribution.

### **The Practice Of Solidarity**

The context I know best is the United Kingdom, Western Europe and the Balkans, particularly Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo. So what I have to say comes out of this context. Solidarity means standing in the shoes of the other – particularly when the ‘other’ is marginalized or persecuted. Solidarity is not just an attitude.

Imagine for a moment a synagogue in East London. It has been vandalized; anti-Semitic slogans are scrawled on the walls. A neighbouring cemetery has had the Jewish graves ripped up, destroyed. Then, following this vandalism, the local mosque and the local churches together express their solidarity with the local Jewish community.

Imagine an arson attack on a mosque in East London: many of the Muslim community are frightened. They feel unsafe. Then the local synagogue and local churches together condemn the arson and express their solidarity with the Muslim community.

Imagine a church in East London. The doors have been forced open; the cross on the altar has been broken. The church has been desecrated. Then the local synagogue and local mosques together express their solidarity with the Christian community.

A demonstration is organized by the three communities; it is disrupted by extremists and in spite of a strong police presence there is a sense of possible violence on the streets. But the demonstration continues on its way to each of the three places of worship, a mosque, a church and a synagogue where speeches of friendship are made and prayers offered to God.

That is an expression of solidarity, part real, part imagined. But to arrive at this point, this act of solidarity, takes a lot of time and effort. The local religious leaders have over the years taken time to get to know each other. They and their communities have often visited each others place of worship. The mosque, the synagogue and the church were accessible to each of the other communities. Slowly each community begins to have a sense of the others, their culture, traditions and their worship. Friendship grows, meals are shared. Time and again people said: 'Well I never realized what it is like to be a Jew, a Muslim or a Christian here.' This is already happening in places like Leicester in England and Duisburg in Germany. But these are the exception and not the rule.

In most places there remain problems. Some members of these communities do not want to get involved in what is seen as being too political. (The demonstrations I mentioned could well have happened after 9:11 or after the London or Madrid bombings.) Some members left their places of worship. The rabbi, priests and imams faced conflict among their communities; none of these leaders were used to handling these disagreements; sometimes the authority of those leaders was challenged and appeals to the sacred texts of those communities compounded the divisions because of different interpretations of these texts.

The emerging solidarity which I have described has also to be replicated regionally, nationally and internationally. In other words, the growing of solidarity has to become a 'movement', to resist marginalization and persecution of religious minorities.

I have been involved in peace building in the Balkans for ten years. One thing I have learnt is that peace building depends on establishing networks of firm working relationship with the 'enemy' so that those who are not like us become our partners. This is also true of inter-religious dialogue.

## Conversation And Study

‘Dialogue’ is now the word to describe many of the activities under the interfaith umbrella. But it has become overused to the point that the word is almost meaningless. In Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, recently I met an official from the European Union; I was trying to get financial support for our work of mediation, bringing together the Serbian Orthodox monks from the monastery of Decani together with local Kosovo Albanian Muslims between whom relations have been strained since the war there ten years ago. The official said to me: ‘We have done dialogue.’

So there is much to be said for another way of describing the processes of talking, listening, paying attention, appreciating other religions, other cultures and traditions. This is Conversation: an art we have almost lost in the West.

I have been lucky enough to have experienced conversation, where listening is intense, but not without laughter, where conversation is real, serious but not solemn. In Bosnia the Soul of Europe had been commissioned to bring together Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims to agree on a Memorial demanded by the survivors of Omarska, a killing camp where hundreds of Muslims were murdered during the Bosnia War. Our brief was clear: we had to persuade both parties, Serbs and Bosniaks, to get round the table, to plan the Memorial. To assist us in this tricky task we invited a group of about a dozen young Serbs and Bosniaks to meet with the Soul of Europe regularly. Those conversations in Prijedor, the town nearest to the killing camp, during a hot, dusty summer in gardens and later throughout a bitterly cold winter in a smoke-filled café run by returnee Muslims, were a model of attention in which disagreements were expressed but where the listening never faltered.

Who then should participate in these conversations, and what should be their subject, given the title of this lecture: ‘Religious Upbringing in a Globalised Era’?

Everyone should be invited to ‘the table’, not just those who are committed to inter-religious dialogue, but particularly those who might be considered ‘spoilers’. I am thinking for example of those who justify terrorism by quoting from the Qur’an, those who validate settlement in the West Bank with references to the Hebrew prophets, those

who ransack the Book of Revelation to sanction their government's policies in Israel and the Middle East.

Those who use sacred texts in this way regard religion as a means to restore certainty in a conflicted world.

This quest for certainty, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is flourishing - understandably so, given the uncertain and even apocalyptic future unfolding before us. I refer to the social and political effects of global warming with the possibilities of famine triggering movements of population; then the rapid expansion of the world's population will raise urgent issues concerning energy and food shortages. There is the persistent threat of small armed terrorist groups and the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons. Yes those who wish to have nothing to do with these conversations have to realize, however difficult, that it is in their interest to participate. Sometimes those who stake their lives and faith on certainty are criticised for having little to do except to convert others to their way of thinking and living; whereas the rest of us are too busy. I am reminded of the aphorism by Oscar Wilde who said: 'The trouble with socialism is that it takes all of your free evenings.'

The other growing and flourishing groups who need to be invited 'to the table' are those who say 'I am a good Muslim, but...' or 'I am a good Catholic, but....' the word 'but' is significant.

Some years ago I was invited to participate in a Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in Trinidad. I described the Soul of Europe's attempt at encouraging the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in the city of Banja Luka in the Serb Republika Srpska part of Bosnia. We saw this work as a story of Muslim/Christian collaboration. The Ferhadija Mosque was one of fifteen destroyed during the Bosnia War in Banja Luka alone. All of them were blown up and the stones and foundations removed; a signal that the Islamic community was no longer welcome there.

When I had finished my speech a mufti from Trinidad told me: 'The Bosnian people deserve to have their mosques destroyed: God was telling them they were not true Muslims.' What is a 'true' Muslim? I have made many friends who were both Bosnian and Muslim. Some have become secularised, but they remained Muslim. One put it this

way: 'I am a Muslim in my heart, but I do not carry out all the religious observances.' The question for these Muslims is what constitutes a 'true' Muslim in terms of his/her relationship to the world. I will look at this question later under the heading of 'Segregation or Integration'.

Then particularly in Western Europe there are those who say they are Catholic but ignore the teachings of say, birth control issued by the Vatican. 'I go to Mass,' a friend says to me, 'but not as often as I used to.'

Thus, apart from those drawn to inter-religious dialogue, to 'the table' need to be invited those who regard this activity as unnecessary and a waste of time, and those who call themselves Jewish, Muslim or Christian but who have difficulties in making sense of their faith in relation to the way they live it out in the world.

What follows is the outline of a program for those committed to inter-religious conversations which need to be set up: schools, universities, academies of all kinds and religious institutions.

### **The Crisis Of Religious Authority**

The crisis began in the 1960's when in the West a new generation began to say: 'We will not be told what to believe; we will find out for ourselves.' Deference to authority disappeared. 'We will make up our own minds.' This has raised difficult questions for religious leaders. If they appeal to the Qur'an, the Torah or the Gospels then there are others who say: 'These texts are not correct for today,' and will refer to others.

This is a major issue for all religions, compounded by one of the effects of globalization through the Internet. Not only is there choice for everyone, there is also scholarship and learning, so the academic's study is no longer a privileged place.

Authority is not just about theoretical questions. As I noted in my example from East London the local religious leaders were faced with intense reactions, some enthusiastic, some highly critical to the extent that a number of people no longer appeared at worship. There is a significant question for religious and community leaders: how can they be helped to deal with conflict in their communities? Most of us are not trained to do this.

But there is now a substantial body of work, theoretical and practical, on conflict resolution and peace building which should be drawn on.

A basic issue over authority needs to be opened up, to find out what is more or less relevant in this day and age. Difficult. I would mark up one particular area for discussion, but without proposing a solution: and that is the question about democracy. How far should some religious institutions embrace democracy in which the voices of everyone are heard, in order to eventually reach compromise? In different Christian Churches one can find striking differences about the way decisions are made. In Eastern Orthodoxy the decisions are made by the Bishop, and there can be no disagreement. Some forms of Protestantism also have a top down authoritarian leadership. If you don't like the decisions made then you have a choice: to live with it or leave. There are other Churches where decisions are debated and decided at every level.

Together with teasing out issues around authority comes consideration of leadership, and training for leadership.

### **Sacred Texts**

Religious leaders often refer to their text to reinforce their arguments, but as noted earlier interpretations of these ancient texts can be manipulated for political and other reasons. There is consequently a major task awaiting the Abrahamic Faiths to discover how these texts should be read and interpreted.

However difficult this task may be and complicated, it is necessary, and far beyond the scope of this lecture. But there is a recent development about reading Sacred Texts which promises a possible way forward for different Faiths to study them together.

This is the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. Representatives from different traditions gather to study common themes in the Qu'ran, the Torah and the New Testament: for example those that concern our common humanity, the nature of friendship and issues of the world's creation. What began in America in 1994 among academics is beginning now in the UK and in the US to be undertaken outside universities, in meeting places and churches, mosques and synagogues. There is something compelling about listening to a Rabbi expounding say the story of Jonah and the Whale, and then from the Qu'ran a

Muslim scholar staying close to the text, expounding the same story; and then a Christian recounting the same story from the Christian Bible. This practice is inclusive: it should and needs to include those for whom certainty is central and those who share a more open perspective, women as well as men.

### **The Imagination**

A neglected area in inter-religious conversation and study is the Imagination. Religious leaders have often been suspicious of the Imagination because they fear its uncontrollable and anarchic qualities. However it is through the Imagination that one comes closer to the heart and soul of each religious faith, as it manifests itself in art, music, painting, dance, sculpture, design and artefacts used in rituals.

### **Segregation or Integration**

Here is a story: it begins in the back streets of Leeds, a northern town in the UK. A hundred years ago it used to be a working class community, generation following generation down the mines and into the mills of Northern England. That community no longer exists. A Muslim community, mostly families from Pakistan, live there now. Nadia was born there thirty years ago; her parents were and remain devout Muslims. Nadia's mother says: 'We are Muslim; before everything else we are Muslim.' The parents made an important decision. To give their clever daughter the best education possible, giving her the best opportunities for a future career, and sent her to one of the best schools in the area, away from the Muslim community, but they insisted on her wearing different clothes from the other girls, trousers to cover her legs instead of short skirts. Nadia worked hard, and went to University where she joined the secular European young adult culture and left her Qur'an at home. She gained a first class degree, then a doctorate and is now a University lecturer, married to a Muslim and living in an expensive suburb of the city where she was born.

The human cost of this success story is not immediately apparent. Nadia's family, including members living in Pakistan, became extremely distressed. They felt they had lost their daughter, that she had betrayed them. Nadia's determination to succeed

concealed much anguish: guilt and confusion. She had problems with her identity, was she a Pakistani Muslim or British? For years there were considerable strains at home: arguments, silences, tempers lost. The human cost of Nadia's gradual acceptance of her identity as a British Muslim was considerable, although somewhat eased by her marriage to a Muslim, a respected member of the community.

Nadia's experience is typical of many across Europe and beyond, and from different Faith communities. Her parents consider themselves Muslim, even above being British. Whenever they leave the Muslim community in Leeds, to visit the seaside on holiday or go to other places in Britain, they have learned to put up with racist abuse: 'Go back to where you belong, etc...' That is the price paid for living in a community that is effectively segregated, and therefore a target for suspicion, racist and cultural prejudice. The local imam and the mosque supported Nadia's parents. They too considered that Nadia had betrayed her parents and turned into a 'bad' Muslim. However Nadia is proud of her Muslim soul, the traditions that raised her. The story of her life continues – now she has children of her own.

Her story shows how difficult it is for minorities. Should they allow themselves to be segregated as much as possible, in which case they will be regarded with suspicion by their host countries, and their communities become ghettos. History tells us what happens to people in ghettos. Or should they integrate themselves, and risk losing their identity? 'Religious upbringing' has to include public discussion at every level, local, national and international. The issues are too important to be put aside, not least because of the human cost, as Nadia's story shows.

### **The World – Resisting Idolatry**

Recently a survey of 24 year olds from London asked what these young people felt about school: what is a school for? The unanimous response was: 'to improve social skills'. Why did they think that necessary? 'To get a good job.' Nothing illustrates better the way that the 'markets' have taken over in the West as representing life's purpose. I object strongly to the way in which the ideology of the market has invaded the territory of those of us whose mandate is to provide answers to the fundamental question: 'What is

our purpose as human beings?’ What is it that God wills for Creation? This market ideology has crowded out many opportunities for sacrifice, generosity and kindness – those immeasurables without which life becomes bleak and soulless.

So there is a huge task to examine the fundamental assumptions about the world we have constructed, noting how they work in practice – not least noticing the widening gap between rich and poor. The Faiths need to reclaim that territory of questions about the meaning and purpose of life; not leave the market unchallenged.

On my first visit to Sarajevo overlooking the city on a summer evening I heard the Call to Prayer: ‘I bear witness that there is no divinity but Allah.’ In other words: ‘you shall have no other idols’.

### **Learning the art of dialogue – A special sort of conversation.**

In a speech to the Christian and Muslim Conference of Scholars in London in March 2010 Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury described dialogue as ‘growing together’.

This is what he said:

*In every single human life we see something of how the infinity of God’s mystery winds itself into the mystery of a human life and personality.*

*Every human face reflects something of that mystery.*

*Every human face is worth attending to.*

*Every human voice is worth hearing.*

*How much more so when you see another human face, and hear another human voice directed towards God. The language that the other person uses about God may not be the language you use; you may disagree and find areas of enormous strangeness between you. And you will still want to say: ‘In that attention to the other I will discover something of God’.*

That is what the Archbishop means by ‘growing together’. So the question remains to be considered: How can the newcomer to inter-religious dialogue/conversation learn the art of ‘dialogue’ so that he or she experiences it as ‘growing together’.

Dialogue does not just happen. It is an art to be learnt: skills in listening and facilitating.

Therefore there is a need for opportunities for people to come together to learn and practise the art and skills of dialogue.

Many who are committed to inter-religious dialogue are modest; claims to truth are held, certainly, but they have developed an intrinsic gentleness and openness to the world. Modesty is not weakness. If the fires I mentioned at the start of this paper are to be extinguished, then inter-faith, inter-religious dialogue and its working out in solidarity as I have described need to become a 'movement'. Nothing less will do – not least to counter the extremists from all sides who constantly grab the headlines. As I prepared this paper, I read of a pastor in Florida who on the anniversary of 9:11 was going to burn a copy of the Qur'an. Nothing could be more offensive to Muslims throughout the world, and such an act harms Christianity itself. It could be said that this is how Christians view Islam. To resist this, those of us committed to another way have to be prepared to speak and act consistently and boldly and together.

In this paper I have described the elements in the practice of solidarity, and have proposed areas for further conversation and study. I am aware that the title of this lecture could be directed towards young people: what are we to teach them? We have to first make a clearing in the forest. Once there is some clarity about the issues I have described, about our 'own religious upbringing', and in the minds of those who have a responsibility for passing on our religious traditions, then the paths will be clearer for us to follow.

## Teach your children well<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky**

*Appleman Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies, Jewish Theological Seminary  
3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027, USA, [buvisotzky@jtsa.edu](mailto:buvisotzky@jtsa.edu)*

*The role of educational, social, and media institutions cannot be separated from the content of the values and traditions they transmit. The author considers five areas of common concern to Jews and Muslims in America for raising the new generation within the broader Christian and/or secular milieu: A) Where we came from: The Arc of Judaism and Islam in America. B) Assimilation and Authenticity: The Challenges Judaism and Islam face as part of America. C) Interpretation of Scripture. D) Interpretation of Law. E) Looking Forward: Training the next Generation. These will be considered, along with a session on Christian views of minority religions, at a workshop for Muslim and Jewish scholars jointly sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Islamic Society of North America, October 25-26, 2010.*

### **Introduction**

“Raising the new generation on a foundation of values and traditions” has been a challenge since the time of Adam and Eve. “The role of educational, social, and media institutions” in doing so has been an engine of advancing religious civilization throughout recorded history. I prefer to not survey *all* of humanity and history on this noble topic, and instead will narrow my purview to Judaism in America for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even here, we must distinguish further between the role of institutions affecting transmission, and the content of religious values and traditions.

If you will allow an analogy from *Hadith*, there is a difference between the *isnad* and the *matn*. It is true that generations of Muslim scholars have struggled to determine the authenticity and validity of the transmission of Muslim traditions –there is a venerable

---

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:7, as interpreted by Crosby, Stills, and Nash, *Déjà Vu* (1970), lyrics by Graham Nash.

science dedicated to the study of *isnad*.<sup>2</sup> But once the vehicle of transmission (*isnad*) has been established, the quality of its content (*matn*) becomes all important. So, too, while we may delineate the role of educational, social, and media institutions in raising the new generation; we are remiss if we do not examine the content of those values and traditions. My assumptions are two-fold. First, that values and traditions are not static, but slowly evolve over time. Values change and are in tension with received traditions. Second, we cannot separate the institutions from the content they transmit any more than we would separate the *matn* from its *isnad*. The institutions by which we transmit those values and traditions have a role in shaping the content of our teachings. As Marshall McLuhan famously put it, “The Medium is the Message.”<sup>3</sup>

As a scholar of religion, serving as a professor of Midrash,<sup>4</sup> I stipulate that educational, social, and even media institutions each play a role alongside that of family, and synagogues, churches, and mosques in the transmission of our religious values and traditions. I wish to emphasize the distinction between values and traditions; for in modernity we often find an uncomfortable conflict arising between modern values, values of the surrounding culture, and the traditions of our ancestors. Each of the means of transmission (media, educational, and social institutions) can serve to potentially exacerbate the tension between values and traditions or, when thoughtfully studied and applied, serve to enhance the transmission and education of those religious values and traditions to the new generation.

In focusing on Judaism in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, I note that the Jewish community, alongside the Muslim community of America, is embedded within a largely Christian and/or secular culture. This means that Judaism in America differs in kind from Judaism in Israel, or even Judaism in Europe at the current time (which is, perforce, a decidedly more secular culture than that of America). In large measure, what is true of Judaism in

---

<sup>2</sup> *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith*, translated by Eerik Dickinson, (Reading, U.K.), 2006; and see the classic by Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle), 2 vols., 1889–1890.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, 1964), et passim.

<sup>4</sup> See Burton L. Visotzky, *Reading the Book: Making the Bible a Timeless Text* (New York, 1991); and idem., “The Literature of the Rabbis,” in B. Visotzky and D. Fishman, *From Mesopotamia to Modernity: Ten Introductions to Jewish History and Literature* (Boulder, 1999) 71-102.

America is also true of Islam in America. Both share common features as religions and cultures, and also share minority status. As such, Judaism and Islam have a great deal to learn from one another as they respond to the Christian hegemonic milieu.<sup>5</sup>

I wish to take a brief detour to establish my *bona fides* on the “role of educational, social, and media institutions in raising the new generation.” I am a conservative Rabbi who was ordained and earned my Ph.D. at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, where I currently teach.<sup>6</sup> My training includes expertise in the ancient literature of the rabbis, and comparative work in New Testament and Church Fathers. Recently I have been learning Arabic that I may augment my ability to work in Quran, Hadith, and other Muslim sources (إن شاء الله). I am trained in education, have served as an academic dean, write both academic and popular mass-audience books in Jewish studies, have blogged,<sup>7</sup> done television (including a ten hour series with Jews, Christians, and Muslims discussing the book of Genesis for public television),<sup>8</sup> and even consulted with DreamWorks on their animated feature “Prince of Egypt.”<sup>9</sup> I am not shy about using educational or media institutions to teach our values and traditions.

## Values and Traditions

The *raison d'être* of the Jewish Theological Seminary, where I teach, is precisely the transmission of Jewish values and traditions to the next generation of American Jews. Indeed, we see the problem as urgent for both Jews and Muslims within the predominantly secular and Christian American culture.<sup>10</sup> For more than a year we have

---

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. the classic works by Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (NY, 1994) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (London, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.jtsa.edu/Academics/Faculty\\_Profiles/Burton\\_Visotzky\\_Bio.xml?ID\\_NUM=100589](http://www.jtsa.edu/Academics/Faculty_Profiles/Burton_Visotzky_Bio.xml?ID_NUM=100589)

<sup>7</sup> Primarily on *Reuters: Faithworld: Religion, Faith and Ethics*. See

<http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/genesis/>

<sup>9</sup> See Charles Solomon, *The Prince of Egypt: A New Vision in Animation* (New York, 1998), p. 191 where current author is listed under Research: Religious Consultants.

<sup>10</sup> Much of what follows comes from planning documents for the “Workshop on Judaism and Islam in America,” described here. The steering committee for the two-day workshop consists of Prof. Arnold Eisen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Prof. Ingrid Mattson, ISNA

been addressing these issues together with our Muslim colleagues from the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). These deliberations have resulted in the convening of a “Workshop on Judaism and Islam in America,” which will take place on Monday and Tuesday, October 25-26, 2010. As we write in our statement of the issue we seek to jointly address:

American Jews and American Muslims face an array of pressing and often troubling issues, none more significant perhaps than maintaining their heritage and identity in a predominantly secular and Christian culture. ... [the joint workshop offers opportunities] ...for Jewish and Muslim scholars to gather and share their learning and insight as these bear on the problems and unique experiences of the two groups as they seek to live and teach their traditions faithfully and authentically in the unprecedented conditions of 21<sup>st</sup>-century America.

To facilitate discussion of the questions that face us scholars and educators in transmitting the values and traditions of our separate religions in a common Christian/secular culture, we are gathering Jewish and Muslim educators, media experts, and social scientists to join in conversation. This workshop is closed to outsiders in the hopes of encouraging frank discussions and relationships which allow for mutual trust, understanding, and synergy. Only when we explore the common problems we face, can we work toward common solutions for raising the new generation of Jews and Muslims, *mutatis mutandis*.

In order to focus the workshop, we are considering five content-areas: A) Where we came from: The Arc of Judaism and Islam in America. B) Assimilation and Authenticity: The Challenges Judaism and Islam face as part of America. C) Interpretation of Scripture. D) Interpretation of Law. E) Training the next Generation. Each of these areas seeks to establish the common ground among Jews and Muslims: our shared attitudes, similar

---

President and Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary, Prof. Burton L. Visotzky, who serves as the workshop’s program officer, and Ms. Jessica Marglin, of Princeton University, who graciously brought to fruition our plans and coordinated the conference. Visotzky is responsible for the language and content of this essay, its errors and omissions.

practices and beliefs, and mutual challenges within the broader American culture. We will also have a sixth session on “Christian perspectives.” In this session we invite the heads of three major American Christian Seminaries to share their views on the challenges which Jews and Muslims face in America and the role of Christian religious leaders in shaping inter-faith tolerance, acceptance, and respect for one another. In tracing “Where we came from” the scholars will focus on the social history of Judaism and Islam in America. We explore the development of Judaism over the past two centuries in America and the emergence of Islam in America. We seek to determine how Judaism and Islam in America each differ from their antecedents: how Judaism in America differs from its European origins and how Islam in America is developing a separate identity from its Middle-Eastern and Asian roots. The different waves of immigration that brought separate and diffuse populations of Jews and Muslims to America are a topic for consideration. We will also attend to changing attitudes within America toward immigration and minority cultures. We will observe how within each religious population sub-communities and denominations have developed. We assume that the study of history leads us to understand how we became what we are. This allows us to imagine an arc of progress into the new generation.<sup>11</sup>

Our session on “Assimilation and Authenticity” seeks to address how our young people assimilate to the broader American culture, how both religions face xenophobia in the forms of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and how the new generation navigates these pressures while forming an independent religious identity through education in Muslim and/or Jewish values and traditions. The Jewish community in America has experienced these issues a generation and more ahead of the Muslim community, which is currently confronting these challenges. Yet we have much to learn from one another’s successes

---

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004); Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States: 1654-2000* (California, 2004); Barbara Bilgé, “Islam in the Americas,” in M. Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1987), 7:425-31; Sulayman Nyang, “The History of Muslim Immigration in the U.S.,” paper presented to *Symposium on Muslims in North America*, 1983; Ilyas Ba-Yunus, “Muslims Living Next Door,” in N. Hosansky and M. Jalil, eds., *Muslims and Jews* (Columbus, 2003) 83-90.

and failures in confronting and engaging these essential tests to maintaining identity in America.<sup>12</sup>

In our discussion of the interpretation of Scripture, we consider how contemporary interpreters draw on traditional methods to find new relevance in *Tanakh* and Quran. The impact of modern critical scholarship upon traditional interpretation, to say the least of its impact upon finding religious significance in our sacred texts, is an essential topic.

Scriptural interpretation is a flashpoint in the debate between the traditional and the scientific historical-critical approach. While both Judaism and Islam each have a long history of Scriptural interpretation, the modern university presents challenges to religious approaches on two fronts. On one hand, traditional readings are dismissed as quaint, or worse, as false. Secondly, the non-denominational attitudes inherent in American universities often give rise to a class of interpreters who study Scriptures from outside their own religious traditions. While this provides a patina of objectivity, it runs the risk of unsympathetic interpretation of our classical texts. We seek to find a middle ground that allows for critical yet sympathetic scholarship which accounts for modern research methods while respecting the integrity of traditional readings<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, we find interpretation of law to be contested territory. Judaism and Islam confront aspects of modernity which have bearing upon our legal traditions. Scholars of *halachah* and *fikh* are called upon to adjudicate religious law for changing conditions brought by technological innovation; but also by changing social mores and values in the broader American society. A simple example would be the shifts in attitudes over

---

<sup>12</sup> See Chaim Waxman, *American Jews in Transition* (Philadelphia, 1983); Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2000); Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into America: The Challenge of Islam* (Brookings, 2010), Paul Barrett, *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion* (New York, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Two excellent examples of sympathetic attempts to synthesize modern scholarship with traditionalist views are Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York, 2001); and Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Quran: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Malden, Mass., 2008).

centuries of American experience toward slavery. A much more complex and contested example would be the role of women in religious leadership.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, we look forward to the future of Islam and Judaism in America. Specifically, we focus on the training of Rabbis and Imams for American constituencies. This requires discussion of educational, social, and media institutions. But it also recognizes the unique demands upon clergy for Islam and Judaism in America going forward. We expect to discuss professionalization of clergy, gender roles (i.e. the role of women in religious leadership), and the increasingly complex relationships between religious institutions and communal organizations.

## Conclusions

While the workshop of Judaism and Islam in America is intentionally a closed group (to enhance connections, openness, and progress), we intend to use our educational institutions, social organizations, and media following the workshop to publish our shared vision and conclusions. To that end, I have spoken at the Doha forum and the annotated, longer version of my address will be published for the international inter-religious community in the conference proceedings. At our workshop itself, we will hold one public session, reprising the discussion on “Assimilation and Authenticity” for a large public audience. Publicity for the public session is being coordinated with the New York Public Library’s exhibition of manuscripts of the three Abrahamic religions. Following the workshop we intend to use a variety of media to circulate our findings. *The Journal of Interreligious Dialogue* will serve as a means of disseminating our work to the broadest possible audience. Our conference coordinator will write a summary article of the workshop findings. Further, the Journal’s *InterViews* will post short videos of the

---

<sup>14</sup> See Elliot Dorff, “The Historical Development of Jewish Law,” in idem, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to our Descendants* (New York, 1996) 53-68. For Islam, see the writings of Muzammil Siddiqi, president of the Fikh Council of North America, on [www.IslamOnLine.net](http://www.IslamOnLine.net) and [www.islamopediaonline.org](http://www.islamopediaonline.org).

workshop participants on-line through both the Journal website<sup>15</sup> as well as on YouTube.<sup>16</sup>

In summary, we have considered the broad content areas of Jewish values and traditions and their means of transmission in educational, social, and media institutions of America. We also recognize that raising the new generation must happen in conjunction with our Muslim and Christian neighbors.

### **Select Bibliography**

Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2000)

Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States: 1654-2000* (California, 2004)

Elliot Dorff, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to our Descendants* (New York, 1996)

Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York, 2001)

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004)

Burton L. Visotzky, *Reading the Book: Making the Bible a Timeless Text* (New York, 1991)

B. Visotzky and D. Fishman, eds., *From Mesopotamia to Modernity: Ten Introductions to Jewish History and Literature* (Boulder, 1999)

Chaim Waxman, *American Jews in Transition* (Philadelphia, 1983);

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://irdialogue.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/user/religiousdialogue>

## **The Importance of School Curricula in Implanting Religious Values**

**David J. Michaels**

*B'nai B'rith International, USA*

*In his paper on “the importance of school curricula in implanting religious values,” David J. Michaels, Director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs at B'nai B'rith International, will offer analysis of a fundamental and nearly universal objective, doing so from his perspective as a communal professional, representative of a young generation, an American, a traditionally observant Jew, and one committed to seeking understanding and cooperation between diverse people of goodwill, not least Jews and Muslims. Drawing on sociological and pedagogical insights, and particularly the corpus of Jewish religious texts and thought, Michaels will submit the view that educational curricula for young people remain essential in fostering the values – service to one’s Creator, and care for fellow people – common to the major faith communities.*

I would like to thank His Highness the Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, as well as all the conference organizers, and not least the people of Qatar for hosting this latest of inter-religious dialogues, and for their very kind hospitality. As a Jew who seeks friendship with Muslims – not least knowing the exceptional commonalities between Judaism and Islam – it is a privilege for me to be present in this very special country, and I am honored to be among many distinguished religious leaders, scholars and many friends.

Indeed, in sharing thoughts, perspectives, and insights, it is my hope that this exercise in intellectual exchange and communication can sow seeds for new friendships. During the course of my own focus over recent years on intercommunal – both interreligious and interethnic, as well as international – relations, I have found that the identification of shared goals and shared challenges can open new avenues for practical partnership, for mutual understanding and mutual esteem. And ultimately, to borrow the well-worn cliché, I have found that there truly is more that unites us than that which divides us. Undoubtedly, it would be a supreme and overdue blessing to discover fundamental

human commonality in this region where we meet – and for harmonious interpersonal and intersocietal coexistence to be modeled here for the rest of the world.

I have been asked to offer some thoughts, from my own Jewish perspective, on the importance of school curricula in the imparting of religious values. Though I cannot claim to be an educator, I bring the vantage point of a young person who is also a member of a millennia-old faith whose continuity and *raison d'être* have been bound up inextricably with education. I am also the citizen of a Western civilization that has been defined in increasingly significant ways by modernity and secularism, while the most defining values and beliefs of my own life and that of my family remain rooted in the ancient landscape of this very region.

It is thus certainly appropriate, as we seek common ground – particularly those here who look to the patriarch Abraham and his descendents as forefathers – that we reflect on the importance of study and schooling in maintaining our traditions and all that they represent.

Moreover, in a world wherein about 85% are believed to harbor some form of religious faith – Christianity and Islam alone account for approximately three-and-a-half billion adherents – the transmittal of doctrines and values can be considered to be very close to *universal* concerns, while many of even those who are agnostic or non-believing would subscribe to essential values often jointly held, developed, concretized and promulgated by the major religions.

As for Judaism and the Jewish people, it almost goes without saying how central and vital education is to our collective existence. The traditional inclusion of Jews among those seen by Muslims as *ahl al-kitab*, “people of the book,” is one of the most valued such designations that come to mind.

It is no secret that Jews have generally placed a premium, even above other significant pursuits, on the amassing and bequeathing of knowledge, religious and otherwise. For a people that has long been few in number and faced with a variety of challenges, this has proved to be a critical asset – this cultivating of “human resources” – while the sacred texts served as a spiritual homeland of sorts, a roving anchor, to Jews in their dispersion throughout the world.

In a helpful summation of the sense of cohesiveness and identity that comes with the study and maintenance of religious precepts, the nineteenth-to-twentieth century Jewish figure Ahad Ha'am said: "More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews." Jews, like all mortals from the dawn of time, have been imperfect; they – we – have at times strayed, and erred, and fallen short of aspirations, even as we have been mercifully preserved, with the help of memory, and hope, and customs such as those of the Sabbath, that symbol of a more peaceful reality, taste of a more elevated existence, and reminder of God's creation of the world and His great intentions for it.

But, in Judaism, scholarship is not simply an option, something to be undertaken and instrumentalized when desired. Rather, it is a paramount commandment and duty: As observant Jews read from Deuteronomy<sup>1</sup> after recital three times daily of *Sh'ma Yisra'el*, the declaration of faith: "Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart." Moreover, the verse's continuation makes clear that one is not entitled to hoard their essential knowledge, but must transmit them to future generations: *v'shinantem l'vanecha* – "Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you lay down and when you arise." Further stressing the need for all – leaders, but also laypeople<sup>2</sup> – to have engagement in study of scripture as a continuous element of life, we read in the book of Joshua<sup>3</sup>: *v'hagita bo yomam va'layla* – "This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; rather, you should contemplate it day and night in order to observe to do according to all that is written in it."

Thus we have enunciated a Jewish truism, that knowledge of the text is a prerequisite to fulfillment of the text. And so, for the very reason that study leads to broader (let alone more meaningful) observance, religious study is not simply one of 613 Biblical commandments, but rather, *talmud Torah k'neged kulam* – in a real way, "the study of Torah is equivalent to them all."<sup>4</sup> Jews are told in the ethical treasury known as the

---

<sup>1</sup> 6:6-7

<sup>2</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:8

<sup>3</sup> 1:8

<sup>4</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 127a

Chapters of the Fathers (*Pirkei Avot*) that their true freedom is manifested in study,<sup>5</sup> and that none should gloat over distinction in Torah study since, after all, and I quote, “it was for this that you were created.”<sup>6</sup> The renowned medieval Jewish philosopher, physician and religious authority Maimonides, when asked until when the obligation of Torah study applies, said: until one’s very last day.

Yet there should be no mistake that, as we are taught,<sup>7</sup> *lo hamidrash ha’ikar ela ha’maaseh* – “it is not study that is the essence, but rather action.” Indeed, in perhaps the seminal moment of Jewish history, those who received the revelation at Sinai famously declared: *na’aseh v’nishma* – “All that the Lord has said, we will do and we will hear!”<sup>8</sup> Classical commentators interpreted this formulation – agreement to comply even before grasping in full – as reflecting submission to the Divine will, notwithstanding deficiencies in human understanding or appreciation. At the same time, there is little question that, in the Jewish tradition, study of God’s word – beyond purely practical instruction – demonstrates the most ambitious, and character-refining, objective: of growing in love and awe of God, by seeking greater familiarity with Him and understanding of His will. This, even as observance of God’s will is not dependant on degree of mastery of, or individual comfort with, its reasoning – and undoubtedly that reasoning is at times an objective mystery, beyond our comprehension.<sup>9</sup>

The value – and, for that matter, responsibility – attached to one’s own study and to the teaching of others has led in Judaism to related institutions and practices. Study is encouraged communally, and especially in partners. Upon becoming *b’nei mitzva* – reaching the age of obligation in observing the commandments – young Jews lead synagogue prayers along with reading from the Torah and the corresponding portion from the Prophets. Following the Jewish view of heritage faithfully preserved, interpreted and maintained, specialized scholars are ordained as rabbis, and Jews are encouraged to seek out a personal rabbinic authority for competent Jewish spiritual and ritual

---

<sup>5</sup> 6:2

<sup>6</sup> 2:9

<sup>7</sup> Chapters of the Fathers 1:17

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 24:7

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9

guidance;<sup>10</sup> in fact, the very word “rabbi” – *rav* – connotes teacher. The relationship in which inestimable wisdom is imparted obliges one in deep respect and gratitude toward another from whom he or she learned even just a bit<sup>11</sup> – while the attitude of the quintessential teacher is that he or she has learned a great deal from mentors and colleagues, but the most of all from engagement with students, for whom lessons must be reviewed, re-explained and analyzed until they are adequately absorbed.

Undoubtedly, then, schooling is held to be utterly crucial in the molding of well-equipped, fully formed – that is, faithful but thinking and probing – religionists. Jews would establish residence only in communities with educational facilities. The Babylonian Talmud relates, in this vein, that “the whole world exists only for schoolchildren.”<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the curriculum itself, the general recommendation in *Avot*<sup>13</sup> would have instruction in Bible – that ultimate foundation of Jewish history, theology and law – commence at age 5, and progression in study and analysis of *halacha* (religious law) with immersion in Mishnah and Talmud at age 10 and 15, respectively. However, there has been evolution and diversity in Jewish educational curricula and methods across time, place and ideological and denominational spectrum. Staunchly traditionalist Orthodox schools stress the Talmudic “Oral Law,” commentaries and legal codes as including debates and rulings founded on, and applying, Biblical content. The Talmud itself appreciated individualism by conveying the suggestion that students be guided to study areas that resonate with their own hearts.<sup>14</sup> Quite apart from the traditional Ashkenazic village *cheder* of old (or of Chasidic communities today), most modern Jewish educational institutions – whether synagogue-affiliated “Sunday schools” or “Hebrew schools,” or the more intensive *yeshiva* academies or “day schools” – extend focus beyond scripture and rabbinic responsa by including classes, often over the course of years, on Jewish history, language, philosophy, ethics and relevant contemporary

---

<sup>10</sup> Chapters of the Fathers 1:16

<sup>11</sup> Chapters of the Fathers 6:3

<sup>12</sup> Shabbat 119b

<sup>13</sup> 5:25

<sup>14</sup> Avoda Zara 19a

literature. While passion for the holy texts was encapsulated in the mantra *hafoch ba, va'hafoch ba, d'chula ba*, “delve into it, and delve [further] into it, for everything is in it,”<sup>15</sup> centrist Orthodox institutions have coined an embrace of *Torah u'mada* – both Torah and the sciences – as an expression of reverence for all authentic forms of wisdom on God’s earth. Moreover, while women always played an indispensable role in the educational upbringing of young Jews and in the creating of a truly Jewish community, avenues for highly advanced Jewish scholarship by women have expanded dramatically across the Jewish world.

Admittedly, though, the picture that I have portrayed is one largely of the traditional ideal. Like the age-old Jewish emphasis on education, I imagine that contemporary challenges in effectively imparting it may also be relatable to many colleagues in this room, of diverse backgrounds.

Indeed, the modern reality within the Jewish people is one of struggling to contain passive defection or distancing of members from the organized community, or at least from its practiced faith. The world Jewish community of roughly 13 million people is divided nearly evenly between the Diaspora, principally the United States, and Israel. In the latter, the Jewish population (with corresponding public and private educational tracks) can be divided crudely into Orthodox, traditional and secular “thirds,” but there is limited possibility of genuine demographic loss to Jewish society. In the United States, however, the Orthodox – whose children make up the strong majority of those enrolled in Jewish religious schools – currently comprise only about 10% of affiliated Jews, yet the majority of affiliated American Jews today associate with the Reform movement (followed by the Conservative movement, also on the liberal flank of Orthodoxy but to the right side of Reform).

Studies consistently show correlation between the preexisting commitment (and significant financial investment) manifested in religious education and continued religious identification and practice. Twenty years ago, the National Jewish Population Survey showed that this identification and practice is declining, with at least 50% of American Jews marrying outside the faith.

---

<sup>15</sup> Chapters of the Fathers 5:26

Ironically, the separation of church and state in a Western nation like the U.S. – in contrast with many European countries with past or even lingering recognition of official state denominations – has seemed to allow for the relative flourishing of the majority religion, in this case Christianity, while members of minority faiths enjoy equal liberties but are afforded unprecedented temptation and opportunities to not only integrate but assimilate and become disassociated from their unique identity.

Showing the need for better and more widespread religious education, another challenge even in the U.S., considered to be among the most religious Western societies, is overall gaps in religious literacy. In the *U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey* of the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life,<sup>16</sup> released just a few weeks ago, Americans correctly answer only 16 out of 32 questions on “the core teachings, history and leading figures of major world religions.” Though Jews and Mormons performed better, with respective correct-answer averages of 20.5 and 20.3, notably it was atheist and agnostic respondents who fared the best with an average of 20.9; also, interestingly, Christians showed the greatest proficiency on the Bible, while Jews showed particular familiarity with other religions, including Islam.

For the purposes of our current discussion, the survey found that higher levels of education, regular discussion of (and involvement with) religion, and attendance at private rather than public schools were linked to better performance – although no added advantage was attached to *religious* private schooling.

What is clear – including within Western societies, even among those skeptical toward religion, and presumably within other societies characterized by different majority-minority dynamics and different interplay between religion and government – is that more fundamental knowledge, transmitted fairly, compellingly and comprehensively, is needed about our own faith systems and communities. Indeed, it is something to be reinforced that graduation from institutions of higher learning is popularly called not “conclusion” but “commencement” – signaling that intensive and broad-based learning is not a short-term, passing phase but a lifelong process.

---

<sup>16</sup> September 28, 2010; Washington, DC

At the same time, it perhaps falls most upon us – those who know and experience the beauty, richness and timelessness of faith – to present faith as positive and edifying in a global marketplace of ideas that not only is crowded and competitive but within which religion is too often seen as the cause of problems, not solutions; division, not unity; and hurt, not healing.

The religious roots that so many see as their own is described in Proverbs as “a tree of life for those who grasp it,” whose “ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.”<sup>17</sup> Many religious communities and canons contain elements of extremism or triumphalism. Without sacrificing one’s religious integrity and sense of self, it is up to us to stress, in our religious curricula and otherwise, the crucial elements of humility, generosity, compassion and peace.

Indeed, it is up to us to hasten peace through self-reflection – and to erode stereotypes and mistrust of others by eroding ignorance and increasing exposure and empathy.

Without a doubt, engagement in a truly inclusive dialogue across communities, nations and cultures is an act of both shared interest and self-interest – comporting well with the teaching: “Who is wise? He who learns from every person.”<sup>18</sup>

In a word, the religious values that we must seek to transmit must not only be those that relate to how we serve our God, but also how we care for His creatures, and the global community that we comprise.

After all, we are all children and parents; seekers of truth and meaning; sons and daughters of Adam and Noah; mortals created in the very image of God<sup>19</sup> – He Who commanded: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”<sup>20</sup>

*Shukran jazeelan wa’aleikum as’salaam.*

---

<sup>17</sup> 3:17-18

<sup>18</sup> Chapters of the Fathers 4:1

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>20</sup> Leviticus 19:18

## **Bibliography**

*Babylonian Talmud*, Soncino Press (1961; London).

*Mishneh Torah*, Moses Maimonides [Philip Birnbaum, ed.], Hebrew Publishing Company (1967; New York).

*Siddur Rinat Yisra'el*, [Shlomo Tal, ed.,] Moreshet Publishing Company (1970; Jerusalem).

*Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim (Tanakh)*, Koren (1996; Jerusalem).

*U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey*, Pew Research Center (2010; Washington, DC).

*For related statistics, the following two sources are among those recommended:*

*National Jewish Population Survey,*

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=33650>

*North American Jewish Data Bank, <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/default.asp>*

## **The Role of Religious Education in the Development of Society**

**Hegumen Philip Riabykh**

*Vice-Chairman*

*Department for External Church Relations*

*Russian Orthodox Church*

*The economic crisis has revealed a weakness of the modern system of social development. Many specialists believe that to prevent such downfalls in the future it is necessary to carry out a serious restructuring both in individual countries and on the international arena. This, in its turn, is impossible to do without a review of the ideological foundations of the modern development model. As is known, basic ideas of this model have been formed since the Modern Time. Among the characteristics of this model is the material development of society made absolute. In the last century, the leading countries of the world have concentrated on the efforts to ensure the material conditions for human life, while rating personal spiritual life as a private and secondary matter. This has ensured freedom of conscience, on one hand, and guaranteed the protection of various ideological groups against arbitrary decisions and violence of the state. But on the other hand, the society has ceased to be concerned for the religious and, generally, moral elevation and education of its members, thus refusing to support the basic source of energy for a pro-active behavior of people in social processes. As a result, the society has come to be dominated by spiritual impoverishment, individualism, ethical relativism and the cult of consumption.*

Economic crisis has revealed the weakness of the modern model of society development. The future is becoming more uncertain. People's distrust in various public institutions is growing. The meaning of human activity is being lost. Many analysts believe that to

overcome these tendencies it is necessary to carry out a serious restructuring of social relations both in individual countries and on international arena. It is impossible to do it without a review of the ideological foundation on which the modern model of development is built. As is known, its principal ideas were formed during the Enlightenment.

Certainly, the project of modernity started since the Enlightenment has some indisputable achievements. But one of its dogmatic characteristics is dominance of the material factor in the life of society. For this reason, the major efforts of world leading countries have been focused in the last century on ensuring the material conditions for people's life while their spiritual life has been ranked among secondary issues. Moreover, the modern model of society itself very often sees religion as an antipode of development, thus prescribing it desirably as full exclusion from the life of society.

However there are many more successful social projects based on religious motivation than its various negative manifestations. For instance, the religious motivation ensures today the demographic growth, solid families, social relations based on mutual trust, struggle against poverty, promotion of moderate consumption of material goods and diligence. These ethical guidelines are vital for a way out of the crisis and renewal of the social development model.

Nevertheless, extremism on the basis of religious motivation does exist. What to do with it? Certainly, a barrier should be put before all the religious and non-religious extremist forces. But it does not mean that in doing so, it is necessary to deny religion an active role in the public sphere, as suggested by some secularists. An active presence of religion in the social sphere is no less risky than the presence of non-religious ideas. For instance, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the non-religious and anti-religious thinking generated terrible examples of mass violence. And today, acts of violence are committed under the banner

of non-religious ideas in no smaller but may be even in greater number than under the religious one. To my mind the main problem is not a potential conflict between different religions but the discrimination of believers by representatives of the secularist worldview. In order to achieve peace it is necessary to propose an alternative to the secularist model of modernity. This alternative should not exclude but integrate the religious worldview. We need such a model which takes all that is positive from the modernity and restores the artificially interrupted link between religions and social life. That is why, in my view, it is important not only to oppose to religious extremism but in the first place to build mechanisms of support for a positive presence of religion in society. An irreplaceable instrument in this regard is the system of education and formation.

Representatives of the secularist model of modernity insists today on a neutral teaching of knowledge about various religions in national education systems and on acquaintance with different religious traditions without any stress on children's native tradition.

Regrettably, the modern approach to education often presupposes the communication of knowledge and skills without teaching children how this knowledge should be used. This is the greatest mistake, especially at a time of intensive development of technologies.

However, a religious motivation for one's positive conduct in society can be formed only if a child receives the system of moral values through his own religious tradition which is not something apart from him but in which he or she can live. Only being enrooted in his own tradition a young person can make acquaintance with other main religious traditions of the world and respect them.

The development of the religious education system in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union represents a special case. Our people survived the time of persecution against religion and total prohibition of religious education. So we started to

build this system from zero level after the collapse of the USSR. On the one hand each religion began to develop its own, independent from the state, system of education from kindergartens to higher schools. But a system of education is a very expensive enterprise and we understood very soon that it is impossible only with our forces to cover all needs of people in religious formation. This is the common task of religious organisations, state and civil society! The main religions of Russia Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism proposed the following model of religious education in state schools. This model means the presence in curriculum of the obligatory discipline which is called in Russia - "Spiritual-moral culture". But inside of this discipline there are options to choose. Parents are asked to choose for their children either "Religious culture of their faith" (Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism), or the "History of various religions", or the "Secular ethics". I should say that it was a whole battle in our country with secularists which insisted only on neutral teaching of different religions and they were strongly against confessional lessons even if they are chosen freely.

Fortunately, the position of the traditional religions of Russia was supported in 2009 by the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Now we have an experiment carried out in 19 regions of Russia where this discipline is introduced and given in general schools for children of 11-12 years old. After two years of experiment this discipline will become obligatory in all Russian schools. A research into its results shows already now that this discipline helps to educate children for morality, to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts and to raise the educational level of schoolchildren.

A study of the basics of religious cultures in secondary schools is certainly beneficial. But there are middle and low-ranked civil servants who seek by all possible means to make parents to choose the Secular Ethics. This happens because of efforts of secularist forces which still do not accept the presence of religion in public sphere, including

education. And that is not a particular problem in the post-soviet countries with recent anti-religious past. In many countries where the system of religious education exists and is supported by the state for a long time national authorities are pressured by secularist local and international forces to change the system and make it neutral to different religions.

It is my conviction that efforts for strengthening religious education in each particular country are not sufficient. In the global world, it is necessary to make international institutions to recognize not only the importance of religious education and formation but also ensure the presence of the religious worldview in other disciplines on the school curriculum. I am sure that we can work together for it, for instance, within UNESCO, which is responsible for educational issues. I knew that recently the Organization of Islamic Conference tried to go through the Executive Council of the UNESCO a draft resolution on religious education but it was blocked on the pretext that it is not an issue for UNESCO. I think if to do good preparatory work and to make a circle of supporters in advance even some of those countries which blocked the draft would vote for it in the future, especially, if to shape such a draft not only supporting Islamic education, but religious education in general.

## **Religious contents in information flow and technology revolution: They chose the medium; let us choose messages**

**Joshua M. Z. Stanton**

*Founding co-Editor, Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue*

*Schusterman Rabbinical Fellow, Hebrew Union College*

*The media shapes the terms in which messages are conveyed. Religious organizations and leaders have the opportunity to amplify their messages by rooting them in traditional teachings but being mindful of the new dynamics created by the Internet. Ultimately, religious groups hold an edge over many other organizations in “bundling,” interpreting, and synthesizing ideas from the Internet into accessible and meaningful content for their communities. As such, they should expand their operations to include online components. Even as instantaneous media can at times foment controversy, leadership and forethought will enable many organizations to weather possible challenges in their online work. It appears that overall benefits outweigh costs for religious leaders and organizations that engage current and potential community members online.*

### **Introduction: Media in the Age of the Internet**

In a single line, brilliant and controversial scholar Marshall McLuhan defined the study of modern media: “The medium is the message.”<sup>1</sup> The technological means by which an idea is presented to the public can be more important than the very words used to do so. McLuhan’s insight is more applicable now than ever before. Since it was first presented in 1964, the varieties of media have both grown exponentially and shifted fundamentally in their nature. Once-dominant television – and before that radio, itself preceded by the printed word – has since been challenged, if not outright subordinated, to the Internet. According to Internet World Stats, a marketing research consultancy, approximately two billion people worldwide use the Internet.<sup>2</sup> Of great significance, these statistics indicate

---

<sup>1</sup> *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, with Lewis H. Lapham. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

that Asia, not Europe or North America, leads the way in Internet usage, with well over 825,000,000 users. This shift in media usage not only reflects the economic development taking place in Asia, but a point about the Internet in general: it is the most international form of media ever created. Friends “gchat” online across the world, conference call overseas using Skype software, and collaborate on multi-million dollar endeavors in corporate offices that span Hong Kong and New York via e-mail. Even Africa, the least economically developed continent, boasts well over 100,000,000 Internet users, many of whom engage online media by way of cellular telephones – an advance that has in good part obviated the need for more localized telephone and cable infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

Compounding its internationality is the very nature of the Internet itself: interactivity. Unlike other forms of media, such as television or the radio, users actively engage in Internet media. They create new websites, weblogs, and articles, in doing so expanding and reshaping the Internet’s content. Its very vitality derives from personal relevance and content that can be updated, modified, or redirected at any time. The Internet is, in a sense, the most collaborative project ever undertaken. With two billion contributors and users, it is a work conceived of by few but influenced by all.

As a result of personal contributions to the Internet from around the world, a provocative 200-word posting on an informal “weblog” (more commonly known as a “blog”) can ricochet into a major international news story in a matter of hours. No longer do newscasters or television stations hold a monopoly on disseminating information. Individuals everywhere can command followings on their websites and break news stories that impact the way we understand world events.

Television and radio outlets have responded to the dramatic shifts caused by Internet media with live television “webcasts,” “live-streaming” online radio programs, Facebook “fan pages,” and blogs that feature comments made by viewers. Even as they reach their audiences in large part through unidirectional programs, they have created more

---

<sup>2</sup> “World Internet Users and Population Stats.” <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> “World Internet Users and Population Stats.” <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>>.

According to a stark reflection by bloggers for the World Bank, “94 percent of urban Africans are now near a GSM [Global System for Mobile Communications] signal” and over five billion subscriptions to cellular telephones exist around the world. For more, see: <<http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/more-cell-phones-than-toilets>>.

personalized content and a means by which viewers can react to – and on occasion directly impact<sup>4</sup> – programs.

These careful adaptations have enabled television, and to a lesser extent radio, to preserve their roles in shaping public opinion; they merely do not maintain that ability exclusively. As the London *Economist* describes in its special report on television, “Even the technological futurists found it hard to imagine the explosion of websites, social networking and mobile phones that was to come. Yet these things have not displaced television. Rather, they have squeezed around it.”<sup>5</sup>

Print publications, by contrast, have not fared as well. Newspapers throughout the United States have lost significant market share and revenue, as Internet publications have seized large segments of their readership and an overall willingness to pay for them has declined.<sup>6</sup> Print publications in other countries are likely to experience similar trends in the coming years, if they have not already.

At the same time as many traditional print publications have tended towards decline, entirely new subspecialties of media have emerged as leaders online. In particular, social networking websites (often simply referred to as “social media”) have become central to the Internet. The most popular among them, Facebook, now boasts “more than 500 million active users,” and “700 billion minutes per month spent on Facebook” by all of its users combined.<sup>7</sup> That means that nearly one in four overall Internet users is an “active user” of the Facebook website and that one in eight overall Internet users logs onto Facebook every day.<sup>8</sup> The website was only founded in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

Facebook and other social media – notably Twitter, MySpace, and Digg – owe their popularity to the ability to maximize the benefits that the Internet as a medium provides.

---

<sup>4</sup> “Reality TV,” in which viewers can vote for candidates online or by phone for various contests, is a quintessential example of interactive television.

<sup>5</sup> “Changing the channel: A special report on television.” *The Economist*. April 29, 2010. <<http://www.economist.com/node/15980859>>.

<sup>6</sup> For more, see *The State of the News Media 2009*, produced by the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. <[http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2009/narrative\\_newspapers\\_audience.php](http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2009/narrative_newspapers_audience.php)>.

<sup>7</sup> “Press Room.” <<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>>.

<sup>8</sup> These statistics were derived from a combination of those presented in the “Press Room” and “World Internet Users and Population Stats.”

<sup>9</sup> “Facebook Factsheet.” <<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?factsheet>>.

Users of these websites create profiles designed to show their individuality<sup>10</sup>; they interact with other users immediately and freely, without significant interference from the websites' designers<sup>11</sup>; they can communicate through a variety of formats, whether pictures or online videos, short messages to individuals or open letters to the public; and they enable individuals to interact with distant acquaintances for social or professional purposes. Individualism, instantaneousness, freedom, multi-media interactions, and the opportunity to engage in personal interactions with new people define social media, as well as the Internet itself.

As the quintessential forms of media so far developed in the Internet Age, social networking websites provide crucial lessons for religious, civic, and business leaders seeking to convey religious content online. The medium has changed in ways that appear irreversible. The question is how to seize upon the opportunities provided by the Internet in order to promote religious values and positive interfaith relations. The answer is complex, still in many respects emerging, and includes careful responses to challenges that rapid, public, and global interactions online entail.

### **Religious Movements Venture Online**

McLuhan's adage, "The medium is the message,"<sup>12</sup> is incisive, but also has its limitations. The medium is not the message; it merely defines the terms in which a message can be conveyed. Ultimately, the person presenting that message maintains significant control over the message itself. The Internet will indeed select for messages that play into individualism, instantaneousness, freedom, and multi-media (or multi-sensory) interactions. But religious ideas can still be conveyed in those terms. It requires adaptation to the format of the Internet, not an internal change of the religious worldviews themselves.

---

<sup>10</sup> These profiles include biographical information, photographs, personal interests, workplace and educational affiliations, and connections they have to others with profiles on the social media website.

<sup>11</sup> The frequent exception to this is patrolling to inhibit the exchange of pornography and messages that may be considered harassment.

<sup>12</sup> *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, with Lewis H. Lapham. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

If anything, the messages that the Internet selects for place religious groups and leaders at an advantage. The Internet simultaneously prioritizes individualism and connectedness to others – and ultimately the creation of online communities. Even as one maintains a personal profile on Facebook, one also joins “groups” and becomes “fans” of organizations, people, and ideas. In many respects, Internet users form online congregations around ideas or leaders who inspire them. While messages are often conveyed in a more concise or immediate way on the Internet, versatility and profound knowledge of core religious texts enables clergy and lay leaders to effectively share their messages. The fast-pace interchanges require, if anything, a greater depth of knowledge. Religious websites, organizations, and personas also provide essential services to online communities. The challenge that the Internet poses to its users is an overabundance of information. Religious leadership naturally entails the three crucial services: the bundling, interpretation, and the synthesis of ideas. Religious organizations gather reputable sources of information and “bundle” them together for easier use, interpret these sources in order to draw out overall messages, and synthesize these ideas with current events and modern experiences to provide a solution for age-old existential questions and the challenges of contemporary life.

Without religious, spiritual, or philosophical guidance, many Internet users remain overwhelmed by information. As the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) notes, this overabundance even holds significant implications for entire countries and the ways in which their citizenry engages in matters of public policy: The Internet and other media, as well as initiatives aimed at building information repositories through the collaboration of individuals, such as wikis and blogs, make more information available to more people than ever before. Therefore, the ideal of a “fully informed decision maker” is far from the case: although citizens are constantly bombarded by information, this information is not necessarily translated into knowledge.... On the contrary, more and more people are overwhelmed and confused by the amount of information available.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> “Democracy in the ‘information age’: Opportunities and risks.” Summary of findings in “Statistics and Politics in a ‘Knowledge Society,’” by Enrico Giovannini of the Organisation for

These trends online are of even great importance to religious communities, which have long spanned the globe and are now more interconnected than ever. Religious and lay leaders can play a critical role in helping adherents make sense of current events and information from within the framework of authentic religious teachings.

### **Case Study: Jim Wallis and *Sojourners***

A number of religious organizations are already making use of the Internet to help practitioners contextualize their life's experiences and the information that abounds online. In the United States, Reverend Jim Wallis and the *Sojourners* magazine and community over which he presides, may be the most noted example.

After co-founding *Sojourners* in 1971, Reverend Wallis has guided the organization through a number of transitions, including political changes, demographic shifts, and technological revolutions. Even so, the organization has maintained its core religious values: "Our mission is to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, and the world."<sup>14</sup>

The publication and community it sustains has effectively made the leap online. All issues since 1994 have been made available in full online – an early start, compared to other publications that remain ambivalent about Internet resources. *Sojourners* is now effectively hybridized, with a print publication, website, blog, e-mail listserv, and Facebook "fanpage" that together reach over 250,000 people.<sup>15</sup> The result of this transformation has not only been a voice for *Sojourners* and Reverend Wallis online, but the amplification of those voices in society as a whole. The Internet has created what some technological experts might term an "echo chamber" of ideas.

---

Economic Co-Operation and Development. The report was released in May, 2007.  
<[http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,3343,en\\_40033426\\_40037349\\_41319495\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,3343,en_40033426_40037349_41319495_1_1_1_1,00.html)>

<sup>14</sup> "Mission." *Sojourners*. Accessed August 22, 2010.

<[http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about\\_us.mission](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about_us.mission)>.

<sup>15</sup> "Jim Wallis: President and Chief Executive Officer" *Sojourners*. Accessed August 22, 2010.

<[http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about\\_us.display\\_staff&staff=Wallis?>](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about_us.display_staff&staff=Wallis?>).

The reasons behind this increased reach are at least twofold. First, it is far easier to join the community; doing so no longer requires a subscription to the magazine or attendance at a public forum or presentation by Jim Wallis. It simply entails signing onto Facebook, going to [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net), commenting on a blog post (article), or reading one of Jim Wallis' many columns in the *Huffington Post*, *Washington Post*, or other publications. Second, for those previously involved in *Sojourners* and its community, its messages have become more accessible and available in multiple, more up-to-date forms. Subscribers to the magazine can now read about it in print, take part in gatherings in person, and access up-to-the-moment information about it on their computers and Internet-equipped mobile telephones.

The result is a more intense, direct connection to the *Sojourners* community than was possible before. Members of the movement now absorb its values and content more regularly and are able to use it as a source of information about current events and the news, as well as for theological inspiration and religious guidance. These changes bear the mark of careful planning and leadership. The result has been an organization that combines the immediacy and personalized nature of the Internet with the age-old values to which it ascribes as a religious organization.

### **Caveat: The Internet is Prone to Controversy**

Even as *Sojourners* has in many respects thrived by harnessing the power of the Internet to reach new members and engage existing ones more fully, it has not been immune to challenges created by the Internet.

In March 2010, television and radio host Glenn Beck challenged the idea that social justice was a core tenet of Christianity, even going so far as to call it a “perversion of the gospel.”<sup>16</sup> Beck then singled out one of its major proponents, Jim Wallis, who had become even more of a public persona through his effective use of Internet technology.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Much of this controversy was covered directly by *Sojourners*, including this and other statements made by Glenn Beck. < <http://blog.sojo.net/2010/03/11/glenn-beck-responds-social-justice-is-a-perversion-of-the-gospel/>>.

<sup>17</sup> Wallis has been a prominent figure for decades and has published a number of popular books and countless articles – even before the Internet came into mainstream use.

After strong interchanges (seldom in person or face-to-face), carried out in a series of newspaper articles, television segments, blog post (articles), and radio broadcasts, Jim Wallis and Glenn Beck appeared to be interlocked in a public dispute. Both had access to online and traditional media; both had strong followings; but one was an established religious leader, while the other was more of a political commentator, known for his provocative tactics.

Ultimately, and of great note, both appear to have benefitted from their public disagreement. Neither was censured within their organizations; their supporters – highly disparate in composition to begin with – remained loyal; and both used the opportunity to galvanize their base of support, either to advocate for them online or raise money for their causes. The controversy raised the profile of both figures, without undoing either, at least in the short and medium terms.

It is little surprise that Glenn Beck, as a television persona, weathered the media frenzy online – fuelled by parallel stories in print, on the radio, and on television. But what is noteworthy is how Jim Wallis, as a religious leader with a large and growing online following, managed to do the same.

Apparent in his encounters to Beck were three strategies: maintaining credibility as a religious leader through use of sacred texts, using facts to counter criticism, and responding rapidly to developments as they emerged. In essence, Wallis remained calm and reinforced his usual points about social justice being a core Christian value.

For example, when Jim Wallis offered to dialogue with Beck about the meaning of social justice to Christians, Beck responded with threats. The latter railed,

So you go ahead and you continue to do your protest thing, and that's great. I love it. But just know — the hammer is coming, because little do you know, for eight weeks, we've been compiling information on you, your cute little organization, and all the other cute little people that are with you. And when the hammer comes, it's going to be hammering hard and all through the night, over and over...<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> This and other portions of the interchange between Beck and Wallis have been covered extensively by *Sojourners*, including this piece on March 15, 2010. <

Though likely appalled at such a statement, Wallis maintained his composure and stayed on point. In article after article and television appearances replayed on YouTube.com and Facebook, he reaffirmed his belief that Christianity was fundamentally based on the value of social justice. He remained up-to-date with Beck's latest "hammer," responded by backing up his theological assertions, and increased his public profile by coming across as a moderate religious leader trying to live by his faith, even in the face of strident criticism.

On March 27, Wallis even went so far as to ask his followers to pray for Glenn Beck: Jesus said that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. So whatever Beck does, Christians who want to follow Jesus should not personally attack Beck but, rather, should pray for him, for the poor and for our country, which is being harmed by an increasingly poisonous public discourse.<sup>19</sup>

By rooting his actions and words in the core religious texts to which he adheres, Wallis managed not only to overcome criticism but also address it rapidly and effectively. In doing so, he increased his public persona and demonstrated that age-old wisdom from his religious tradition was more important than ever before to constituents on the Internet. The Internet in large measure enabled the Reverend Jim Wallis to come across as a strong leader. By responding rapidly to Beck through multiple forms of media and with use of Scripture and facts about Sojourners, he weathered a controversy that was in large part also fomented by the Internet. Wallis' interchanges with Beck (which may well continue into the future) provide important guidance about how religious leaders and organizations can respond to challenges that may arise as a result of instantaneous and interactive media.

---

<http://blog.sojo.net/2010/03/15/in-spite-of-glenn-becks-new-threats-my-invitation-to-dialogue-stands/>>.

<sup>19</sup> "Christians Stand Up to Beck." March 27, 2010. *Washington Post*.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/26/AR2010032603630.html>>.

## **Conclusion: New media and sacred messages**

With care, thought, and grounding in one's own religious tradition, it is possible – if not advisable – to create online resources for fellow religious practitioners. While risks do exist, the apparent benefits far outweigh them, especially given the potential to interact with community members around the world in a personal and timely way.

Religion may in time become a singular means by which to bundle, interpret and synthesize information online in order to make it more accessible and less overwhelming to Internet users. Given its potency and widespread use, the Internet will profoundly impact religious practice in the coming century; the open question is how much the reverse will be true.

Drawing from the Jewish mystical (*Hasidic*) tradition that I respect and admire, I sense that the Internet is not as daunting as it sometimes seems amid the flood of information. As Rabbi Hayim Heikel of Amdur expressed through verse, “The basic principle is that you should not do anything – great or small – without first thinking about its Divine source.”<sup>20</sup> The interactive nature of the Internet may be the single greatest collaborative project ever undertaken by humankind. It is, in my mind, a manifestation of our innate creativity, which is itself a gift from our Creator. Given the Internet's potential to link people and provide them with knowledge of themselves and each other, it is upon religious leaders to engage with the Internet and ensure that it can be seen and used as an enterprise reflective of the Creator who made it possible.

The revolution of information technology is well underway. Its greatest undertaking – the Internet – should be approached by religious organizations with care rather than apprehension.

---

<sup>20</sup> “Emotional Mindfulness.” Or Rose and Ebn D. Leader. *God in All Moments: Mystical and Practical Spiritual Wisdom from Hasidic Masters*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2004: page 121.

## Bibliography

“Changing the channel: A special report on television.” *The Economist*. April 29, 2010.

<<http://www.economist.com/node/15980859>>.

“Christians Stand Up to Beck.” March 27, 2010. *Washington Post*.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/26/AR2010032603630.html>>.

“Democracy in the ‘information age’: Opportunities and risks.” Summary of findings in

“Statistics and Politics in a ‘Knowledge Society.’” Enrico Giovannini, ed. Paris:

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2007.

<[http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,3343,en\\_40033426\\_40037349\\_41319495\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,3343,en_40033426_40037349_41319495_1_1_1_1,00.html)>.

“Emotional Mindfulness.” Or Rose and Ebn D. Leader. (Poems translated from Hebrew)

*God in All Moments: Mystical and Practical Spiritual Wisdom from Hasidic Masters*.

Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2004: page 121.

“Facebook Factsheet.” <<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?factsheet>>.

“In Spite of Glenn Beck’s New Threats, My Invitation to Dialogue Stands.” Jim Wallis.

*Sojourners*. March 15, 2010. <<http://blog.sojo.net/2010/03/15/in-spite-of-glenn-becks-new-threats-my-invitation-to-dialogue-stands/>>.

“Jim Wallis: President and Chief Executive Officer” *Sojourners*. Accessed August 22,

2010. <[http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about\\_us.display\\_staff&staff=Wallis?](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about_us.display_staff&staff=Wallis?)>.

McLuhan, Marshall and Lewis H. Lapham. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

“Mission.” *Sojourners*. Accessed August 22, 2010.

<[http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about\\_us.mission](http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=about_us.mission)>.

“More Cell Phones Than Toilets.” World Bank Blogs. April 12, 2010.

<<http://blogs.worldbank.org/african/more-cell-phones-than-toilets>>

“Press Room.” <<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>>.

“State of the Media: 2009.” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism.

<[http://www.stateofthedia.org/2009/narrative\\_newspapers\\_audience.php](http://www.stateofthedia.org/2009/narrative_newspapers_audience.php)>.

“World Internet Users and Population Stats.”

<<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>>.

## **Religious Teaching and its Influence on Liturgy or Worship for raising new generations**

**Dr. Jean-Pierre Lafouge**

*Associate Professor,*

*Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures,*

*Marquette University, (A Jesuit and Catholic University)*

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin,*

*United States of America.*

*In this lecture, it is briefly reminded, firstly, what the topics “How to restore the active role of worship in raising new generation?” implies. Then, I am limiting the question to the relationship between religious teaching and its influence on worship for raising new generations. It is reminded that religious truths are, nowadays, quite threatened from all sides by relativism, rationalism, sentimentalism, consumerism, etc. but that the new generation is visibly hungry for substance according to several surveys. Finally, this kind of discernment allows us to briefly redefine the best conditions for worship and liturgy to faithfully reflect the Sacred in its deepest dimension, on the basis that an authentic liturgy, coupled with Truth, has more profound impact on the new generation than many sermons.*

The topic we are talking about is: “How to restore the active role of worship in raising new generations?” This seems to be a very difficult task nowadays. Let us see first what this question implies. If I analyze more precisely what is implied in this question, I would say the following:

First, it is about “restoring” worship, which means that it would be important to recall briefly what it was before and what means were used and why they are not used anymore, why these means would not be valid today or why they do not “work”.

Second, the question requires an important precision: it is not any kind of role of worship but an “active” role. This implies that there is or there was a “passive” role of worship which has also to be replaced. It is possible that an active participation requires a deep

transformation of religious behavior in our current environment, or a rekindling of faith in general.

Third, the very notion of “worship” has different meanings or different connotations depending on the religion, of the history of a specific religion. This word can be interpreted very narrowly, for example attendance at mass, rites, sacraments, or more widely, prayer, meditation in general, participation in spiritual activities of all kinds, community service to others, etc. Since I discuss here a Christian point of view, mainly a Catholic point of view, (I am teaching in a Catholic and Jesuit university, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA) I risk limiting my presentation to this domain only, but it is possible to find scholarly research which widens this perspective.

Finally, the question is narrowed down to the raising of the new generation, which is quite understandable since they are the future of anything religious and spiritual in the world today. Now, an active continuation is necessary if we do not want a complete disappearance of what constitutes, I hope, in the eyes of everyone here, the best chance of survival or at least the best chance of realizing the very vocation of man on earth as long as God permits it. This last aspect of the question implies two issues which are at stake here. How to make religion attractive to youth on one hand and how not to disfigure this religion to the point that it becomes something else, which means in this case, becoming something which is no longer a religion but an ideology or a pure fantasy? There is here a delicate balance to be observed, especially in the case of Christianity, where imagination is not lacking but where we wonder at times if what is going on in worship is heading in the right direction. There is also the issue whether we do not too often put the cart before the horses. To participate in the mass and use the sacraments are at the same time a consequence for and a help to our faith. If the latter is weak, how worship can reinforce it? If there is no worship how can our faith be strengthened?

Of course, it is not in 20 minutes that I will be able to consider everything that could be said on this topic. Therefore I would like to focus on what are the main intellectual obstacles to authentic worship and how overcoming these obstacles should promote a better participation in liturgy.

Indeed, it is important to remember here what constitutes a religion. A religion is always composed of a doctrine and a method, a teaching and a practice. Its goal is to establish a living link between God and men and women. That is the etymology of the word “religion”, *religare*, to bind. This link is always there from God to men: nothing would exist even for a second without this divine intervention. But it is not always there from men to God, at least in our times and in a much larger scale than ever before. We should not forget that for thousands and probably millions of years, “*homo sapiens*” has been a religious being. It is only during the last four hundred years that things changed in the way we know today. This is an important fact because we should not forget that we are living in a time which is quite different.

First, religion seems quite awkward in a modern, scientific and technological world. The whole ambiance is against religion. About 75% of Americans, for example, say they believe in God, but religion is often replaced by what is called by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in *Souls Searching, The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (Oxford University Press 2005) “moralistic therapeutic Deism.” Religion is often used as a tool for parents to try to prevent children from doing drugs, alcohol, sex etc... Of course, it is better than nothing but is it still religion? Relativism, positivism, rationalism, materialism, psychologist ideologies and consumerism are dominating the stage everywhere. Is it the sign that a new religion is coming with new dogmas and new practices which would revolutionize the world and create a New World Order? I personally doubt it.

From a strictly religious or spiritual point of view, it should not make any difference if we live in the 5<sup>th</sup> century or the 21<sup>st</sup>, if we are young or old, male or female, rich or poor, in prison or free, married or not married, the vocation of a human being is the same: that is to say, to know, to love and to serve God, as I learned in my Catholic Catechism, whatever your destiny is. But, of course, what particularizes youth is important to take into account: young people are more easily receptive but also more fragile. They need good examples and solid intelligent foundations for their religious lives and beliefs. They have to build their own identity and for that they have to go through specific crisis which need to be addressed properly. But crisis are not the prerogative of the youth, as we all

know. The religious education of a child should start very early, in the family, which means that parents, as surveys show again and again, are the first and most important persons in charge in this domain. But the “baby boomer” generation, has not been very articulate doctrinally, they have the tendency to dislike any “rigid” dogmas and institutions (sometimes for good reasons) and anything which would counteract their feeling of independence and liberty. So they have a difficult task. If their religious knowledge is a little deeper, then they have difficulty expressing it, and cannot articulate properly their faith. According to Colleen Carroll, in *The New Faithful, Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*, (Loyola Press, Chicago, 2002), the new generation is much more exigent about the doctrinal aspect of their religion, it is witnessing the consequences of their parents’ short comings, and looks back to traditional teachings more frequently than expected. According to Carroll, even if their numbers are not great, their influence might be decisive.

So, if you want to raise a religious child, what can you do? Completely isolate him or her from the world? Provide a protected environment for some sort of teaching and worship within the family or school? Go back to nature? Adapt worship to the specific needs of youth? Put the accent on service to others? Put the child in situations which could help him or her to transcend him or herself? Give a good example? Give to faith a less sentimental trend? Go back to basic catechism? When religion is passively received, faith loses strength as soon as children gets out of the family and go into the “world”, even after all the adaptation efforts (*aggiornamento*) of Vatican II.

Christian priests and ministers, in the three major confessions are deploying a lot of imagination to help younger generations, to bring them to some form of worship, to participate more actively in the sacraments, etc. But we can also see the other side of the coin: a celebration such as a holy mass or a service risks becoming an “entertainment” and loses as a result its sacred dimension to the point of being almost religiously and spiritually unrecognizable. Too much depends on outward manifestation which outweighs the inward nature of Christianity. An ego-centered activism, in tandem with an extreme outwardness, is all too willingly trying to by-pass the necessarily contemplative orientation of any spirituality, with the risk of “choking” religious vocations from the

start. The importance of canonical prayer and practice is undervalued, to be replaced by more outward activities. For example, a certain form of ideological humanism, emanating from a worldly perspective, is trying to prove that religion is not really needed for helping others. Of course, community service is certainly a good start, if done in the appropriate spirit, to give back to young men and women a sense of who they are as human being or at least a direction in their lives which might promote a more legitimate, compassionate and more understood need for worship.

But let us not put the cart before the horse, when I ask why worship is devalued, the answer is invariably: lack of faith, faith not based on solid ground, that is, “intellective” ground, faith inspired by moralism and sentimentalism, bad examples or indifference of parents and teachers, priests etc... And what are the solutions? To return to true principles, to use again our intelligence, not the rationalist mind, dissociated from the heart, but the intelligence of the heart, the one which feels and understands spontaneously, without doubt, instinctively, the basic evidences of life: that is to say, that we did not create ourselves, that we are part of a world which is much bigger than us but at the same time that we have the ability to be conscious of this world and of ourselves and to know that we are on one hand small, which is why we have to be humble, and on the other hand, that we have a dignity to assume because of being an “image of God”. This means that we need to go back to a clear discernment between what is “worldly” and what is Godly, to redefine man on the basis of what God really is. Any action not based on Truth is pure agitation and useless spiritually. This is, briefly, the doctrine. Now, what about practice, prayer and liturgy?

If I look back to my upbringing (from 7 to 18 years old): Catholic schools had the best influence on my generation: every aspect of life (meals, class time, sleep, learning) was surrounded by prayers (the rosary was one of the most frequent forms of prayer with a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, as well as the use of the Psalms and daily attendance to mass), religious or spiritual readings and many hours of worship in the school chapel or the nearby cathedral for the religious holidays (Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Ascension, etc...). Gregorian chant in Latin was the norm and the practice of the sacraments (mainly confession and communion) was frequent. The teachers, who

were often members of religious orders, provided advice for moral behavior and life, but they did not promote a rigorous and absurd moralism; instead there was a certain moral and spiritual ambiance directly inspired by the spirituality of Saint Francis of Sales and Saint Ignatius of Loyola, based on truth and realism. It should also be noted that music and chants had an important role as well as service at the altar.

This description seems rosy but these practices were still alive especially after the war, when people understood concretely how fragile their lives were. Harsher times very often bring people back to deeper religious lives.

So what happened? Well, the situation is different in different countries and different confessions. I do not have enough time and data to give you the most objective picture but it is possible to say that the situation is worse in Europe, the old world, than in any other part of the world. When you attend Mass in France or Spain, most of the attendants are older people. In North America, the worship attendance is slightly better in the USA than in Canada and a survey made by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton and published in the book already mentioned, reveals that there is a resurgence of practice among the youth in America, whatever religion and whatever confessions may be. This is encouraging. But statistics are not enough to inform us about what is going on. It seems to me that the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church has kept a lot of their tradition related to cult and liturgy: a tangible sacred ambiance is still striking. Catholics and Protestants are deeply divided about what should be a religious celebration. Vatican II tried to put religious worship as close to the new generation as possible, but some risks already mentioned, and even expressed again in Jean-Paul II and Benedict XVI Encyclicals and books show that there is a real problem.

For example, Benedict XVI wrote, when he was still Cardinal, in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*:

Whether it is Bach or Mozart that we hear in church, we have a sense in either case of what *gloria Dei*, the glory of God, means. The mystery of infinite beauty is there and enables us to experience the presence of God more truly and vividly than in many sermons. But there are already signs of danger to come. Subjective

experience and passion are still held in check by the order of the musical universe, reflecting as it does the order of the divine creation itself. But there is already the threat of invasion by the virtuoso mentality, the vanity of technique, which is no longer the servant of the whole but wants to push itself to the fore. During the nineteenth century, the century of self-emancipating subjectivity, this led in many places to the obscuring of the sacred by the operatic. The dangers that had forced the Council of Trent to intervene were back again. In similar fashion, Pope Pius X tried to remove the operatic element from the liturgy and declared Gregorian chant and the great polyphony of the age of the Catholic Reformation (of which Palestrina was the outstanding representative) to be the standard for liturgical music. A clear distinction was made between liturgical music and religious music in general. (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp 146-7, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2000)

To conclude, the closer we live by universal Truth the better our children will participate in worship. There is a real hunger for substance in the new generation (I witness it every day in the class room) and we should not forget our responsibility in this matter. The worst would be to create an obstacle by espousing “feel-good theology”, vague platitudes about tolerance and love, etc... (*The New Faithful*, p.60) and by rejecting hundreds of years of tradition. The more our liturgy keeps the sense of the sacred by encouraging reverence and seriousness instead of just “entertaining”, the more it will strengthen our faith and the faith of the new generation. The main question, expressed by a young person quoted in *The New Faithful* (p. 59), “Do you want to worship God in the way he wants to be worshipped or in the way that makes you comfortable?” Now the way God wants to be worshipped is explicit in the word of Christ in John 4:23-24: 23 *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.* 24 *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*"

## Works Cited:

Carroll, Colleen: *The New Faithful, Why Young Adults are embracing Christian Orthodoxy*, Loyola Press, Chicago, 2002.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger: *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp 146-7, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2000.

Smith, Christian (with Melinda Lundquist Denton): *Soul Searching, The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.

Smith, Christian (with Patricia Snell): *Souls in Transition, The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.

## Bibliography

Aron, Isa. *Becoming a Congregation of Learners—Learning as a Key to Revitalizing Congregational Life*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001.

Aron, Isa, Sara Lee, and Seymour Rossel. *A Congregation of Learners—Transforming the Synagogue into a Learning Community*. New York: UAHC Press, 1995.

Bass, Dorothy (editor). *Practicing our Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Caldwell, Elizabeth. *Making a Home for Faith—Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children*.

Cleveland: United Church Press, 2000.

Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: USCC, 1997.

Darcy-Berube, Françoise. *Religious Education at the Crossroads*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

Department of Education, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. Washington, DC: USCC Publishing, 1999.

Dooley, Catherine. “Liturgical Catechesis for Confirmation.” *Traditions and Transitions*. Edited by Eleanor Bernstein CSJ and Martin Connell. Chicago: LTP, 1998.

Dooley, Catherine. “From the Visible to the Invisible: Mystagogy in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.” *Living Light*, Spring 1995.

Dooley, Catherine. "Mystagogy: A Model for Sacramental Catechesis." *The Candles Are Still Burning*. Edited by Mary Grey, Andree Heaton, and Danny Sullivan. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Dooley, Catherine. "Catechumenate for Children: Sharing the Gift of Faith." *Readings in the Christian Initiation of Children*. Edited by Victoria Tufano. Chicago: LTP, 1994.

Dooley, Catherine. "Baptismal Catechesis for Children of Catechetical Age." *Issues in the Christian Initiation of Children*. Edited by Kathy Brown and Frank Sokol. Chicago: LTP, 1989.

Dooley, Catherine. "The Lectionary as a Sourcebook for Catechesis in the Catechumenate." *Before and After Baptism*. Edited by James Wilde. Chicago: LTP, 1988.

Dykstra, Craig. *Growing in the Life of Faith—Education and Christian Practices*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1998.

Foster, Charles. *Embracing Diversity*. Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1997.

Foster, Charles and Theodore Brelsford. *We Are the Church Together—Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Foster, Charles. *Educating Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

Foster, Charles. *Teaching in the Community of Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982.

Foster, Charles. "The Faith Community as a Guiding Image for Christian Education." *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*. Edited by Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller. Nashville: Abingdon Press 1982. © Center for Ministry Development - 21 -

Foster, Charles. "Intergenerational Religious Education." *Changing Patterns of Religious Education*. Edited by Marvin Taylor. Nashville: Abingdon Press 1984.

Groome, Thomas and Harold Daly Horell, editors. *Horizons and Hopes—The Future of Religious Education*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

Groome, Thomas and Michael J. Corso, editors. *Empowering Catechetical Leaders*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Education Association, 1999.

Hadden, Jeffrey K. *Religion in Radical Transition*. New York: Transaction, Inc., 1971.

Hardon, John A. *Christianity in the Twentieth Century*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971

Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

Huebsch, Bill. *Whole Community Catechesis*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002.

Mongoven, Anne Marie. *The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

Nelson, C. Ellis. *Where Faith Begins*. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967.

Pope John Paul II. *Catechesis Tradendae*. Washington, DC: USCC Publishing, 1979.

Regan, Jane. *Toward an Adult Church—A Vision of Faith Formation*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

Ross, Murray. *Religious Beliefs of Youth*. New York: Association Press, 1950.

Sawicki, Marianne. *The Gospel in History—Portrait of a Teaching Church: The Origins of Christian Education*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Stevens, James H. S. (2002), *Worship In The Spirit - Charismatic Worship In The Church of England*, Paternoster.

Thompson, Margorie. *Family—the Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.

Ward, Pete (2005), *Selling Worship - How What We Sing Has Changed The Church*, Paternoster

Warner, Rob (2007), *Reinventing English Evangelicalism 1966-2001 - A Theological And Sociological Study*. Chapter 2 includes a study of changing worship styles.

Webber, Robert. *Ancient-Future Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Weiss Ozorak, Elizabeth: *Social and Cognitive Influences on the Development of Religious Beliefs and Commitment in Adolescence*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1989 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

Westerhoff, John. *Will Our Children Have Faith*. (Revised Edition) New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2000.

- Westerhoff, John. *Living the Faith Community—The Church that Makes a Difference*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Westerhoff, John, and William Willimon. *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle*. (Revised Edition) Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1980, 1994.
- Westerhoff, John. *Learning through Liturgy*. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.
- Westerhoff, John and Gwen Kennedy Neville. *Generation to Generation*. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974.
- Westerhoff, John, editor. *A Colloquy on Christian Education*. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1972.
- White, James. *Intergenerational Religious Education*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988.

## **Media placement in building personality of a child and raising him religiously, culturally, and socially**

**Nico Wattimena**

*Media Expert and Senior Lecturer,*

*The London School of Public Relations, Jakarta, Indonesia.*

*As media play an increasingly important role in children's lives of worldwide, parents and authorities are alarmed by their watching content that compromises or damages personal development, and can affect religious commitment, cultural values and social attitudes. Today's mobile devices are powerful enough to surf the web, watch TV, talk to friends, play games, and read, but parents may be bewildered or frightened by this freedom, as they are responsible for children's upbringing. Undesirable content from foreign cultures with different moral values threaten to confuse or mislead young people. While parents demand their children carry their cell phones everywhere, they may be shocked by what else is going on with those mobile devices! Mapping Parental Mediation implies mother or father will pay close attention to what the child sees and hears, and act as a censor if necessary. Indonesia is today facing the reality of heavy media bombardment on its children: how much parents and society react to monitor and guide their children's viewing? As children are the leaders of tomorrow's world, our responsibility as adults is to mediate their heavy viewing and listening practices. Our success in doing this will be measured by how well-adjusted the child's personality emerges, and how dynamic and intelligent he or she will perform. We strive to maintain moral and religious values, in a media-intensive society of change.*

### **Introduction**

Few would deny that media – primarily electronic and cyber – play an increasingly important role in the lives of today's children around the planet. Homes worldwide are saturated with the media – the content of which might be compromising and damaging to the development of young minds. The vast range of mobile devices which young people carry with them wherever they go allows them to surf the web, watch TV, stay in touch

with friends, play games, and learn from print media. Much of this bewilders or frightens parents and authorities responsible for children's upbringing – particularly when undesirable content from foreign cultures with different moral values threaten to confuse or mislead young people.

The Media and Children concerns related to media exposure become most acutely sensitive when children and adolescents are involved. It is often difficult to know how media affect them: while young children lack the physical ability, intellectual development and financial independence to determine their environment, they are in fact “mutants” who have grown up in a heavily technology-infused environment, from infancy. Today's children grow, develop preferences, and indulge their capacities to make independent choices based on their relation with media (which they can often master more thoroughly than their parents!). On the other hand, their immature emotional and intellectual abilities mean they cannot evaluate risks and benefits of the many varieties of media exposure they are bathed in. They may therefore become vulnerable to the impact of alluring (if undesirable) media choices. Moreover, because of the unique development sensitivities of children, their exposure may have longer-lasting effects than would be expected with adults – for better or worse, with subsequent effects on social skills, academic achievement and physical, emotional and spiritual health.

On the other hand technology is in fact unavoidable, as many strictly controlled societies are finding out, as they fail to control entering content. And because business, government, banking and industry have become so heavily media-intensive, there is no way to “shut down the Internet” or other media without paralyzing society.

The history of mass media began in 11th Century China and 15th Century Europe with the invention of movable type for printing; while this was a “passive learning” medium, it was succeeded in the late 19th Century by early interactive technologies including the telegraph and telephone, which were introduced at widely differing times in different nations. Currently available formats for the dissemination of information include packaged and disseminated data from printed text, the radio, television and movies. Recently, however, the dramatically broadening use of the internet and wireless technologies (such as cellular phones), along with Web-enabled personal digital

assistants, have had a tremendous impact on social development, with far-reaching implication for both individual and social change, with particular deep implications for children. Parents around the world demand their children carry their cell phones with them everywhere, and be “on line” at all times – but they don’t really know what else is going on in those mobile devices!

Parents or other authorities should not expect that they can have perfect control over the media their children access; rapidly evolving modes today include both mature technologies that have melded into people’s everyday routines, such as radio and television, and newly and possibly better ways to connect and interact, such as cell phones, and the internet. Kids everywhere love to acquire and experiment with new media.

Inasmuch as the human development process is greatly affected by interaction with the environment, children’s habits, tastes, and knowledge may be powerfully shaped through exposure to these far-reaching mobile devices.

Technologies are implemented with the expectation that they will benefit users, yet concerns are raised about children’s potential misuse of the media, poisonous effects of American consumerism, violence and sexual content on children, and the unknown impact of mass media on communities and families.

Pediatricians and child psychiatrists are the medical professionals who expressed their concern most forcefully. Stars burger and Donne stein, in a comprehensive article focusing on children and the media, write that “television and other media represent one of the most important under recognized influences on the children health and behavior”. If they were to write today they would undoubtedly expand their focus to include the worldwide web: for many children Facebook has become infinitely more appealing than any TV show.

Research concerning the television programs watched by children indicates that parents are frequently unable to impose limits on their children or steer them towards recommended high quality programming. The failure of “expert” warnings to resonate with the public, the overwhelming and pervasive impact of the media, and lack of time on the part of parents to monitor children’s programming also account for these findings.

There is also concern for the physical effects of exaggerated media exposure, as evidenced by reports of brain cancer from cell phones and potential eyestrain from television.

### **Parental Mediation and making connections with Media Literacy**

Mapping Parental Mediation as a discipline of importance has arisen from our media-saturated societies. Today, there is no doubt that individuals (particularly young people) are inundated with media messages in their day-to-day lives. The effects of commercial enticement include dissatisfaction with one's looks, body, living space or possessions and feelings of helplessness and depression.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (1999), in the United States children on average spend 5.5 hours per day outside of school work engaged with media (such as television, internet, radio, magazines, newspapers, CDs, DVDs, books, video games). Children are increasingly likely to have a television and computer in their bed rooms (Bovril & Livingstone, 2001; Livingstone, 2002); they are entertained and informed by the media, but that's also where they get information about social roles, ideals and values (MySpace, Yahoo Messenger, Facebook). Media may serve as a socializing agent, taking the place of schools, parents and religion in providing guidance about social roles, norms, attitudes, and behavior (Brown, 1998; Brown, Shaffer, Vargas, & Rookie, 2004a; Silverbatt, 2004; Thomas & Jolls, 2004).

Parents and authorities are coming to recognize the "Pied Piper Effect"; normally placid children can acquire negative behavior such as violence and aggression, a negative body image and low self-esteem, poor nutrition habits, substance abuse. Religious and uplifting programming, with popular role models as guides, can encourage positive behavior through cleverly crafted messages, such as how to be physically and emotionally healthy, and how to become a good student, loyal friend and patriotic citizen. We must seriously consider the extent to which parents, educators, media industry professionals, and government officials may expect to exert such positive influence through the media on the social and psychological development of youth. As we witness the increase in media saturation in kids' lives, we must consider mitigating the effects it

might have on them – often without their being aware themselves (for an overview of media effects on kids, Strausburger & Wilson, 2002).

Parental mediation is an eminent solution; it focuses on combating negative effects, through communication between parents and children. Recent literature on mediation is reviewed and analysed, and a partnership between mediation and media literacy is suggested, providing insights on how media literacy can strengthen parental mediation. Browne mentions the importance of parents in playing a part in their child's media exposure: most young children's experience of viewing television and videos take place in their own homes and therefore parents are able to help shape young children's perceptions of the status, value and enjoyment of televisual text (Browne, 1999, p.31). Researchers are exploring parental motivation for discussing media messages with their children and the result of such interactions (Fujioka & Austin, 2002). There are several factors that predict why parents mediate, including attitudes and beliefs, gender, accessibility and family communication style. However, some of these predictive factors reveal discrepancies in their research methods. The strongest and most consistent predictive factor of mediation is parental attitude towards television and the parent's beliefs about the negative effects of television (St Peters, 1991; Altenburg, 1999; Warren, 2001). Nathanson (2001b) found strong relationship between parental attitudes and types of mediations parents used. Parents with negative attitudes towards television more often resorted to negative active mediation and restrictive mediation, as "parents who enforce rules have an inherent dislike of violent content for themselves (Nathanson, 2001b, p.214). On the other hand, parents with positive attitudes towards television and those with more favorable attitudes towards violent television are more often found co-viewing content.

The affinity of Indonesian children to watch television and its impact on personality building. Travel reveals that the media perform strikingly different roles from country to country. While we tend to believe ethnocentrically that our particular model represents "media as they ought to be", close study will show that it may have varying applications. As the fourth-most-populous nation in the world, Indonesia, an archipelago of some 13,500 islands and 230 million inhabitants, Indonesia was ruled for 32 years by an

authoritarian government, which specifically exploited electronic media for state goals of “national development”. Among notable projects were family planning, rehydration for infants, public health programs and agricultural modernization. Radio and television were both heavily used as a resource to communicate and influence the masses, many of whom were at a low educational level. Radio and TV programmers were expected to conform to stated Government objectives in their program content, to unify the people and build the nation, which had suffered from colonial exploitation, the ravages of war, the lack of resources and political instability.

Like its Asian neighbours, Indonesia is “a nation of young people”, with some 40% of the population 15 years of age or under. The results of surveys in Indonesia indicate a high level of television viewing hours. In 1997, according to the Foundation of the Welfare of Indonesian Children’s (YKAI), average elementary school students watched television for 22-26 hours per week, or 3-4 hours per day. In 2006, a survey by the Foundation of Development of Children’s Media (YPMA) revealed that on the average, elementary school students watched television for 30-35 hours per week, or 4-5 hours per day on weekdays and 7-8 hours on Sunday. Meanwhile, the maximum number of viewing hours which experts recommend is just 2 hours per day. Children have been watching all kind of television programs, including adult shows, so they become what is known as “omnivision viewers” (Khakis in Mulvane & Ibrahim, 1997).

Children and television are a powerful combination (Chen, 2005: xiii). For too many children, television is their “third parent” (Nesbit, 2001: 117), “the other parent” which has the power to shape reality, design expectations, direct behavior, create a self-image and dictate interest, choices and values (Steer, 2002: 7).

Children have high affinity for television. This affinity co-relates with their motivation to watch television. A study on affinity and motivation to watch television is in line with the idea of Uses and Gratifications (U&G). The U&G factor related with affinity and motivation is the level of media exposure (Conway & Rubin, 1991, McQueen, 1980: 134). In terms of television study, the factor is in the form of television exposure. Children are “specific public” in media study, especially the ones related to television (Cartel in Without & Dieback, 1980, 2002: 701). Parents are often involved with

children's interaction with television, mainly out of concern about the impact of television. Such parental involvement is what is known as "mediation" (Nathanson in Schement, 2002: 701).

A study based on the U&G assumption observed how the motivation of watching television had influenced children's television affinity by looking at the exposure level. The study tried to ascertain the relationship of the three variables with parental mediation.

Relationship among these variables is tested using path analysis. The objective of the research is to define the relationship between the motivation to watch television and television affinity related to TV exposure and parental mediation, as illustrated in the path model.

Academically, there has not been any research which links affinity, motivation, and level of media exposure (which is the focus of U&G) with mediation.

According to Ibrahim (2007: 297), communication study mainly focuses on mainstream media, with an emphasis on politics and media culture. Children's media has not yet been considered a challenging field of study. But the fact is that in most Asian countries, the number of children under 15 years old of age reaches 40% of total population. This signifies that by qualitative measure, children constitute a significant media public throughout the region.

This study socially describes how television affinity, viewer motivation, parental mediation and the level of television exposure on children will be able to bring awareness to parents, educators, and a public which cares to be more critical of the use of television by children and the form of mediation which should be adopted to resist and fight off negative impacts of television: easy sex, achievement without effort, violence to solve conflicts, rampant consumerism & greed, drug abuse – and an American world view and cultural attitude that may well not be appropriate for other cultures.

Rather, television, like travel, should emphasize cultural broadening, a bigger world view, mental agility and interaction, the stimulation of sensory & intellectual processes (Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, etc.)

The study by YPMA shows that half of the respondents name animated movies as their favorite television program, with *Sponge Bob*, *Idaten Jump*, and *Tom & Jerry* at the top of the list. These three movies are not “safe” shows for children because they contain violence (*Sponge Bob* and *Tom & Jerry*) and depict the supernatural (*Idaten Jump*). In the YPMA analysis, *Sponge Bob* and *Idaten Jump* have both positive and negative content for children while *Tom & Jerry* is “dangerous” because of the excessive sadistic violence continuously displayed ([www.kidia.org](http://www.kidia.org)).

Respondents react positively to feature programs for children such as *Si Bolang*, *Surat Sahabat* (A Letter from A Friend), and *Laptop Si Unyil* (Unyil’s Laptop). These programs provide informational and educational content as well as entertainment. They are categorized as healthy and safe programs for children ([www.kidia.org](http://www.kidia.org)). *Surat Sahabat*, for example, has been recognized by the Commission for the Protection of Indonesian Children as the best children TV program, received the Cultural Award 2005 from the Department of Culture and Tourism, and has been named a finalist for the ABU/CASBAA UNICEF Child Rights Awards (2005).

Mendoza (<http://www.mediaeducationlab.com>) stated that mediation was a solution to block the negative impact of television on children. Children who frequently watch television have a higher risk of receiving a negative impact from television than those who rarely do so. However, parents can modify or even prevent the impact of television through parental mediation (Schmitt, 2002: 701). Parents “can shape the nature of media effects on their children.” (Nathanson and Boyar, 2003: 308).

Parental mediation is “the act of giving meaning, discussing, and recognizing the idea, image, and information regarding TV programs with children” (Prescott-Adams, 2004). Studies on parental mediation are focused more on children of elementary school age since the relationship between these children and their parents are generally strong. Many of the ideas and analyses expressed also apply to more contemporary media, such as video games and the Internet (rapidly becoming the most influential and catalyzing media for youth around the world, with an exponential growth of on-line users in Indonesia). According to Nathanson, there are three kinds of mediation: active, restrictive, and covieing mediation. Active mediation can be further divided into three types. (1)

Positive active mediation: when accompanying their children in viewing television shows, parents inform them of the positive aspects of the television program being shown. (2) Negative active mediation: parents inform their children of the negative aspects displayed on television. (3) Neutral mediation: parents do not provide positive or negative guidance, but provide additional information to their children.

In restrictive mediation, parents limit children's access to television by controlling their viewing times, selecting the programs they can watch, duration of the viewing, etc.

Meanwhile in co-viewing, parents watch television together with their children but do not provide any guidance to them.

Based on a study by Austin (1993), not all parents play their mediation role. Impeding factors have to do with parents' characteristics. The main factor is time availability, especially when both parents are working. The variability of working hours outside the home affects parental mediation, because it influences the involvement of parents and children.

Another factor is who does the mediation. Of the two parents, mothers are the ones who often do the mediation, and tend to be stricter in controlling children's interaction with TV than fathers.

In Indonesia and many other parts of the world, the parents' education level is another important factor. Educated mothers usually apply restrictive mediation, while less educated mothers tend to apply co-viewing.

Finally, it is important that parents, many of whom grew up in much less media-rich environments, force themselves to learn and understand how media operate and control viewers.

## **References**

- Acuff, Dan S. (1997). *What Kids Buy and Why*. New York: The Free Press.
- Austin, E.W. (1993). Exploring the effects of active parental mediation content of television content. *Journal Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 37, 147-158.

Bovill, M., & Livingstone, S. (2001). Bedroom culture and the privatization of media use, *Children and their Changing Media Environment. A European Comparative Study* (pp. 179-200).

Brown, J. (1998). Media Literacy perspectives. *Journal of Communication*, 48, 44-57.

Browne, N. (1999). *Young Children's Literacy development and the role of televisual texts*. New York, NY: Falmer Press.

Chen, Milton. (2005). *Mendampingi Anak Menonton Televisi*. Jakarta, Gramedia.

Common Sense Media. (2006). *Raising media savvy kids: A common Sense tool kit*. Retrieved December 10, 2006 from [http://publications.childrennow.org/resources/community\\_toolkits/kids.php](http://publications.childrennow.org/resources/community_toolkits/kids.php)

Fujioka, Y., Austin E. W. (2002). The relationship of family communication patterns to parental mediation styles. *Communication Research*, 29 (6), 642-666.

Ibrahim, Idi Subandy. (2007). *Budaya Populer Sebagai Komunikasi Dinamika Popscape dan mediascape di Indonesia Kontemporer*. Yogyakarta, Jalasutra.

Kaiser Family Foundation. (1999). *Kids and Media @ the New Millennium*. Retrieved December 7, 2006, from <http://kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security>

Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young people and new media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lull, James. (1998). *Media Komunikasi Kebudayaan: Suatu Pendekatan Global*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

McQuail, Dennis. (1980). *Towards A Sociology of Mass Communications*. London: Collier-Macmillan.

Mendoza, K. "Mapping Parental Mediation and making connections with media literacy". <http://www.mediaeducationlap.com>

Nathanson, Amy. "Parental Mediation of Media Effects" in Schement, Jorge Reina, et.al.eds. *Encyclopedia of Communication and Information Vol.2*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. <http://www.sagepublications.com>.

- Nina Mutmainsh Armano. (2008). Pengaruh motivasi Menonton terhadap afinitas televisi pada anak-anak , Thesis FISIP Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Jakarta
- Potter, W.J. (2004). Theory of media literacy: A cognitive approach. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strausburger,V.C., & Wilson, B.J. (2002).Children, adolescents & the Media. Thousands Oak, CA: Sage.
- Singer, Dorothy and Jarome L .Singer,eds. (2001). Handbook of Children and the Media. Thousands Oak, California: Sage.
- Valkenburg, P.M, Kremar,M., Peeters, A.L, & Marseille, N.M. (1999). Developing a scale to access three styles of television mediation:“instructive mediation”,“restrictive mediation”,and “social coviewing”. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,46 (1), 87 -111.
- Wartella, Ellen. (1980). “Children and Television: The Development of Child’s Understanding of Medium, in Wilhoit and deBock, eds. Mass Communication Review Yearbook Vol.1, Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Wattimena, Nico. (2009). How to be media savvy in the era of transparency. Jakarta: NWA Publication.
- Weaver.B, Barbour, N. (1992). Mediation of Children’s televiewing . Families in Society, 73(4), 236-242.

## **Bridging Differences at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School**

**Rabbi Anne Ebersman**

The world is a very narrow bridge

The most important thing is not to be afraid

-- Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav

*A key component of the mission of the Abraham Joshua Heschel School, a Jewish parochial school in New York City, is “building bridges between different sectors of the Jewish community, and between the Jewish community and other communities, as expressions of our religious imperative to unite human beings through justice, shared humanity and mutual respect.”<sup>1</sup> We employ a number of different educational strategies as we seek to implement this mission with our students. These strategies include: (1) providing inspiring examples for our students of individuals who dedicated their lives to building such bridges, particularly our namesake, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (2) stressing, throughout our curriculum, the importance of learning how to take on perspectives other than one’s own, and (3) giving our students age-appropriate opportunities to take concrete steps towards building bridges themselves, both within the Jewish community and by reaching out to other communities.*

### **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Builder of Bridges**

Our school is named for one of the great rabbis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was born in Poland in 1907. After completing a doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Berlin, he was deported to Poland by the Nazis in 1938. With great effort, he managed to obtain an American visa and in 1940 he sailed for New York City.<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Heschel’s dissertation was a study of the Biblical prophets. He writes that the core of the prophetic message is that God desires justice and love of other human beings above all, more than religious observance or ceremonies: “Amos and the prophets who

---

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel School, Educational and Religious Policy Handbook, p.4

<sup>2</sup> Susannah Heschel, ed. Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity, Essays by Abraham Joshua Heschel. (New York, 1996) p. xv

followed him not only stressed the primacy of morality over sacrifice, but even claimed that the worth of worship, far from being absolute, is contingent upon moral living...Questioning man's right to worship through offerings and songs, they [the Prophets] maintained that the primary way of serving God is through love, justice and righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Heschel was deeply influenced by the message of the prophets as well as the Jewish teachings he absorbed during his childhood from the many rabbis in his family, " ' I was very fortunate' he told an interviewer, 'in having lived as a young boy in an environment where there were many people...of spirituality and integrity, people who have shown great compassion and understanding for others'".<sup>4</sup>

After arriving in America, Rabbi Heschel began to seek ways to put the lessons he had learned as a child, and the message of the prophets which he studied as a young man, into action. In America's open society, he sought and found opportunities to seek justice and build bridges not just within the Jewish community but in the larger world in which he found himself.

Having experienced first-hand the terrible toll of anti-semitism in Europe (Heschel's mother and three of his sisters perished in the Holocaust, after many fruitless attempts on his part to obtain visas for them to come to America), Heschel was extremely troubled by the prejudice he saw in America against black Americans. In 1963, he was asked to be the keynote speaker at the National Conference on Religion and Race. It was at this conference that he met Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King, a black Christian minister from Atlanta, was the leading figure of the Civil Rights movement in the South, which sought to achieve equal rights for Black Americans. At that time in American history, in the South, blacks were often prevented from voting (though it was their Constitutional right), had to sit on the back of public busses and were not allowed to drink from the same water fountains as whites. The Civil Rights movement sought to change all of this

---

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, 1962) p. 195

<sup>4</sup> Susannah Heschel, p. ix

using the principles of non-violent disobedience that King had learned about in his studies of Mahatma Ghandi.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Heschel and Dr. King became very close friends and Rabbi Heschel took great personal risks to support Dr. King in his efforts for justice. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Rabbi Heschel, along with Americans all over the country, watched in horror as the evening news showed images of a non-violent civil rights protest in Alabama which was met with a brutal police assault. A hundred or so people marching from Selma to Montgomery Alabama to raise awareness for civil rights efforts, were attacked by the police with dogs and tear gas, and severely beaten with clubs. When Dr. King decided to respond to the violence by repeating the march several weeks later, this time with many more people, he called his friend Rabbi Heschel and asked him to stand by his side. Despite his family's concern for his safety, Rabbi Heschel flew to Alabama on Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup>, attended a religious service with Dr. King and then stood arm in arm with Dr. King as they marched from Selma.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to his collaborations with Dr. King, Rabbi Heschel made significant contributions to Jewish-Catholic relations by travelling to Rome to meet with Pope Paul VI. In part as a result of Heschel's audience with the Pope, Vatican II included changes to Church dogma to reflect a more tolerant and accepting attitude towards Jews.<sup>7</sup>

Students at the Heschel School learn about Rabbi Heschel's life as an integral part of the school's curriculum. Every year an assembly is held to celebrate and honor his accomplishments, in particular the ways in which he worked to build bridges to the Christian community through his collaborations with Dr. King. Students learn to sing Christian spirituals and feel deep sense of personal connection to Rabbi Heschel's role in the Civil Rights movement. They are taught to see Rabbi Heschel's legacy of reaching out in the name of justice as a core element of their Jewish identities.

---

<sup>5</sup> Or Rose, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man of Spirit, Man of Action, (New York, 2003) p. 57

<sup>6</sup> Edward Kaplan, Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, (New Haven, 2007) p. 222

<sup>7</sup> Kaplan, p. 240

## **Learning to Build a Bridge by Taking Another Perspective**

In addition to inspiring our students with role models like Rabbi Heschel, it is critical to teach them skills that will enable them to follow his example. One such skill is the ability to take someone else's perspective. As Thomas Lickona writes in his book, *Educating for Character*: "We can't very well respect other people and act justly towards their needs if we don't understand them. A fundamental goal of moral education must be to help students to experience the world from the point of view of others, especially those who are different from themselves."<sup>8</sup>

Our students begin studying the Hebrew Bible when they are approximately 8 years old and immediately begin encountering stories with moral ambiguity and the potential for multiple perspectives. One such story is Genesis 21, the tale of Abraham's family. God took note of Sarah as God had promised and God did for Sarah what God had promised. Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age...Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, the name of Isaac.

Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing. She said to Abraham, "Cast out that serving woman and her son for the son of that woman shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."<sup>9</sup>

How a story like this one is approached in the classroom will be critical in forming how a child grows to understand his or her Jewish identity and how he or she grows to view others. There are deep ethical questions raised in these few short lines. As Lawrence Kohlberg has taught, children develop morally by wrestling with moral dilemmas. Students at the Heschel School are encouraged to wrestle with this story in many different ways. One recent assignment was to dramatize a conversation between two of the characters in this story that might have taken place after the verses above. Here is what one pair of students wrote, in the voices of Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah: I want to banish Hagar.

Abraham: But she is my wife.

Sarah: She is also my servant.

---

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character*, (New York, 1991) p. 55

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 21: -2, 9-11

Abraham: I know that but it is not right to banish her.

(5 second pause)

Sarah: I am worried that her son Ishmael will teach our son Isaac to worship other gods.

Abraham: Ishmael would never do a bad thing like that. He is a good boy. Why do you dislike them so much?

Sarah: I want our family to be Jews and not Egyptians [according to the Torah, Hagar is Egyptian]

Abraham: Sarah, God understands that we want to be Jews. And Hagar does not want to change that.

Using their own words and their own developing moral understanding, these 4<sup>th</sup> graders begin to explore the tensions and competing objectives inherent in this difficult story. Through Sarah's voice, they portray a perspective which is exclusively concerned with the future of the Jewish people. Sarah worries about the influence of other cultures on her family. Her mission, from which she does not waver, no matter what the cost, is to ensure that the Jewish people successfully survives to the next generation ("I want our family to be Jews and not Egyptians").

Perhaps more interesting is how they imagine Abraham's perspective on the situation. Abraham does not agree with his wife's single-minded focus on Isaac and the future of the Jewish people. His concern is for Hagar and Ishmael's rights. When Sarah suggests banishing Hagar, he responds, "I know [that she is your servant] but it is not right to banish her." It is interesting to note that following this comment, they include the stage direction "5 second pause." Clearly Sarah finds something compelling about Abraham's comment and is thinking it over.

The students introduce the distinction between what is expedient and what is morally right through Abraham's voice. Later in the dialogue, when Sarah expresses concern that Ishmael will introduce Isaac to other gods, Abraham challenges her assessment of Ishmael's character: "Ishmael would never do a bad thing like that. He is a good boy." In this brief dialogue, these students are taking their first steps towards trying on multiple perspectives. When these students learn, in the next few verses, that the Torah does finally allow Sarah to banish Hagar and Ishmael, their experiment in perspective-taking

will color how they understand the story's conclusion. If we as educators have done our job, they will be able to understand both how this action served the Jewish people but at the same time that it was not fair or just. It is our hope and our intention that Abraham's imagined words, "it is not right to banish her" will become part of their understanding of the story, as will the power and strength of Sarah's fidelity to her mission of furthering the Jewish people.

### **Building Our Own Bridges**

Finally, each student needs opportunities to take action, to experience for him- or herself what it is like to be bridge builders and reach out to others. At our school, every grade participates in a specific community service project designed for their age and developmental level. One representative project is highlighted below.

Several years ago, an elementary school teacher brought to our attention the work of a friend of hers who was teaching in Malawi. The teacher at our school had learned from her friend that the students there are without many basic supplies. When our teacher brought this problem up to her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, they decided to take action. They implemented a school-wide school supply drive, beginning by meeting with the woman who runs the school in Malawi to find out exactly what was needed and then disseminating the information to students, parents and faculty. After collecting and packing up the supplies, the students were pleased to receive letters from the children in Malawi showing them how the supplies were being used.

In the course of this project, in addition to helping others with a concrete problem, the students learned a great deal about what life is like in a community very different from their own. Looking at pictures of classroom life in Malawi, they took very seriously the stark differences. For instance, in Malawi, one teacher has 60 children; at our school there are 2 teachers for every 25 children. They learned about many other ways that school in Malawi is different from their own experience, and some ways that things are not so different (everybody loves to play ball at recess). Perhaps even more important than the assistance they were able to offer the school in Malawi was the way in which this project raised our students' consciousness about their own lives, about the many

privileges of which they are the recipients daily, and the fact that many other children are not so lucky. The students were able to experience in a very concrete way how they can use their own resources to make a small step towards building a world in which there is less inequity.

### **Conclusion**

Rabbi Nahman teaches that “the world is a very narrow bridge and the most important thing is not to be afraid.” There are so many ways in which the work of building tolerance feels like a narrow bridge. As we look over the edge, we can see how easy it would be to fall into habits of insularity and even bigotry, to “circle the wagons,” to use an American expression, and only focus on our own communities. Rabbi Nahman pleads with us to have courage, to continue the work even when it is difficult, not to succumb to fear or despair so that we can cross the bridge towards other communities and other people, and in doing so bring more unity and peace to the world.

## **Worship leads to Devotion**

**Rabbi Shlomo KÖVES, Ph.D**

*Executive rabbi*

*EMIH Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation*

*Budapest, Hungary*

*People do not want to be hypocrites, and they feel that refraining from religious worship is justified when they are “not there yet” or their “faith is not that strong”. Is it more important to be immersed emotionally in a religious experience or to act upon it in the form of worship? And what is the point of religious worship if there is no faith and devotion behind it? One of the central teachings of Judaism is that there is a Divine spark concealed in the heart of every human being. In order to elevate it to the level of consciousness, physical action is needed. Religious practice without devotion is not hypocrisy; worship itself brings about and strengthens devotion. Another important aspect of religious deed is that it has the potential to change the world. Before the creation of man, the world was not consciously aware of its Creator. It was the creation of man that made it possible for Divine existence to be experienced on a conscious level. Only we, humans have the ability to elevate our physical existence and the material entities around us to a higher sphere, simply by using our free will to choose our actions.*

### **Devotion vs. religious practice**

Which one is more essential: devotion or religious practice? This question has been long debated by religion and philosophy. Is it more important to be immersed emotionally in a religious experience or to act upon it in the form of worship? And what is the point of religious worship if there is no faith and devotion behind it?

Recently, there has been a spiritual revival all over the world in very secular communities, and the question of worship and devotion has become all the more relevant. People do not want to be hypocrites, and they feel that refraining from religious worship is justified when they are “not there yet” or their “faith is not that strong”. Faith and devotion seem to be the essence of religion, which makes the above reasoning logical: mind and heart should come first and only then should mouth, hands or feet follow.

## **Judaism – “a practical religion”**

Jewish religion has a different view on this issue. The first 5 books of the Bible list 613 commandments<sup>1</sup>, which makes Judaism a very practice-oriented religion<sup>2</sup>. Each and every form of worship in Judaism is linked to physical action.

Spiritual experience and the re-telling of Biblical stories and certain episodes in Jewish history are very important, but are not the sole means of commemorating these events: they are always linked with physical action. On *Pesach* we remember the Exodus from Egypt, and we eat unleavened bread<sup>3</sup> for a week to remind us that our ancestors had to leave Egypt in such a hurry that there was no time for the dough to rise<sup>4</sup>. On Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year), when the world is being evaluated and judged by G-d a ram horn (shofar) is blown. The sound of it is similar to the sound of a crying infant, and it symbolizes that our relationship with G-d is like that of Father and child. Each moment of religious Jewish life is filled with action. We wrap tefillin (phylacteries)<sup>5</sup> on our arm and head when we pray. It is not enough to think about words of prayer; the words have to be formed with our lips and pronounced. There are very strict regulations regarding food that could or could not be eaten, etc.

It is interesting to note that some Sages of the Talmud are of the opinion that devotion is not a prerequisite for fulfilling Biblical commandments (*mitzvot*)<sup>6</sup>. According to the laws of Judaism, worship that is performed with regard to every practical detail but without religious intention is considered valid.

What is the logic behind this? Why is religious practice so important? What we feel inside matters more, does it not? So what is the point of religious worship without spirituality and devotion?

---

<sup>1</sup> *Talmud*, Makot 23b

<sup>2</sup> See: *Talmud*, Fathers 1:17: „The essential thing is not study, but deed.”

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 16:3

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 6:8.

<sup>6</sup> *Talmud*, Rosh hashana 28b-29b

## Physical actions can alter our state of mind

The simple answer is that since we are not heavenly angels, but human beings, we live in a physical world and only physical entities are real to us. Therefore religion, which is spiritual, has to manifest itself in physical actions in order to be accessible to us.

There is another answer on a deeper level<sup>7</sup>: faith, devotion and intention of the heart are intangible and impossible to measure, whereas actions are accessible and real. Physical actions can alter our state of mind, our feelings, our faith. We all know from experience how the clothes we wear, the food and drinks we consume or the activities we are engaged in affect our mood and our physical life. Why would it be any different when it comes to our spiritual life? The constant observance of religious practices makes us more conscious of the divine spark concealed in each of us and it strengthens our faith.

The following can be found in *Sefer HaChinuch* (Book of Education, 13<sup>th</sup> century), in the chapter discussing customs and regulations related to Jewish holidays:

“Do not think, my son, to criticize my words and say: Why did G-d, the Blessed One command us to perform all of these (commandments) that are commemorative of that miracle? Would not the matter be implanted upon our consciousness and not forgotten by our descendants with a single commemorative (commandment)?

A person is influenced by his actions, and his heart and thoughts follow the acts he does whether they are good or bad. Even one who is a completely wicked person, who constantly thinks of doing bad deeds, if he is inspired for the better and puts time into fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* (biblical commandments), even if it is not for the sake of Heaven, he will turn to the good and he will overcome his Evil Inclination through the power of these actions, since the heart follows the actions a person does. Similarly, even if one is a completely righteous person who desires Torah and *mitzvot* but always involves himself in bad deeds ... after a certain amount of time he will become a wicked person, for we know, and it is true, that every man is affected by his actions.

We learn from our Sages that G-d gave Torah and *Mitzvot* in order to give the people of Israel an opportunity to increase their merit (Talmud, *Makot* 23b), so that we will never

---

<sup>7</sup> *Talmud*, Sanhedrin 35a (Rashi)

cease the words of Torah day or night and that we will merit in the world to come. Those with *tzitzit* on the four corners of their garments, *mezuzah* at the entrance to their houses, and *tefillin* on their hands and their heads will surely not sin. These are constant *mitzvot* with eternal benefits.”

### **There is a well in every human**

It is written in the Bible that Abraham and Isaac made wells in the desert of the Promised Land. According to Jewish commentaries, this action symbolizes the inherent Goodness concealed in every human being that needs to be brought to the surface. Judaism teaches that every man is essentially good and when his actions contradict this, it is simply because he has wandered off the path of Good. How can we find this Goodness, the water of Life, under the dry surface of the desert? By acting instead of waiting for faith and devotion to spring forth by itself.

### **Making home for G-d in the Lower Realms**

Another important aspect of religious deed is that it has the potential to change the world. Out of all the creations on Heaven and Earth, only man was given free will to decide whether or not to accept the reign of the A-mighty. Man's relationship with G-d is the result of a conscious decision. Other creations were not given a choice: they are connected to G-d simply because they are His creations. By creating man, G-d also created the possibility for His unity and His will to be accepted or refused. Human beings were given the choice to recognize the reign of the A-mighty or to rebel against it, and the ability to regard Him as King and not as a tyrant.

It is written by our Sages in *Midras Tanchuma* that G-d created the world “in order to have a dwelling place in the Lower Realms”.

Isaiah describes the A-mighty as “a G-d Who hides Himself”<sup>8</sup> in the physical world. But His desire is that this world be elevated to a spiritual dimension by using the physical elements for a Divine purpose.

---

<sup>8</sup> 45:15.

## **What does it mean to make our world a home for G-d?**

A basic tenet of our faith is that "the entire world is filled with His presence" and "there is no place void of Him." So it's not that we have to bring G-d into the material world – He is already there. But G-d can be in the world without being at home in it.

Being "at home" means being in a place that is receptive to your presence, a place devoted to serving your needs and desires. It means being in a place where you are your true, private self, as opposed to the public self you assume in other environments.

The material world, in its natural state, is not an environment hospitable to G-d. If there is one common feature to all things material, it is their intrinsic egocentrism, their placement of the self as the foundation and purpose of existence. With every iota of its mass, the stone proclaims: "I am." In the tree and in the animal, the preservation and propagation of the self is the focus of every instinct and the aim of every achievement. And who more than the human being has elevated ambition to an art and self-advancement to an all-consuming ideal?

The only thing wrong with all this selfishness is that it blurs the truth of what lies behind it: the truth that creation is not an end in itself, but a product of and vehicle for its Creator. And this selfishness is not an incidental or secondary characteristic of our world, but its most basic feature. So to make our world a "home" for G-d we must transform its very nature. We must recast the very foundations of its identity from a self-oriented entity into something that exists for a purpose that is greater than itself.

Every time we take a material object or resource and enlist it in the service of G-d, we are effecting such a transformation. When we take a piece of leather and make a pair of *tefillin* out of it, when we take a dollar bill and give it to charity, when we employ our minds to study a chapter of Torah – we are effecting such a transformation. In its initial state, the piece of leather proclaimed, "I exist"; now it says, "I exist to serve my Creator." A dollar in the pocket says, "Greed is good"; in the charity box it says, "The purpose of life is not to receive, but to give." The human brain says, "Enrich thyself"; the brain studying Torah says, "Know thy G-d."

It is not sufficient for Divine energy to spread out in the Lower Realms: in order for G-d's desire to be fully realized, the existence of the Divine has to be acknowledged and

accepted as well. This is the way to make a perfect dwelling place for G-d in the Lower Worlds.

Before the creation of man, the world was not consciously aware of its Creator. It was the creation of man that made it possible for Divine existence to be experienced on a conscious level. Only we, humans have the ability to elevate our physical existence and the material entities around us to a higher sphere, simply by using our free will to choose our actions.

The unity between G-d and the World will be realized in the Era of Redemption, when “the earth shall be full of knowledge of the L-rd as water covers the seabed” (11:9). The revelation of the Divine in the Era of Redemption depends solely on our willingness to perceive and discover the Divine Presence concealed in our world. By making a conscious effort to connect to G-d and to extend this divine connection to every aspect of our existence, we can bring about the Era of Redemption. May it be speedily and in our days!

## **The social role of the Family**

**Richard G. Wilkins**

*Professor of Law and Managing Director*

*The World Family Policy Center, Brigham Young University*

*We live in a world of clashing values and views. This conflict can create grave dangers, ranging from minor interpersonal conflicts to terrorist attacks. Reduction of tension requires that individuals develop the twin values of understanding and tolerance. These values not only bring peace to individuals struggling to live in a tense world, they help promote peaceful resolution of great controversies. Development of understanding and tolerance begins – and is perhaps best fostered – within the family. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects the fundamental truth that the family is the “natural and fundamental group unit of society.” UDHR, Article 16. The family, as the drafters of the Universal Declaration understood, stands as a bulwark against organized discrimination and tyranny. The value of the family in promoting tolerance and understanding, furthermore, is recognized by the world’s great religions. Strengthening the family, therefore, is fundamental to inculcating a culture of tolerance.*

Social science data demonstrates two nearly incontestable conclusions: (1) stable, natural marital structures provide profound benefits for men, women and children, while (2) the breakdown of stable, natural marital structures imposes significant social costs upon individuals and society at large. In short, families play a profoundly important social role. Without healthy families we simply cannot have a healthy society.

We must re-awaken the conscience of the world regarding the social role of the family. I will first address the benefits of stable marital relationships to men, women, and children. I will then canvass the costs that society has incurred as a result of the decline in marital

stability. I will conclude by calling upon the world community – and particularly the world’s faith communities – to recommit themselves to marriage and the natural family.

### **The benefits of stable marriage relationships**

Marriage, as it has been conceived by and practiced in Western societies for centuries, has marked benefits for marital partners and their offspring. Marriage is more than the union of two persons, it is a social institution “culturally patterned and integrated into other basic social institutions, such as education, the economy, and politics.”<sup>1</sup> Marriage, in a real sense, underlies every social institution. It comes as no surprise, then, that marriage affects some of society’s most consequential interests:

Married people are generally healthier; they live longer, earn more, have better mental health and better sex lives, and are happier than their unmarried counterparts.

Furthermore, married individuals have lower rates of suicide, fatal accidents, acute and chronic illnesses, alcoholism, and depression than other people.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, in the West and elsewhere, the need to articulate the benefits of marriage has been largely unnecessary. American courts, for example, have recognized for some time that marriage is “fundamental to our existence and survival”<sup>3</sup> and “of basic importance to our society.”<sup>4</sup> There is a growing body of research showing that marriage is indispensable to the welfare of society and to the individuals that comprise it.<sup>1</sup> Much recent research, in

---

1 Steven L. Nock, *Marriage in Men’s Lives* 11 (1998).

2 *Id.* at 3.

3 *Skinner v. Oklahoma ex rel. Williamson*, 316 U.S. 535, 541 (1942).

4 *Boddie v. Connecticut*, 401 U.S. 371, 376 (1971).

5 Brigitte Berger, “The Social Roots of Prosperity and Liberty,” 35 *Society* 44 (March 13, 1998) (available on Westlaw at 1998 WL 11168752) (“Although of late we can witness a public rediscovery of the salutary role of the nuclear family of father, mother, and their children living together and caring for their individual and collective progress, policy

fact, shows that natural marriage has significant benefits for children and their mothers and fathers. I will detail the personal – and social – benefits of stable marital and family life for children and youth, and for the men and women who take (and honor) their marital vows.

### *1. Benefits flowing to children and youth*

According to one scholar, natural marriage is “by far the most emotionally stable and economically secure arrangement for child rearing.”<sup>6</sup> Recent research, moreover, indicates that – for children – nothing compares to a solid, stable marriage between their biological parents.<sup>7</sup>

---

elites appear neither to have fully understood that public life lies at the mercy of private life, nor do they seem to have apprehended the degree to which the [traditional] virtues and [traditional] ethos continue to be indispensable for the maintenance of both the market economy and civil society.”)

6 Berger, above note 5, at 44.

7 This research has many implications, particularly for those who are voluntarily choosing to ignore the patent benefits of marital parenting in the pursuit of individualistic lifestyles:

[W]hile only a couple of decades ago childbirth was sought almost exclusively by married couples in their prime childbearing years, many applicants for access to the new technologies are now single, and some are post-menopausal. Nor do these new applicants necessarily wish to establish traditional family forms. Some want their children to have only one legal parent; some want their children to have no father but two mothers; some want to establish "traditional" parental relationships by conceiving with sperm from a deceased partner.

Marsha Garrison, *Law Making for Baby Making: an Interpretive Approach to the Determination of Legal Parentage*, 113 Harv. L. Rev. 835, 839-40 (2000). Garrison also notes that

[d]uring a 12-month period in 1986-87, there were approximately 4,000 requests from single women for artificial insemination. [citation omitted]. While there are no current national data on the proportion of [artificial insemination] users who are single women, anecdotal evidence suggests that the phenomenon is increasing in frequency. For example, the director of one California sperm bank has estimated that 40% of its

*a. Natural marriage supports children's education.* Studies consistently show that children in two-parent families are significantly less likely to drop out of high school than children in a one parent family.<sup>8</sup> In some studies, the likelihood of dropping out more than doubles for children in single-parent households.<sup>9</sup>

*b. Natural marriage minimizes the likelihood of poverty.* Studies also show that children raised outside marriage are more likely to be raised in poor economic conditions.<sup>10</sup> These children suffer not only from economic deprivations, but also from a lack of parental attention and from high rates of residential relocation, all of which can work to disadvantage the child's development.<sup>11</sup>

*c. Natural marriage aids in crime prevention.* Recent studies emphasize the critical role dual-parenting plays if children are to become law abiding citizens. As one researcher noted, "the single most important factor in determining if a male will end up incarcerated later in life is . . . whether or not he has a father in the home."<sup>12</sup> The mother-child relationship is equally important. "As mothers spend less time with infants and

---

[artificial insemination] recipients are single lesbian women. [citations omitted]. Births to unmarried mothers have also risen dramatically in recent years. In 1970, 10.7% of U.S. births were to unmarried women; by 1995, 32.2% were. [citations omitted]."

*Id.*, n.9.

8 Linda J. Waite, *Does Marriage Matter?*, 32 *Demography* 483, 494 (November 1995).

9 *Id.* Importantly, Waite notes that these statistics "take into account differences in a number of characteristics that affect educational attainment," thus accentuating the accuracy of the statistics' indications.

10 Waite above note 8, at 494.

11 *Id.* (citing N.M. Astone & S.S. McLanahan, *Family Structure, Residential Mobility, and School Dropout: A Research Note*, 31 *Demography* 575-84 (1994)). "The presence of two parents potentially means more parental supervision, more parental time helping with homework, and another parental shoulder to cry on after a hard day." *Id.*

12 Michael Gurian, *The Good Son: Shaping the Moral Development of our Boys and Young Men* 182 (1999) (referring to research studies conducted by the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University).

toddlers . . . the boys' developing brains, and thus their behavioral systems, are affected."<sup>13</sup> Children without this crucial early bonding are "more likely to start out on a path of later narcissism and out-of-control behavior as [they] compensate[] for [the] early deprivation."<sup>14</sup>

*d. Natural marriage supports healthy socialization.* Marriage is an unequaled institution for fostering healthy socialization. "[C]hildren of divorce do not accept monitoring or supervision from live-in partners nearly as much as they do from married parents."<sup>15</sup> Young adults in single-parent households are more likely to give birth out of wedlock, and are more likely to be out of both school and the labor force.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, "children who spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family . . . report significantly lower-quality relationships with their parents as adults and have less frequent contact with them."<sup>17</sup>

---

13 *Id.* at 42-43.

14 *Id.* at 43. Gurian notes that today there is a cultural strain on the early bond between both mothers and fathers. "Most boys lose their mothers not because of death but because the importance of the mother-son bond has been gradually diminishing in our culture, and thus in the home. Pressures on contemporary mothers are such that mothers can't mother their sons as they wish and need to. Similar pressures have for years frayed the father-son bond . . ." *Id.* at 42. Gurian also notes that "[t]he reason the question of working mothers and child care is so developmentally crucial now is that mother-child attachment itself has changed a great deal by force of culture. Our economic system forces many mothers to work far away from their babies, and the 'aunties' — the child-care workers provided by our culture — are generally so slightly paid that they don't stay around long enough to form bonds. This situation is potentially dangerous to the developing child." *Id.* at 74.

15 Sanford M. Dornbusch et al., *Single Parenthood*, *Society* 30 (July 1, 1996) (available on Westlaw at 1996 WL 9295204).

16 Waite, above note 8, at 494.

17 Waite, above note 8, at 495 (citing D.N. Lye, et al., *Childhood Living Arrangements and Adult Children's Relations with Their Parents*, 32 *Demography* 261-80 (1995)).

The above research, taken together, demonstrates that – for the good of our children – society has a compelling interest in promoting and preferring stable, natural marriage. “Adolescent children care about marriage and view it positively . . . [they] endorse marriage, want to get married, and want to have children.”<sup>18</sup> And, although young people are increasingly bombarded with pessimistic views about marriage, they “yearn[] for a return to stable family life, and . . . are much less likely than their elders to consider divorce a good option.”<sup>19</sup> Any breakdown in the importance placed upon natural marriage impairs the social welfare of future generations.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. *Benefits flowing to adults.*

The advantages of marriage for children are derivative of the benefits gained by those who enter into the marital vow. Marriage is the ultimate social bond that can be formed between a man and woman because

---

18 Dornbusch et al., above note 15.

19 Elizabeth VanDenBerghe, *The Enduring, Happy Marriage: Findings and Implications from Research in Strengthening Marriage and Family: Proclamation Principles and Scholarship* 28 (David C. Dollahite, ed., publication forthcoming, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City).

20 *See, e.g.*, David Popenoe, “Family Caps,” *Society* 25, (July 1, 1996) (available on Westlaw at 1996 WL 9295227):

That substantial family disintegration has occurred in the United States in recent decades is now widely recognized. Here are some of the key statistics: From 1960 to 1990 the divorce rate in the United States doubled or tripled (depending upon how one calculates the rate); the percentage of families headed by a single parent tripled, growing from 9 percent to 27 percent; the percentage of out of wedlock births increased from 5 percent of all births to 30 percent; and the percentage of children living apart from their biological fathers more than doubled, growing from 17 percent to 36 percent. It is very much in the public interest for the government to prevent such family disintegration--to promote marriage and the two-parent family and to try to limit single-parent families and out of wedlock births.

[b]y their marriages, husbands and wives accept an obligation to be faithful, to give and receive help in times of sickness, and to endure hardships. Not everyone will be able to remain true to such vows. However, it is more difficult for a married than for an unmarried person to break such promises *because* they are part of our laws, religions, and definitions of morality. Others have taken identical vows throughout history. Collectively, society enforces these ideals both formally and informally. Nothing can be said about any other type of intimate relationship between two adults.<sup>21</sup>

It should come as little surprise, then, that this ancient social union has particular (and unique) social value. This unique social value, moreover, does not flow from some natural selection process in which healthy, strong, bright, and charismatic people are the most likely to marry and, therefore, the most likely to benefit from the union. “Married people do not simply *appear* to be better off than unmarried people; rather, marriage changes people in ways that *produce* such benefits.”<sup>22</sup>

It follows that society has a compelling interest in promoting, sustaining, and preferring the oldest social institution shown to change people in propitious ways; ways that make

---

21 Nock, above note 1, at 4 (emphasis in original). By contrast, not all forms of alternative “marriage” proposed today contain all elements of the traditional marital vow. For instance, at least some same-sex advocates specifically disavow any notion of sexual monogamy, asserting that sexual commitment to a single partner is “inconsistent” with the “gay” lifestyle. *See, e.g.,* Robert H. Knight, *How Domestic Partnerships and Gay Marriage Threaten the Family* (visited March 2, 2000) <<http://www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html>>.

22Nock, above note 1, at 3 (emphasis in original) (citing R.H. Coombs, Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review, 40 *Family Relations* 97-102 (1991)); *see also* Walter R. Gove et al., The Effect of Marriage on the Well-Being of Adults, 11 *Journal of Family Issues* 4, 25 (1990) (“[T]he evidence suggests that [the link between individual benefits and marriage] is not primarily due to particularly competent and healthy persons being more likely to marry and stay married but instead is primarily due to the effect of the marital relationship on individuals”).

the world a better place. Recent studies strongly support the propositions that natural marriage promotes physical health, mental and emotional health, and social productivity.

*a. Natural marriage promotes physical health* . There is a positive – and multi-factored – causal relationship between marriage and physical health:

First, married men and women live longer than non-married individuals.<sup>23</sup> These statistics are especially significant for unmarried men who “face higher risks of dying than married men, regardless of their marital history.”<sup>24</sup>

Second, married people are less likely to report “problem drinking” than are non-married persons.<sup>25</sup> Excessive alcohol consumption has been linked to a variety of health-related problems, including liver failure and heart disease. Although men are the clear beneficiaries of marriage in this regard, even married women are nearly one-third less likely to report drinking problems than divorced women.<sup>26</sup>

---

23Lee A. Lillard & Linda J. Waite, ‘Til Death Do Us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality, 100 *American Journal of Sociology* 1131 (1995); *see also* James S. Goodwin et al., The Effect of Marital Status on Stage, Treatment, and Survival of Cancer Patients, 258 *JAMA* 3125, 3125 (1987) (“Married persons live longer, with lower mortality for almost every major cause of death, in comparison with single, separated, widowed, or divorced or divorced persons.”); Gove, above note 61, at 7-8.

24 Waite, above note 8, at 489. Researchers explain this causal relationship by pointing to marriage’s tendency to curb risky and unhealthy behaviors, increase material well being, and provide a network of help and support, all of which combine to lengthen an individual’s life. *Id.*

25 Waite, above note 8, at 486. Problem drinking was measured by factors such as drinking more than one planned, failing to accomplish things on account of drinking, and being informed that drinking was hurting one’s health. *See id.*

26 Waite, above note 8, at 487, figure 5. Waite notes that “excessive drinking is a particular male pattern of social pathology; for example, marital conflict is associated with problem drinking for men and with depression for women.” *Id.* at 486 (citing A.V. Horwitz & H.R. White, *Becoming Married, Depression, and Alcohol Problems among Young Adults*, 32 *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 221-37 (1991); C.A. Robbins & S.S. Martin, *Gender, Styles of Deviance, and Drinking Problems*, 34 *Journal of Health*

Third, married persons, both men and women, are less likely to engage in risk-taking behavior.<sup>27</sup> With respect to activities such as drunk driving, smoking, and drug abuse, married persons are less likely to engage in such activities compared with their non-married counterparts.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps even more importantly, however, researchers believe that marriage actually encourages responsible, healthy behaviors.<sup>29</sup>

Fourth, research shows that natural marriage positively impacts the sexual health of individuals. Not only are married persons less likely to experience sexual dysfunction,<sup>30</sup> they are also more likely to be extremely satisfied with their partner.<sup>31</sup> According to one

---

and Social Behavior 302-21 (1993); I. Waldron, Gender and Health-Related Behaviors, *in* Health Behavior: Emerging Research Perspectives 193-208 (D.S. Gochman, ed. 1988)).

27Waite, above note 8, at 486. Risk-taking behavior was determined by looking at five factors: (1) carelessness resulting in accidents around house and workplace, (2) taking risks against one's better judgment, (3) serious arguments or fights at home, (4) serious arguments or fights outside the home, and (5) problems leading to arguments with others. *See id.* at 486-87.

28 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 29.

29 This may be so because "marriage provides individuals with a sense of meaning in their lives and a sense of obligation to others, thus inhibiting risky behaviors and encouraging healthy ones." Waite, above note 8, at 488 (citing W. Gove, Sex, Marital Status, and Mortality, 79 *American Journal of Sociology* 45-67 (1973); D. Umberson, Family Status and Health Behaviors: Social Control as a Dimension of Social Integration, 28 *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 206-19 (1987)). Additionally, scholars have noted that "marriage provides individuals – especially men – with someone who monitors their health and health-related behaviors," which may also curb the tendency to engage in potentially harmful activities and encourage healthy, productive ones. *Id.* (citing Catherine E. Ross, Reconceptualizing Marital Status as a Continuum of Social Attachment, 57 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 129-40 (1995); D. Umberson, Gender, Marital Status, and the Social Control of Behavior, 34 *Social Science and Medicine* 907-17 (1992)).

30Edward O. Laurmann et al., Sexual Dysfunction in the United States, 281 *JAMA* 537 (1999).

31Waite, above note 8, at 491.

scholar, the long and monogamous relationships typically associated with married individuals allow for the development of partner-specific skills<sup>32</sup> and facilitate “emotional investment in the relationship.”<sup>33</sup> Marriage also reduces a significant anxiety that only non-monogamous individuals face – the fear of sexually transmitted disease.<sup>34</sup> Fifth, and perhaps flowing from all of the above, research indicates that married individuals “suffer less from illness and disease and are better off than their never-married or divorced counterparts when they do fall ill.”<sup>35</sup>

*b. Natural marriage promotes mental and emotional health* . The health benefits of marriage do not stop with the body. A growing mountain of research strongly indicates that “the psychological well-being of the married is substantially better than that of the unmarried.”<sup>36</sup> “Married people have lower rates of depression and suffer significantly less from any psychiatric disorder than their divorced, never-married, or cohabitating

---

32 *Id.*

33 *Id.*

34 “A marriage marked by fidelity, obviously, circumvents the need for . . . caution [regarding sexually transmitted diseases], and offers a secure, rewarding, and emotionally safe context for displaying physical affection.” VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 31.

35 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 29 (citing Coombs, above note 22; G.T. Stanton, *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society* (1997); Waite, above note 8; Gove, above note 22)); *see also* L. Verbrugge, *Marital Status and Health*, 41 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 267-86 (1979) (report of a comprehensive study using numerous national surveys and looking at acute and chronic conditions, conditions limiting physical and social behavior, and medical treatment). Specifically regarding cancer, one study showed a direct causal nexus between marital status and survival after diagnosis with cancer. Goodwin et al, above note 23, at 3129 (noting that married persons tend to be diagnosed earlier, more frequently receive curative treatment, and are more likely to survive). Scholars noted that one main contributing factor to the higher survival rate among married persons was the degree of social support married persons typically enjoy, which support helps cancer victims cope with the stressful events surrounding cancer diagnosis, treatment, and cure. *Id.*

36 Gove et al, above note 22, at 7.

counterparts.”<sup>37</sup> Married individuals, furthermore, are less likely to be admitted to a public mental institution,<sup>38</sup> less likely to be admitted to a psychiatric clinic,<sup>39</sup> and more likely to cope with psychologically stressful events.<sup>40</sup>

Marriage has also been linked with reports of increased happiness, life satisfaction, and overall occurrence of positive emotions.<sup>41</sup> Marriage offers individuals a “spiritual connection to their deepest values” and satisfies the basic human need for “emotional and physical closeness.”<sup>42</sup> Some scholars have opined that marriage “provides individuals with a sense of obligation to others, which gives life meaning beyond oneself.”<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, “some consensus exists that marriage improves women’s material well-being and men’s emotional well-being.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, “no part of the unmarried population – separated, divorced, widowed, or never married – describes itself as being so happy and contented with life as the married.”<sup>45</sup> As one scholar put it, “[t]he positive effect of

---

37 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 30.

38 Gove et al., above note 2, at 5, 9, table 1.

39 *Id.*

40 *Id.* at 13 (citing L. Pearlin & J. Johnson, Marital Status, Life Strains and Depression, 42 American Sociological Review 704-15 (1977)). Some researchers have linked married individuals’ heightened ability to handle traumatic events with the intimate relationship existing between spouses. “[I]ntimate social relationships . . . increase effective coping by strongly enhancing two intrapsychic resources, self esteem and one’s sense of mastery, both of which [are] important coping resources.” *Id.* at 14 (citing R.C. Kessler & M. Essex, Marital Status and Depression: The Importance of Coping Resources, 61 Social Forces 484-507 (1982)).

41 Wendy Wood et al., Sex Differences in Positive Well Being: A Consideration of Emotional Style and Marital Status, 106 Psychological Bulletin 249, 251 (1989) (citing Walter R. Gove, The Relationship Between Sex Roles, Marital Status, and Mental Illness, 51 Social Forces 34 (1972)).

42 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 33.

43 Waite, above note 8, at 498.

44 *Id.*

45 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 30 (quoting Coombs, above note 22).

marriage on well-being is strong and consistent, and selection of the psychologically healthy into marriage or the psychologically unhealthy out of marriage cannot explain the effect.”<sup>46</sup>

*c. Natural marriage encourages social productivity* . Marriage, finally, has a significant (but often overlooked) impact on social productivity. Marriage, to take but one example, has proven to be a positive factor in the workplace. Besides providing health and psychological benefits, marriage positively affects wages and productivity. One study, in fact, has indicated that married men logged more than double the hours of cohabiting, single men.<sup>47</sup> This translates into a “wage premium” for marriage that positively affects men and (in particular) African-American women.<sup>48</sup>

Another scholar has noted that marriage tends to minimize what Karl Marx described as the alienation between a worker and his employment. “[M]arriage and family still involve the unspecialized, holistic self, providing a context where people bring together their many specialized roles . . . and [can] strategize about the future of family and career within a union that provides value and continuity.”<sup>49</sup> Yet another noted scholar has concluded that the development and reinforcement of the Western marital model (and the inter-generational conception of family built upon that model) is the essential foundation for personal liberty and an efficient market economy.<sup>50</sup>

---

46 Ross, above note 29, at 129.

47 Waite, above note 8, at 495, figure 15.

48 *Id.* Some scholars have suggested that the wage premium for married individuals evidences enhanced productivity – most likely the result of more time (because the other spouse is at home attending to those affairs), reduced negative health behaviors, and increased incentive to perform well so as to provide for the family. *Id.*

49 VanDenBerghe, above note 19, at 34.

50 Berger, above note 5, at 44.

In sum, the weight of social science demographic research indicates that marriage has unique benefits for women and men, as well as for the children that develop from and within the marital union. Marriage offers individuals (and society) natural and inherent benefits. Indeed, the procreative and normative functions of marriage provide the very foundation of civilized society. Efforts to devalue motherhood, diminish parental involvement with children, and to devalue religious norms bring with them high and tragic social costs.

### **The costs of destabilizing natural marital structures**

I now move to the social costs incurred by society as a result of the destabilization of the family. There are growing signs of distress – including poverty – in American society. This distress is directly linked to the breakdown of marriage and family. As one scholar has written:

Much of the debate about the growing gap between rich and poor in America focuses on the changing job force, the cost of living, and the tax and regulatory structure that hamstrings businesses and employees. But analysis of the social science literature demonstrates that the root cause of poverty and income disparity is linked undeniably to the presence or absence of marriage. Broken families earn less and experience lower levels of educational achievement. Worse, they pass the prospect of meager incomes and family instability on to their children, making the effects inter-generational.”<sup>51</sup>

Family breakdown disables the future generation. As demonstrated above, “[r]esearch has documented that natural family structures benefit nearly every aspect of children’s well-being. This includes greater educational opportunities, better emotional and physical

---

51Patrick F. Fagan, “How Broken Families Rob Children of Their Chances for Future Prosperity,” The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, No. 1283 (June 11, 1999).

health, less substance abuse, and lower incidences of early sexual activity for girls, and less delinquency for boys.”<sup>52</sup> In the United States, 50% of children who live with a single mother live in poverty; by contrast, only 10% of children residing in two-parent homes live below the poverty level.<sup>53</sup>

But even more than education, emotional health and poverty is at issue: the very safety and lives of women and children depends upon marital stability. A groundbreaking survey of the scientific literature performed by Dr. David Popenoe and Dr. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead found that cohabiting, unmarried women “are more likely than married women to suffer physical and sexual abuse.”<sup>54</sup> The consequences of cohabitation are even more serious for children. Doctors Popenoe and Whitehead conclude that: the most unsafe of all family environments for children is that in which the mother is living with someone other than the child’s biological father. This is the environment for the majority of children in cohabiting couple households.<sup>55</sup>

In sum, stable marital unions promote the health, safety and social progress of women, men and children. Unstable marital relations promote poverty, crime, abuse and social disintegration. These realities, moreover, are particularly acute for women and children. Society would do well to heed the fact that “the family as an institution exists to give

---

52Craig H. Hart, Ph.D., “Combating the Myth that Parent’s Don’t Matter,” at 3 (address delivered at the World Congress of Families II, Geneva, Switzerland) (available on-line at [www.worldcongress.org](http://www.worldcongress.org)).

53*Id.*

54Dr. David Popenoe and Dr. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation Before Marriage,” at 7 (The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University 1999).

55*Id.* at 8.

legal protection to the mother-child unit and to ensure that adequate economic resources are passed from the parents to allow the children to grow up to be viable adults.”<sup>56</sup>

### **III. A plea for help**

What is the import of the foregoing? First, the family is essential to social progress. Second, the family – particularly in the developed world – is functioning less well than (perhaps) at any other time in history. Third, and finally, as members of society, and as people of faith, we must work together to restore the family to its proper strength and function.

The threats facing men, women, children and the family do not confront one faith, country or culture alone. All religious faiths, all cultures and all countries must stand together to combat the erosion of morality and the family. The profound importance of the natural family transcends religious and cultural boundaries. The Qur’an states that “Allah has made for you mates from yourselves and made for you out of them, children and grandchildren.”<sup>57</sup> The Bible, in the second chapter of Genesis, reflects the same truth: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.”<sup>58</sup> The profound importance of the family unit established by Adam, Eve and their children is recognized in The Torah<sup>59</sup> and explained in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church: The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a

---

56Dr. Maria Sophia Aguirre, “Family Economics and the Information Society: How are They Affecting Each Other?” at 12 (paper presented at the World Congress of Families II, Geneva, Switzerland) (available on-line at [www.worldcongress.org](http://www.worldcongress.org)).

57The Qur’an, Al-Nahl (Sura 16:72).

58The Holy Bible, Genesis 2:17.

59The Torah, Bereishis 2:18 (explaining that man was not intended to live alone, but to marry).

life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society.<sup>60</sup>

The fundamental truth that the natural family is the basic unit of society, furthermore, extends beyond the great monotheistic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The classic Taoist text, *The Chuang Tzu*, explains that familial ties are the basis of any stable society because “[w]hen people are brought together by Heaven, . . . when troubles come, they hold together.”<sup>61</sup>

Why does the natural family hold us together when troubles come? Because a properly functioning natural family has extraordinary strength. Perhaps the most extensive study of adolescent behavior conducted anywhere in the world was completed in 1997 by the American Medical Association. That study found that the factors most “significantly related” to a decrease in risky adolescent behaviors were “parental expectations for scholastic achievement and the presence of connected, caring parents.”<sup>62</sup> As a result, the authors of this study questioned the ways that many current social policies “threaten family connectedness.”<sup>63</sup> They concluded that “one can only hope” that government at all levels will seek to “develop policies that support families.”<sup>64</sup>

We must begin that effort. Because families are the fundamental unit of society, government policy must stop by-passing the unit that can best strengthen society. Fathers and mothers, by and large, love their children. Assistance that permits fathers and

---

60Catechism of the Catholic Church, ¶ 2207 (1994).

61*The Chuang Tzu: A New Complete Translation of the Classic Taoist Text* (Martin Palmer and Elizabeth Breuilly, trans. 1996).

62“Protecting adolescents from harm: findings from the National Longitudinal Study,” *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 278, No. 10 (Sept. 10, 1997) at 864.

63*Id.*

64*Id.*

mothers to work together to strengthen their families to improve the condition of their children will not only be more successful than other possible approaches, it will strengthen society itself.

We must call upon society at all levels to return to basic truths regarding the family: truths that have been recognized for centuries and validated by scientific research in modern times. The best way to improve society is to improve its families. By contrast, the quickest way to destroy society is to weaken its families.

We must all see what is lying before our eyes. Society has a shared commitment to the natural family. The time has come to recognize and act upon it.

# **Protecting Children from the Harmful Effects of Media: A Survey of the Literature with Proposals for Action**

**The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development**

**Dr. Richard G. Wilkins**

**Dr. Hassan Hammoud**

**Dr. Marya Reed**

*This paper surveys existing studies examining the potentially harmful effects of modern media on children (including satellite and broadcast television, computer games and the Internet). The paper has three Sections. Section I summarizes the findings of prominent studies in the United States and Great Britain regarding children's use of television, video games and the Internet. Section I also reviews the efforts of various non-governmental organizations – as well as governments – to protect children from exposure to violent and sexually inappropriate materials, as well as the generally adverse reaction of courts to what are often (unfortunately) seen as “censorship laws.” Section II reviews similar studies related to children and media in the Arab world, including the recent Arab Media Charter and its generally negative reception. Section III suggests possible new and innovative approaches to protecting children from the harmful effects of media. Sections I and II demonstrate a growing need for governmental (and non-governmental) action to protect children from the adverse consequences of a growing wave of violent and sexually explicit materials. The time children spend viewing television, playing video games and exploring the Internet is increasing – and most of this time is spent with little or no parental supervision. As a result, children are being exposed to violent and sexually explicit media programming at younger and younger ages, resulting in documented adverse developmental and behavioral consequences. To date, moreover, most attempts at regulating (or even limiting) children's exposure to such materials have been either ineffective or invalidated by western courts. Accordingly, new approaches are sorely needed. Section III suggests possible new approaches, including the development of new governmental and non-governmental strategies to educate parents and children regarding the potentially negative*

*consequences of violent and/or sexually explicit materials, the production of more positive media programming, and the “zoning” (rather than censorship) of inappropriate materials. Unlike often-ineffective “filtering systems” (which media-savvy children can readily evade) or content-based governmental restrictions (which are negatively viewed as “censorship laws”), a “zoning” approach would confine all “adult” or “mature” materials to readily identifiable broadcast channels or Internet ports – leaving all other channels and/or Internet ports child (and family) friendly.*

## **Media and Children in the Developed World**

With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the range of media to which children have access has grown rapidly and, therefore, children all over the world have been affected not only by their parents, teachers, peer groups and community, but to a growing extent by their access, exposure to, and use of various types of media. Studies conducted by the Kaiser Foundation in the United States, as well as a recent study commissioned by the government of Great Britain, suggest there are significant grounds for concern because this exposure is having adverse developmental and behavioral impacts upon children. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various governments have attempted various approaches to protect children, but these efforts (particularly government regulatory actions) have often proven ineffective, either because of technological difficulties or adverse court reactions.

### **A. The Kaiser Foundation Study**

In 1999 The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a study, *kids and media @ the new millennium*, as part of its Entertainment Media and Public Health program. The study, believed to be one of the most comprehensive studies conducted of young people's media use, was designed by the Foundation in consultation with Stanford University Professor Donald F. Roberts and Harris Interactive, Inc. The study, based on a sample of more than 3,000 children aged 2-18, shows “how much time kids spend watching TV

and movies, using computers, playing video games, listening to music, and reading.”<sup>1</sup>

The study also looks at how much parents supervise their children’s media use.<sup>2</sup> A complete copy of this study accompanies this Paper.

The Kaiser study documented both positive and troubling statistics. For instance, a child’s average daily computer use was 34 minutes. Children 2-7 years old used the computer, on average, 11 minutes a day; children 8-13 years 50 minutes; and children 14-18 years 52 minutes.<sup>3</sup> Also encouraging was that children are still reading. The average time a child spent reading books each day was 25 minutes and the average time spent reading all forms of print medium was 44 minutes a day.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, one troubling statistic is the amount of time children spend watching TV and listening to music, compared to reading. While children, on average, spend more than 29 hours a week watching TV or listening to music, they spend only a little over 5 hours a week reading.<sup>5</sup> Another troubling statistic is that the more time children used media the less contented they are. High media users (children who spend more than 10.5 hours a day using media) score considerably lower than other children on the contentedness index (17.5 compared to 18.6).<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the most troubling statistic is the amount of time children are involved with various types of media without parental supervision. Children over the age of 7 almost *never* watch TV with their parents (95% of the time), while children 2-7 years old watch TV while their parents are doing something else (81%).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, parents of children 2-7 years old appear to be using the TV as a baby sitter.

According to the Kaiser study, the average child in the United States grows up in a home with:<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/1535-index.cfm>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *kids & media @ the New Millennium* report, at. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 32.

<sup>5</sup> *kids & media @ the new millennium*, Executive Summary, at 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>8</sup> *kids & media* Fact Sheet

- 3 TVs
- 3 Tape players
- 3 radios
- 2 CD players
- 2 VCRs
- 1 Video game player
- 1 computer

The amount of time a child spends, on average, using the various types of media (reported in hours and minutes) is:<sup>9</sup>

Total Media Exposure	6:32
Watching TV	2:46
Listening to music	1:27
Reading for fun	:44
Watching videos	:39
Using a computer for fun	:21
Playing video games	:20
Online	:08

The average availability of various types of media in a child's bedroom is:<sup>10</sup>

Television	53%
VCR	29%
Radio	70%
Tape Player	65%
CD Player	51%
Video Game Player	33%
Computer	16%
Cable / Satellite	24%
Premium Cable Channels	11%
Internet Access	7%

---

<sup>9</sup> *kids & media @ the New Millennium* report, at 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 13.

The proportion of time, by age, a child spends watching TV alone and spends watching TV with parents is:<sup>11</sup>

	2-7 years	8-13 years	14-18 years
Television time alone	14%	30%	41%
Television time with parents	19%	6%	2%

The proportion of time a child, in grades 7-12, uses other media “mainly alone,” with their parents and with siblings / peers is:<sup>12</sup>

Medium	Percent viewing or using “mainly alone”	Percent viewing or using with parents	Percent viewing or using with siblings/peers
Videos	27%	25%	56%
Movies	15%	11%	60%
Video Games	55%	2%	36%
Computer Games	64%	3%	13%
Chat Rooms	61%	10%	16%
Web Sites	61%	6%	21%

As shown above, the adult’s role in supervising a child’s exposure to television is limited. Only half of the children surveyed live in homes that had some rules about television viewing and by the time a child reaches third grade, the probability that a child has television viewing rules quickly declines.<sup>13</sup> Forty percent of the children surveyed said

---

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 62.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 64.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 81.

they live in homes where “the TV is on most of the time even if no one is watching,” and almost sixty percent said the TV is on during meals.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Byron Report from Great Britain**

In 2007, the newly elected Prime Minister of Great Britain requested Dr. Tanya Byron to carry out an “independent review of the risks children face from the Internet and video games.”<sup>15</sup> A complete copy of this extensive report accompanies this Paper. As with the Kaiser report, the Byron report found increasing exposure of children to inappropriate material on the Internet and in video games – accompanied by decreasing parental involvement and ineffective governmental and non-governmental reactions.

The Byron report found “the Internet and video games are very popular with children and young people and offer a range of opportunities for fun, learning and development,” but “there are concerns over potentially inappropriate material, which range from content (*e.g.* violence) through to contact and conduct of children in the digital world.”<sup>16</sup> The report noted that some researchers have concluded that “children’s use of the Internet and video games . . . [are] directly linked to violent and destructive behaviour in the young” and often come “at the expense of other activities and family interaction.”<sup>17</sup> The Byron study made several proposals to improve governmental regulatory efforts and increased parental involvement with their children’s use of media that will be reviewed in Section III of this Paper.

### **B. Documented Impact of Violent and Sexually Explicit Materials on Children and the Ineffectiveness of Past Regulatory Approaches**

A recent survey of the available social science in America, Europe, Canada and Africa by Professor Cheryl Preston concluded that “[g]iven the Internet’s pervasive reach and daily expansion, we must no longer ignore one of its most destructive disorders, namely

---

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 82.

<sup>15</sup> “Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review,” Foreword.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 3.

pornography.”<sup>18</sup> Professor Preston’s survey reviews not only the impact of violent and sexually explicit materials upon children, but also evaluates the effectiveness of various governmental efforts around the world to protect children. A copy of Professor Preston’s survey is attached as Appendix A to this Paper.

According to Professor Preston:

Social experts report that pornography and the Internet are feeding rapidly growing social problems, including bullying and random violent attacks, as well as sex trafficking and the creation of child pornography. One recent study suggested a direct link between Internet sexual offenders and actual acts of sexual abuse against children. It showed that as many as 85% of those convicted for trafficking in child pornography admitted to also inappropriately touching or raping children. In addition, empirical data and anecdotal evidence show that easy access to porn cannot be healthy for our children.<sup>19</sup>

Professor Preston reports that, while 44% of children exposed to violent or pornographic materials on the Internet intentionally sought out such materials, 66% of children “reported that their exposure was unwanted.”<sup>20</sup> Professor Preston concludes that: Pornographers often use deceptive images to lure unsuspecting persons, including children, further into their site and then employ pop-up traps to keep them there. Internet users report that clicking on exit buttons only causes additional windows to pop up, resulting in the user’s prolonged exposure to offensive content. Other traps and tricks are deployed by profit driven adult companies, including deceptive advertising which makes a porn site initially appear family friendly. It is not hard to imagine why pornographers try to trap kids. By facilitating children’s access to pornography, website owners not only increase their short-term ad revenue, but, like other merchandisers, they create future customers. The porn industry admits that twenty to thirty percent of its traffic comes from youth under the age of eighteen. This open access to harmful content is unprecedented for minors.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Cheryl Preston et al., “Children and Internet Pornography: The Nature of the Problem and Technologies for a Solution,” Appendix A to this Paper.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 3-4.

Even courts – while generally hostile to what they all-too-often view as unlawful censorship of free speech – have noted that a child’s access to sexually explicit materials can have harmful effects. The United States Supreme Court, for example, concluded, after citing a long string of studies, that exposure of children to pornographic materials (as well as the use of children as the subject of pornographic materials) “is harmful to the physiological, emotional, and mental health of the child” because, among other things, “sexually exploited children are unable to develop healthy affectionate relationships in later life, have sexual dysfunctions, and have a tendency to become sexual abusers as adults.”<sup>22</sup>

The growing availability of pornography on broadcast television, satellite television and the Internet has had another shocking consequence: the emergence of children as pornographers. Professor Preston has noted that:

Some pornographers take advantage of child-made porn videos by providing forums where children can post their material to “become famous.” Thus, children as young as eleven years old use webcams and cell phones to mimic what they see online, film themselves and friends, and subsequently post the films online. . . . [A] Seoul police cyber crimes unit announced it had busted a group of seven elementary and middle school students between the ages of 8 and 13 who had been operating an online community about “perverted” sex, complete with bulletin boards filled with pictures and “how to” descriptions about sadomasochist methods for achieving sexual pleasure.<sup>23</sup> Pornography on the Internet, furthermore, is often used “as a tool for sexual predators” who use the Internet “to seduce their victims because children who have been exposed to pornography become easier targets.”<sup>24</sup> Children who are victimized on the Internet, moreover, may well become serious social threats themselves in the future: If sexual desensitization occurs early in the life of a child, that child may never develop appropriate attitudes toward sex and could become a sex offender. In fact, studies already reveal a link between childhood pornography use and sexually harmful behaviors. An

---

<sup>22</sup> *New York v. Ferber*, 458 U.S. 747 758 & n. 9 (1982).

<sup>23</sup> Preston et al, note 18, above, at 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

Australian Child at Risk Assessment Unit in Canberra, New South Wales noticed an increase in the number of sexually abusive or aggressive children under ten years old. A retroactive study of the case files found that “almost all of the children who accessed [the unit’s] services . . . in relation to sexually harmful behaviors . . . had accessed the Internet for pornographic material.”<sup>25</sup>

But, despite the severity of the problem, governmental efforts to restrict children’s access to harmful materials have largely proven ineffective – both because of the hostility of courts to content-based “censorship laws” and technological difficulties associated with “filters” and other similar measures.

Courts in the United States must take a great share of the blame for the rising tide of pornography on the Internet. The United States Congress has attempted to regulate children’s access to violent and pornographic content on the Internet in two major pieces of legislation, the Communications Decency Act and the Child Online Protection Act. In both cases, courts in the United States struck down the legislation as impermissible restrictions on free speech.<sup>26</sup> The courts concluded that, because the legislation sought to control the content of materials available not only to children but to adults, the measures unconstitutionally restricted the free exchange of ideas. The courts suggested that other “less restrictive means” of regulation were available, including “filters” to block harmful materials from reaching children.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, however, filters have proven to be far from effective in limiting a child’s access to inappropriate materials. Professor Preston, for example, has concluded that “filters are an inadequate protection for children:”

Filters are easily worked around by shrewd teens, are inaccurate and may create a false sense of security. A [US] government survey found that filters block [only] 91% of sexually-explicit websites. That means of the estimated 4.2 million pornographic websites 378,000 would remain unblocked. With the daily addition of new pornographic

---

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Reno v. ACLU*, 521 U.S. 844 (1997) (invalidating Communications Decency Act); *ACLU v. Gonzales*, 478 F. Supp. 2d 775 (2007) (invalidating Child Online Protection Act).

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., *Reno* and *ACLU v. Gonzales*; above note 26.

websites and the efforts of pornographers to beat filters, this number of accessible pornographic pages continues to grow.<sup>28</sup>

Adverse court reactions in the United States, combined with the technical difficulties associated with effective filters, have made governmental action to protect children exceptionally difficult. In Uganda, for example, a strong public outcry resulted in an extensive government study to restrict underage access to inappropriate materials. That study, unfortunately, concluded that any attempt by Uganda to restrict (or “filter out”) pornographic materials available on the web would be ineffective because, despite Uganda’s own restrictions on obscene materials, “pornography has developed into a multi-billion dollar industry in western countries” and “major flaws in western jurisprudence starting mainly in the United States” would insure the continued flow of violent and pornographic materials into the hands of Ugandan youth.<sup>29</sup> An Australian government committee similarly found that – even a marginally effective government-sponsored filtering system – would cost in excess of \$116 million dollars.<sup>30</sup>

### **NGO Efforts to Protect Children from Inappropriate Media**

Numerous NGOs have recently emerged that are devoted to assisting parents and children in dealing with the dangers posed by modern media. Even a cursory review of the materials produced (and approaches used) by such NGOs would require many pages. Accordingly, this Paper will examine two of the most prominent NGOs in this arena. The Family Online Safety Organization (FOSI) is an international NGO with operations in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. FOSI has an extensive Internet site providing educational and other materials to adults and children interested in

---

<sup>28</sup> Preston et al., note 18 above, at 12.

<sup>29</sup> Record of Parliamentary Proceedings, Ugandan Parliament, October 11, 2005. Available at [http://www.parliament.go.ug/hansard/hans\\_view\\_date.jsp?dateYYYY=2005&dateMM=10&dateDD=11](http://www.parliament.go.ug/hansard/hans_view_date.jsp?dateYYYY=2005&dateMM=10&dateDD=11); REPUBLIC OF UGANDA, REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON PORNOGRAPHY (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Media Release, Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, \$116.6 Million to Protect Australian Families Online (June 21, 2006), available at [http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/\\$116.6\\_million\\_to\\_protect\\_australian\\_families\\_online](http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/media/media_releases/$116.6_million_to_protect_australian_families_online).

learning more about the dangers of online violent and sexually explicit materials. *See, e.g.,* [www.fosi.org](http://www.fosi.org). The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD) has begun discussions with FOSI regarding possible cooperative efforts. DIIFSD will be attending a two-day seminar organized by FOSI in London, England, in early June 2008.

Another NGO, whose efforts are primarily directed to families in the United States, is The National Institute on Media and the Family (NIMF). NIMF's mission is "to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm of media on the health and development of children and families."<sup>31</sup> Among other things, NIMF encourages parental involvement with their children, urging mothers and fathers to "Watch What Their Kids Watch."<sup>32</sup> NIMF's website has a page with links to numerous Fact Sheets. The Fact Sheets cover various topics, including Video Games, Television, Internet and Computers and Music. These Fact Sheets include source information to back up the information given. Copies of all of the Fact Sheets – as well as NIMF's Tip Sheets (which provide parents and children with general guidelines for appropriate media use) – are submitted with this Paper. Among other things, these Fact and Tip Sheets reveal that:

By the time a child is eighteen years old, he or she will witness on television (with average viewing time) 200,000 acts of violence including 40,000 murders

Young children who see media violence have a greater chance of exhibiting violent and aggressive behavior later in life, than children who have not seen violent media

Violence (homicide, suicide, and trauma) is a leading cause of death for children, adolescents and young adults, more prevalent than disease, cancer or congenital disorders.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *See* <http://www.mediafamily.org/about/index.shtml>.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *See* [http://mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_vlent.shtml](http://mediafamily.org/facts/facts_vlent.shtml)

## **II. Media and Children in the Arab World**

While the impact of media on children has been widely debated in western literature, and the subject of numerous conferences and research by academics and professionals, very little attention has been allocated to this topic in the Arab world.

### **A. Inadequate Research**

Despite the importance of this topic, Arab research regarding children's media use suffers from a lack of situational analysis as well as qualitative and quantitative studies at both local and regional levels. (Khoury, 2006; Mellor, 2006). In addition, there are very few multidisciplinary studies which examine preventing and/or mitigating the negative impact of media on children. What little has been published in this field: tend(s) to neglect methodological and theoretical reflexivity and in-depth research on concentrated aspects of the social world, of which media is such an important part. . . . Over-eager to put [their] finger on "the thing" about Arab media, many of the authors neglect detailed analysis that could yield new insights and be of use for comparative analysis. (Haugbolle; 2006:p.3-4).

Although there are a great number of concerns about the role of media in changing the social scene in the Arab world: the increasing number of publications and reports published recently about Arab media has mostly been descriptive in nature pointing at the change in format in Arab media and speculating about the new mixture of modern images alongside traditional lives. (Mellor; 2006, at 223).

Thus, the Arab literature lacks in-depth understanding and qualitative analysis of the mechanisms and impact of media on Arab society. Moreover, throughout the Arab world there is a paucity of strategies and programs appropriately designed to sensitize children, their families and civil society regarding the detrimental effects of uncontrolled media access, exposure and use.

## **B. Government Attempts to Ameliorate Children’s Exposure to Questionable Media**

During the last two decades, and despite the fast proliferation in the Arab world of modern media such as broadcast TV, satellite TV channels, video games, Internet, cell phones, and their accompanying usages, the sphere of regulating and monitoring their use in Arab societies seems chaotic and still unattended to by appropriate legislation and governing judicial strategies and procedures.

The consumption of such global media by Arab children and youth is: controlled by two powerful forces: the unregulated, free market commercial nature of the global and regional media, and the contradictory forces that define the mindset of [children and] young Arabs. (Khoury, 2006, at 43).

As a matter of fact, most Arab children and youth are in a very special situation in dealing with mass media, mainly television, cell phone, and the Internet. In most families from different socio-economic backgrounds, children and youth are left to watch TV without any control or interference from their parents. This dangerous situation is compounded by the spread of largely unregulated satellite channels and the Internet – with its various (and rapidly expanding) means of communication (such as Facebook, web cams, chat rooms, You Tube and pornography sites). Moreover, not only do children and youth in most Arab countries know more about satellite channels than their parents, they are also the most exposed to them.

There is mounting and clearly demonstrated evidence in western literature on the relation between a child’s exposure to TV, video game and Internet violence and childhood aggression. A recent study (Huesmann et al., 2003) has revealed that childhood exposure to media violence predicts young adult aggressive behavior for both males and females. These relations persist even when the effects of socio-economic status, intellectual ability, and a variety of parenting factors are controlled. On the Arab scene, a UN report (Muir, 2005) provided a “groundbreaking” overview on violence against children by drawing together the latest knowledge on this topic. The report outlines several forms of cyber violence that include child pornography and live online sexual abuse for paying customers, online sexual solicitation, cyber stalking and bullying, and access to illegal

and harmful materials, in addition to child exploiters using cyber space to network for child sex tourism and trafficking. The report reveals growing concerns about the ease with which people who are intent on harming children move between the physical and virtual world in order to exploit a child...[hence forth] , the scale and changing forms of cyber violence against children are outstripping the existing capacities of legislation and law enforcement agencies, and society's understanding of how the technologies work. (Muir, 2005).

In the modern Arab world, and with the advent of computer technology, attempts at safeguarding children from media's potentially harmful effects remain quite limited. There are various government censorship laws in the Penal Code of some Arab Nations and individual TV stations have sometimes voluntarily restricted their own activities. (Sakr, 2000, at 1). These efforts, however, have been only marginally effective. As a result, children are barely immune from the onslaught of violent and offensive media exposure. As a result, neither their safety nor dignity is protected from abuses of the media industry.

While western nations, notably the United States, have attempted to enact legislation to protect children, such legislation (to date) has been invalidated by judicial decisions. See notes 26 and 27, above. Perhaps because of this western experience, few Arab countries have enacted similar regulatory measures. (Montgomery, at 159). Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, for example, impose censorship via proxy servers – devices that are interposed between the end-user and the Internet in order to filter and block specified content (ARC).

In many countries, including Jordan and Lebanon, taxation and telecommunications policies keep Internet accounts quite costly and thus beyond the means of many, whether or not this is the objective of these policies. Tunisia has enacted the region's most detailed Internet-specific legislation, which is in large part designed to ensure that online speech does not escape the government's tough controls on critical speech (ARC).

In the majority of countries where Internet-specific laws have not been enacted, legal or de facto constraints on freedom of speech and of the press have a chilling effect on what is expressed online, especially in public forums like open bulletin boards and chat rooms.

Algeria, Morocco, and the Palestinian Authority have made little if any effort so far to control online content, allowing Internet user's access to a wealth of political and human rights information that the local print and broadcast media cannot publish (ARC).

### **C. The New Arab Media Charter**

More recently, an emergency meeting of the Arab Information Ministers adopted a charter (ALSBC, 2008) to regulate radio and TV satellite broadcasting in the Arab region. This came as a result of the proliferation across the Arab world over the last decade of some 400 satellite stations, "undermining traditional governmental control over the media." A plethora of arguments and counter arguments has emerged in the Arab and the international press. While proponents of the charter considered it as "a foundation for developing a vibrant, diverse satellite environment that broadcasts programs meeting world-class standards of journalism, entertainment, and public affairs... and as long overdue" (Amin, 2008), outspoken opponents, including media proponents and human rights activists, have condemned and attacked the charter as "an attempt by autocratic governments to squash already limited freedom ... a jumble, a potent mix of over-regulations and unclear directions ... policing the skies, restricting freedom of the media and imposing a hegemony to ensure circulating a culture of revering rulers ... as an unacceptable move on the part of autocratic governments to rob the viewer of the already small amount of broadcast freedom they have enjoyed on private television."

Nevertheless, as one prominent media scholar has rightly put it: the Arab Satellite Charter adopted by the Arab League ... reflects the increasing recognition of the need for regional cooperation in the information field; the importance of clarifying which state has the power over what signals; and the demand for ethical legal principles that would govern trans-regional communication in the satellite realm. (Price, 2008).

In essence, the charter (ALSBC, 2008) bans broadcasting materials seen as "undermining social peace, national unity, public order, and general propriety," criticizing religions or defaming political, national and religious leaders. Moreover, it calls for the exercise of freedom of expression with awareness and responsibility to protect the supreme interests of the Arab States and the Arab nation. However, by its very nature, the charter "seems

too general and elastic”, “encyclopedic” in its listing areas of potential program control, “censorial, overbroad and restrictive.”

More specifically, only five of the twelve items of the charter do indeed reflect concern with safeguarding and protecting children and youth against violence, abuse, obscenity, and other social ills such as smoking, and alcohol drinking (ALSBC, 2008). Furthermore, in this regard the charter is non-binding and lacks specific procedures and provisions to enforce it.

#### **D. NGO Efforts to Remediate Children’s Exposure to Questionable Media**

In the majority of Arab countries, non governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in the provision of social services and thus, in the protection and safeguarding of children’s rights. However, their roles and functions are greatly influenced by the distribution of power in the particular country where they operate. Moreover, the crucial role of international NGOs in advocating for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is notable. Several UN organizations are playing a key role in alliances with local NGOs such as UNICEF, ESCWA, UNDP, UNDESA, and the Regional Bureau for Arab states, who regularly launch and sponsor joint ventures and programs in support of children’s rights. Notwithstanding supportive partnerships with local NGOs, the monitoring of internal laws and policies, as well as implementation of the convention of the rights of the child, rest on the state.

The Draft Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Jordan (ARC) reflects the governmental stand vis-à-vis children, putting them on its national and political priority list. Although the work of governmental institutions lack sufficient funding, and suffers from frequent administrative changes and bureaucratic inefficiency, the Ministry of Social Development is nevertheless the governmental institution responsible for child and family matters. Its objectives include advocating for the improvement of legislation and guidelines for protecting children and safeguarding their rights. The government’s obligation to report regularly to the CRC Committee in Geneva has motivated various initiatives and continuous action. Local and international NGOs have played a pivotal role in advocating for implementation of the Convention. Such efforts have influenced

child rights organizations and legal and planning directorates, including the formulation of a National Plan of Action and the establishment of a National Task force for Children. In addition, a legal committee assesses laws related to children and their rights and the National Coalition for Children ( NCC ) facilitates and promotes high quality activities that enhance child well being. It is in this context that the Arab NGO activities to protect children from adverse media exposure have been most effective.

### **III. Possible New Innovative Approaches**

In view of the positive potential that modern media affords children and youth, and in order to mitigate and control its harmful effects, innovative policies, strategies and measures ought to be considered and promoted by policy makers, child advocates, civil society and the media industry – particularly in the Arab region. As the Ugandan Parliament concluded, “The greatest mistake for developing countries, where pornography is still a budding problem, would be to adopt the misguided western policy approaches that will simply open the floodgates for the sex industry along with its negative effects.”<sup>34</sup> Various approaches should be considered to reduce the risk of children’s exposure to inappropriate material on satellite television, broadcast television, video games and (in particular) the Internet.

1. Increased Parental Involvement: One such approach would be to encourage – through government and NGO-sponsored activities and educational efforts – increased parental involvement in monitoring their children’s media usage. As the Byron Report from Great Britain concludes:

Parents . . . have a key role to play in managing children’s *access* to such material. There is a range of technical tools that can help parents do this (*e.g.* safe search [and other filtering tools]), but they only work effectively if users understand them. So restricting children’s *access* to harmful and inappropriate material is not just a question of what industry can do to protect children (*e.g.* by developing better parental control software),

---

<sup>34</sup> REPUBLIC OF UGANDA, REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON PORNOGRAPHY (2005).

but also of what parents can do to protect children (*e.g.* by setting up parental control software properly) and what children can do to protect themselves (*e.g.* by not giving out their contact details online).<sup>35</sup>

Within the Arab region, the encouragement of parental involvement would be materially aided by the design and implementation of national surveys to examine ways in which parents supervise their children's use of modern media that are increasingly a part of the Arab home.

## 2. Education Regarding the Positive and Negative Effects of Modern Media:

Governments and NGOs can take action to promote media literacy and media education to support and empower families, teachers, and children to use media wisely, thereby increasing the potential for modern media to influence positively the education and acculturation of children while minimizing the media's negative effects. As the Byron Report concluded, schools and parents have a major role to play in protecting children from harmful media. In order to perform their roles effectively, however, parents and schools must have the proper tools. Accordingly, governments and NGOs can take steps to: deliver e-safety through the curriculum, provide teachers and the wider children's workforce with the skills and knowledge they need, reach children and families through Extended Schools and take steps to ensure that [appropriate government agencies] hold the system to account on the quality of delivery in this area.<sup>36</sup>

Within the Arab region, such efforts could include national mobilizing campaigns designed to sensitize parents, schools, NGOs, civil society associations, child rights advocacy groups, research centers and universities, private sectors, and legislators regarding their obligations to safeguard children's rights and dignity.

## 3. Development of Positive Media Messages:

Because the available data demonstrate that children spend many hours watching television without parental supervision, governments and NGOs should take action to encourage the production of positive

---

<sup>35</sup> Byron Report, note 15 above, at 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 8.

television programs (as well as the development of child-friendly video games and Internet sites). The hours children spend in front of televisions, computers and game consoles could be more productively spent – with less danger to the child – if those hours were used to view and/or participate in programming with positive messages. Accordingly, governments and NGOs should strengthen the production and dissemination of materials and programs suitable to children’s physiological, psychological and social characteristics.

4. Reconsideration of Current Regulatory Approaches: While the Arab Media Charter can be seen as a laudable first step in the region, a more effective (and positively received) regulatory approach is needed in the Arab region. A comprehensive Arab strategy, which focuses more on parental involvement, educational efforts and “zoning” of inappropriate content (see below), is sorely needed. Such laws should focus – not only on television and the Internet – but on protecting children against all forms of violence and sexual exploitation. Such laws should be enacted in conjunction with the development of effective measures for their implementation and monitoring.

5. “Zoning” Adult and/or Mature Content: As noted above, past regulatory efforts aimed at restricting a child’s access to inappropriate media materials have been ineffective (1) because they have been viewed by courts as improper attempts to restrict free speech or (2) they have rested upon various “filtering” approaches that are easily evaded by children and are (at best) only 90% accurate – leaving hundreds of thousands of inappropriate web sites available to youth. A more fruitful regulatory strategy might be what Professor Preston has called “zoning” of adult or mature content.

This “zoning” approach is possible because, at present, all Internet browsing (wherever initiated or received in the world) moves over a single electronic port – named “port 80.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, all e-mail traffic currently moves over port 25.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, it is

---

<sup>37</sup> As Professor Preston explains (Preston, et al., note 18 above, at 15):  
Though millions of different Internet users simultaneously browse, email, instant

technologically possible – and in fact rather simple – to “zone” (or confine) all adult or mature materials to electronic ports *other* than port 80 (currently used for all web browsing) or port 25 (currently used for all e-mail).

As Professor Preston explains, Internet “zoning” would merely require the designation of ports 25 and 80 as “Community Ports” (where only content suitable for all ages would be available) while designating any number of alternative ports as “Open Ports” (where adult and/or mature content would be available):

Community Ports would contain only content appropriate for all ages. Open ports would contain all [other] legal [but violent and sexually explicit] content. This approach leverages the existing technical infrastructure of the Internet to “build-in” protective options for families. Legally, nations can enact and enforce laws and penalties for port violations. . . . Publishers of mature content would be required to sanitize their Community Port presence and use the Open Port ranges to publish any [other] legal content.<sup>39</sup>

Such a system would readily protect children. Families, upon signing up for Internet service, would simply specify whether they wanted only Community Ports 25 and 80, thereby insuring their children’s safety from exposure to unwanted materials, or whether they wanted both Community and Open Ports. This approach – unlike other regulatory approaches tried to date – has the potential (1) to be effective (because, unlike current “leaky” filtering systems) a Community Port would not bring offensive materials into a home or office, and (2) pass legal scrutiny even in the United States (because, unlike

---

message, and share files, Internet information does not collide or interfere because of protocols and ports. A protocol is a standard procedure for negotiating data transmission between computers, and a port is the number assigned to each specific protocol. For example, Web browsing uses the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) to send and receive virtual packets. This protocol’s port number is 80. Thus, whenever an Internet user enters and sends a website’s address from a browser, that request contains the port number 80. This port number tells a Web server the appropriate Internet application to use and what protocol to follow, thereby enabling the server to open, read, and respond to the request appropriately. If an Internet user were emailing, his transmission would use a different port—port 25. Even though the Internet possesses thousands of ports, only a small number are used. Indeed, only one port, 80, is used for all Web browsing.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 15-16.

“censorship laws,” a “zoning” approach does not “restrict the rights of adults to view what they want”).<sup>40</sup>

A similar “zoning” approach could be adopted for the regulation of broadcast and satellite television. Community Channels would be those broadcast on satellite channels designated (and allowed) to carry only materials suitable for all ages. Open Channels would then be designated for the broadcast and/or dissemination of adult or mature content. Such an approach would allow for the effective use of “V chips” or other technology whereby parents could block Open Channels – rather than being forced to rely upon the vagaries of program-by-program filtering (or blocking) as is required under current regulatory regimes.

### **Bibliography for Section II**

Amin, Hussein (2008) “The Arab States Charter for Satellite Television: A Quest for regulation”.

<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/index.php?article=649&printarticle>.

Arab League Satellite Broadcasting Charter (ALSBC) 2008.

<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/index.php?article=648&printarticle>.

Arab Resource Collective (ARC). “The International Convention on the Rights of the Child” Ink on Paper or Potential Reality?

<http://www.mawared.org/english/?q=node/243>.

ARC. “ICT Programme Conceptual Background”.

<http://www.mawared.org/english/?q=node/267>.

Armbrust, Walter & Kai Hafez. Ed. (2007). “Internet Users in the Arab World”. In: The Arab Media Handbook. New York: Continuum (forthcoming).

Hangbolle, Sune. (2007). “Arab Media in the Information Age”: Book Review. Emirates Center for Strategic Studies: Abu Dhabi, 2006.

<http://www.arabmediasociety.com>

---

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 18.

- Huesmann, L. Rowell et al. (2003). "Longitudinal Relations Between Children's Exposure to TV Violence and their Aggressive & Violent Behavior in Young Adulthood: 1977-1992. *Development Psychology*. Vol. 39, No.2, 201-221.
- Khoury, Rami (2006). "Arab Youth, Globalization and the Media". In UNDP Report on Arab Youth Strategizing for the MDGs. 37-44.
- Kuttob, Daoud (2008). "Satellite Censorship Arab League Style". *Arab Media and Society*. March.
- Mellor, Noha (2006). "Arab Media: What has this to do with Europe?". *Culture and Society*. 221-223
- Montgomery, Kathryn C. "Children's Media Culture in the New Millennium: Mapping the Digital Landscape". *The Future of Child/Children and Computer Technology*. Vol.10, No.2, 145-167.
- Muir, Deborah (2005). "Violence Against Children in Cyberspace".  
<http://www.crin.org/resources/english/?q=node/267>.
- Price, Monroe E. (2008). "A Charter of Contradictions". *Arab Media & Society*. March.
- Radsh, Courtney, G. (2008). "New Media & New Middle East": Book Review. Edited by Philip Seib. Palgrave: New York, 2007.  
<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/>
- Sakr, Naomi, Ed. (2007). "Arab Internet Use: Popular Trends & Public Impact". *Arab Media & Political Renewal: Community, Legitimacy and Public Life*, London: I.B. Tauris, 56-79 (in press).
- Wartella, Ellen a. & Nancy Jennings (2000). "Children & Computers: New Technology-Old Concerns. *The Future of /children/Children & Computer Technology*. Vol. 10, No.2, 31-43.
- Woodward, Emory H. & Natalia Gridina (2000). "Media in the Home: The Fifth Annual Survey of Parents & Children". The Annenberg Public Policy Center. Survey Series No. 7.

## APPENDIX A

Cheryl Preston, et al., "Children and Internet Pornography:  
 The Nature of the Problem and the Technologies for a Solution"

# **Role of educational, social and media institutions in raising the new generation**

**Fr Christophe Roucou**

## **Introduction**

Eminencies, excellencies, dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to have been invited by DICID (Doha international center for interfaith dialogue), and specially Prof. Ibrahim al-Naimi and Prof. Aisha al-Mannai to participate to this 8th Doha conference on Interfaith Dialogue and to be one of the speaker for the second plenary session. Many thanks to them.

I will focus my speech on one of the elements of this session : the role of the educational institutions in raising the new generation to be able to live in a world where cultures and religions are plural and where they (the new generation) will have to live together with esteem and respect. These two words are used in the declaration of the second council Vatican II, *Nostra aetate*, about the attitude of catholics towards the others religions.

My words are based on my personal experience, first as a teacher both in France and in Egypt, then today as responsible in the catholic church in France (at the bishops' conference) of the relationship between catholics and muslims in our country.

First, I will notice what are, in my point of view, the main challenges for educational institutions in raising a new generation with an awareness of other cultures and religions. In my second point, I will pay attention to some characteristics of the context in which lives this new generation.

Then, in the third point, I will give some educational aims or purposes.

And to conclude, as a fourth point, I would speak about some institutions or initiatives in which this is done in France: schools, scout movement or initiatives coming from the new generation itself.

1      Principal challenges for educational institutions from an interfaith point of view

The main challenge for educational institutions is how to prepare the new generation to live together, when people living in the same country, as France and many countries in Europe and over the world, are from different cultures and religions.

In fact, educational institutions are the place where, in most countries, young people live daily together belonging to different social classes, different cultures and also different religions. So, as they live during their school and university periods, they will live during their adult life: either they will be able to share and live with the others, different from them, or they will remain closed in their own community.

So, this is a big challenge: How do educational institutions prepare the new generation to live together, taking in account what are the common values and beliefs but also what and where are the differences?

In this way, we have to help the new generation to pass from tolerance to the respect of others.

Certainly, tolerance is a progress, if we consider wars between religions. But tolerance is the situation in which people live next to others but without any consideration for them. It is a kind of juxtaposition. Often, in France, young people say: «This is my choice ... yours is different; it doesn't matter. » They say such words for clothing mode but also for values and for religion. So as our educational responsibility is to help them to pass from tolerance to the respect of others which means to pay attention to what my neighbour says, does and believes and to do this I have to get in touch with him.

Another challenge for educational institutions, from our point of view as believers in God, is to be witness of God in a secularized world. In our countries, on the north side of the Mediterranean Sea, it is a tremendous challenge. Secularization of our societies has been a long process active since years. We may be sorry for this situation. But the challenge for us is not to speak about this situation but to testify to the faith in God in the middle of such secularized societies, to testify that the spiritual dimension is essential for every human being if he wants to be really a human being, according to his vocation as creature of God.

How do educational institutions introduce not only in their curricula but also in the organization of school or university life this opening towards the spiritual dimension and

to the responsibility for believers in God to be, in our world, witness of the Almighty and only God?

Where are the educational institutions which face this challenge in common program and activities to young believers of different religions together?

## **2 Some considerations about the context of this new generation**

### **Globalization**

The new generation is born in a world of globalization. So, in most countries, they learn what happens in the other part of the world at the same time that people living in the place where the events happen. They get all the news irrespective of the distance. They are able to get via Internet the best and the worst.

Where will they get the discernment?

Globalization means also the extension of merchandizing to everything: goods but also values and even spirituality or religion.

In our economic and financial worldwide system, money seems to be the first value and to get money the only goal proposed to the new generation.

How educational institutions will propose them other values? How they will propose to put the human being, created by God, as the main criterium for any society any system or project?

### **Clash of ignorances**

I share the opinion of one of my friends, Tareq Oubrou, imam and rector of the great mosque of Bordeaux, important town in the south-west of France, who says « In France, and perhaps in the world, we have not «the clash of civilizations » but « the clash of ignorances ».

I testify that, among the new generation in France, both, young christians and young muslims do not know a lot about their own religious tradition. Often they carry misunderstanding about their religion and prejudices about other religions.

This is another big challenge for, both, educational institutions and media.

## **Life in the moment**

What we have said about globalization and culture of Internet leads us to notice that the new generation is living in the moment. They are not only in the present, ignoring the past, without significant interest in the future and utopia, but in the present they are living the present moment.

With this relation to time, what is the place for history and the importance of memory in each of our traditions. For jews, christians and muslims God reveals himself in the history of men and his Word is transmitted to generations in this human history. The roots of our religions in Abraham's/Ibrahim's story and the perspective of the last judgement common to our three traditions, links the history of men with the revelation of God in this history.

So, what to do if past and future have no importance for the new generation?

## **Pluralism of cultures and religions**

In some parts of the world, pluralism of cultures and religions is the environment in which people are used to grow up and live, for example in the Indian ocean as in the island of Mauritius.

But, in European countries, this pluralism is a new situation and the new generation do not know well how to live in such pluralism. Some young people are attracted by relativism « All religions are the same », some others are frightened by this situation and they are attracted by fundamentalist groups in each of our three religions.

### **3 About some educational aims to face these challenges**

To face these challenges, I propose, first, a reflection based on consideration about three forms of the french verb « connaître » which give us three actions and thoughts that have to be conducted in the same time and especially towards the new generation:

In french language, the same root of verb « connaître » may have three forms, and it would be the same thing in arabic language with the differents forms of verb « arafa ». first meaning, first educational step: « connaître », it means to know the religion of the others, then, in french we say : « se connaître » which means to meet people of another

religion and become friends with them and develop a relationship, so the second action is to know one another last step, in french we say : « se reconnaître », and I add « se reconnaître différents ». In english, it means that, in this process, we have to recognize that we have differences between us according to the truth of this relationship, we have to recognize that we are friends or brothers not in spite of our differences but through our differences.

A second educational aim is to give to the new generation the sense of history. The main purpose is not to give them a lot of knowledge about history that they can find in books or Internet. But more difficult is to guide them on the way of an understanding of the history so that they get a memory of what happens in humanity before them, to understand the roots of the present moment and situation. Our three religious traditions tell us about our fathers in the faith. For everyone here, the history is a sacred history because it tells us the relationship between God and humanity. And especially for us as christian, the revelation of God takes place in the human history and in a special time: in the first century, in Palestine, in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So the second educational aim is to help the new generation to get the sense of history and to project themselves in the future because we get from God the responsibility of the future of the creation and the world. What will they do with the earth given to man such that he transforms it so that every human being can live on it?

Third educational aim would respond to this domination of the immediate moment without any capacity of taking distance. To face this situation, I think that educational institutions have to give to the new generation the sense of capacity of criticism and personal judgment. When teaching is only based on repetition it does not give to a new generation the capacity of understanding new situations and mutations.

We have to help the new generation to use reason, and to combine it with religious faith. In the same order, to face civilization of images, educational institutions have to teach to new generation how to read the amount of pictures that they see all day long. In past times, we learnt at school and in university how to read a text and to interpret it, nowadays the same task has to be done with pictures and images. In order to be able to understand what happens and to make their own judgment.

Last point, raising a new generation on the point of view of interfaith dialogue, I would ask a question that I often ask of my muslims interlocutors and friends in France. What place do we give to the other's religion in our teachings and seminars with the new generation?

How do a christian student listen to a muslim explaining the importance of his own faith in his life or presenting his religious tradition?

And also, how a future imam during his years of formation listens to a christian person explaining what is his faith?

These are examples, the idea is to listen what the other man or woman says himself of his or her faith.

#### **4 Some institutions or initiatives that face these challenges**

##### **The role of the schools**

The situation is very different according to different countries. But the question is the same: how to face, in schools, the ignorance about religions?

In France, because of the laws about laïcité, especially in educational institutions, in governmental schools what can be done is teaching religions as facts, as culture.

But in the national service for education, according to the law, there can be religious schools. They have the possibility to introduce in their curricula special programmes about religions.

First, the french law obliges any religious school with contract with government to welcome any student without any consideration for his religion. This is one of the reason why a number of muslim schoolchildren study in catholic schools.

Some of these catholic schools have the preoccupation to introduce their students in interfaith dialogue. Teachers think that it is important not only to study in same classrooms, but because of the presence of jews, muslims and christians together in the same school to organize interfaith meetings. In these meetings, students, at secondary school, explain to others what their own tradition of faith say on one subject, listen to the others and then have exchanges between themselves about what has been said by others.

I participate in such an interfaith programme in a secondary school in Paris for the past nine years but I am sorry that this rich experience is practiced in only a few schools.

### **The role of youth movements**

Youth movements are other educational institutions where the new generation may find a good interfaith environment or during the several opportunities of exchanges between scouts of different countries and religions.

A good example is the scout movement. In France, the catholic scout movement, years ago, supported the foundation of a muslim scout movement in France. There is still a good relationship between the two movements. But in the same time, some muslim families put their children in the catholic scout movement, especially in popular districts and suburbs of great towns.

Leaders of this scout movement have a responsibility on both sides: not to create any differences between young people during scouting activities and in the same time to respect differences of religion and times for prayer and so on.

International exchanges, for example between french scouts and scouts from Morocco, give opportunities to realize the programme and the pedagogy that I have explained in my third point about « connaître, se connaître et se reconnaître différents ».

### **Initiatives from the new generation**

Raising the new generation is not only to think for them or to build programmes for them but it is also to support initiatives coming from them.

I would like to give only one example, from France. Some young students, living in the same district of Paris had the idea in 2008 to create an association called « Co-Exister ». They are less than ten young boys and girls, some students in last year of secondary school, some students at the university. Some are christians, some jews and some muslims.

Their goal is to propose to young people to know their three religions by sharing together some activities in different places of worship. It also proposes symbolic events such as to ask people of the three religious traditions to give together blood for a transfusion center

because there is no difference between the blood of a christian, a muslim or a jew. One of their rule is that every activity or programme is done by members of the three traditions. For communication, they use media used by their generation: blogs, facebook and twitter. This association of young people gets the support of some adults of « Religions for peace » (some of them are parents of this young people) and of the main religious authorities in our country, involved in interreligious dialogue. One reason of this support is to encourage young people to have initiatives in this field.

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, raising a new generation cannot be the task only of the family, or of the school or media or religious institutions but must combine all these institutions and projects.

We have also to pay attention to combine what has to be done by the new generation itself and what is to be done on an intergeneration level. Initiatives must be taken on both sides.

And as a link between today and tomorrow, I will conclude by some words of Pope John Paul II in his speech at the great Omayad mosque in Damascus : *« It is in mosques and churches that the Muslim and Christian communities shape their religious identity, and it is there that the young receive a significant part of their religious education. What sense of identity is instilled in young Christians and young Muslims in our churches and mosques? It is my ardent hope that Muslim and Christian religious leaders and teachers will present our two great religious communities as communities in respectful dialogue, never more as communities in conflict. It is crucial for the young to be taught the ways of respect and understanding, so that they will not be led to misuse religion itself to promote or justify hatred and violence. Violence destroys the image of the Creator in his creatures, and should never be considered as the fruit of religious conviction. »*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, Meeting with muslim leaders, **Omayyad Great Mosque**, Damascus, 6 may 2001,

## **Religious upbringing and contemporary challenges in the Globalized era**

**JUDr. Ivana Hrdlickova**

*Judge - Appellate Court - Czech Republic*

*Legal Expert of Council of Europe*

*International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ)*

Salam aleykum wa rahmatulahi wa barakatuh, ladies and gentlemen,

We all are responsible for the upbringing of the new generation. We do live in a very dynamic time. Today, it is not possible to stop the flow of information. We live in a world of technological innovations, the Internet, Satellite. Even young children are already familiar with communications technologies such as Skype, ICQ, can use mobile phone, iphones, video call etc. Unfortunately, our modern society increasingly lacks sufficient moral principles. The current time is not only a time of economic crisis, but what is more serious is, that we are witnessing a crisis of moral values. Many people are running for money, new car, big house, career, buying a lot of new toys for children, taking them to expensive holidays, but don't spend enough time with them, don't teach them morality and real values of life. As a judge I have to discuss many cases, where children play an important role. Such cases as divorce, professional careers and busy parents, other family problems, are increasing nowadays and very often are source of problematic behavior of children. We see many children tend to alcohol, drugs, they also tend to have problems with the law.

The best way how to educate children is upbringing them with transparency, open mindedness and religious values. Religious upbringing can help children find their place in today's world. Upbringing with humility, teaching children religious values through examples is definitely the best way how to influence children to live according to moral principles. When we start religious upbringing in early age of children, we would have benefit for the future. We can see many teenagers, who have not been raised according religious principles, trying to find their place in the world. There are so many seductions nowadays, as easily available alcohol, unfortunately drugs, pornography etc. Our globalized era has many positive sides, but also negative. We need to explain to the

children the negative sides to this globalization, making them have self control from drugs, pornography, alcohol and other seductions.

We must find a way to teach children religion in an attractive way, not to impose on them anything. As I mentioned, the best way is transparency and examples. When young children can see their parents, teachers, people in the society who profess religious values, living according to moral principles, then it will be much easier for them to follow such a way of life. It is extraordinarily tough for children and young people to see adults as they struggle with addiction to alcohol for example. Our goal should be to work for the society, where it is natural to live according to high moral principles, to help others, not to be selfish. Religion is the way how to live such a life. When young children are already familiar with the religious principles and adopt them as their own, it is much easier to appeal to these principles later.

One of the negative sides of the globalized era is that it is going to be more difficult for teenagers to find their place in the world. It is easy to chat on the internet with people from different ages, countries, races and mentalities it is more difficult for parents to control children and to prevent them from such activities. Well known saying, “forbidden fruits taste better” is very true. The banning way is not successful. There are many seductions in the modern globalized world. We can see many young people who tend to the magic, to the spirituality in a different way. To be raised without religious principles is in fact very difficult for the children. We can see teenagers who are searching for their foothold in their life, who worshipped stones, icons etc, because they don’t know religion, they don’t have experience of religious principles. Many young people started to follow sects unfortunately. The reason is to find “something” to believe in, to worship in. We can find many books nowadays teaching people that everybody can be happy if he or she wants, if he or she starts worshipping different icons, cards etc. It is very confusing for young people who don’t know religion, who are lost in the big globalized world. It is our responsibility, our duty to raise children according to religious principles, to teach them the right way of worshipping. Let me conclude with a short story that influenced many young people.

*A teenage girl about 17 named Aisha had gone to visit some friends one evening and time passed quickly as each shared their various experiences of the past year. She ended up staying longer than planned, and had to walk home alone. She wasn't afraid because it was a small town and she lived only a few blocks away. As she walked along under the tall elm trees, Aisha asked Allah to keep her safe from harm and danger. When she reached the alley, which was a short cut to her house, she decided to take it. However, halfway down the alley she noticed a man standing at the end as though he were waiting for her. She became uneasy and began to pray, asking for Allah's protection. Instantly a comforting feeling of quietness and security wrapped around her, she felt as though someone was walking with her. When she reached the end of the alley, she walked right past the man and arrived home safely. The following day, she read in the newspaper that a young girl had been attacked in the same alley just twenty minutes after she had been there. Feeling overwhelmed by this tragedy and the fact that it could have been her, she began to weep. Thanking Allah for her safety and to help this young woman, she decided to go to the police station. She felt she could recognize the man, so she told them her story. The police asked her if she would be willing to look at a line up to see if she could identify him. She agreed and immediately pointed out the man she had seen in the alley the night before. When the man was told he had been identified, he immediately broke down and confessed. The officer thanked Aisha for her bravery and asked if there was anything they could do for her. She asked if they would ask the man one question. Aisha was curious as to why he had not attacked her. When the policeman asked him, he answered, 'Because she wasn't alone. She had two tall men (Angels) walking on either side of her. Amazingly, whether you believe or not, you're never alone. Did you know that 98% of teenagers will not stand up for God? Know, that Allah is always there in your heart and loves you no matter what.....and if you stand up for him he will.*

# **Places of Worship: supporting and influencing the new generation**

**Dr. John Taylor**

## **1. Places of worship seen as communities of people**

While it is an important right to have or to share a place of worship, it is the community of worshippers, not the building or place, which is the vital element. Communities that are a part of a wider majority may often inhabit a long-established place of worship but newcomers who are in a minority in a wider community will often seek to affirm their identity by opening a new place of worship whether within an existing building or as a new manifestation of their religiously based community. Communities of like minded people who have no place of worship quickly aspire to plan and build and organize a church, mosque, synagogue or temple, however simple or however elaborate. The importance of places of worship in supporting and influencing the new generation is not simply to symbolize the presence of a particular tradition but rather to provide a sensitive and welcoming community for both members and visitors.

One may see a microcosm of a place of worship and of a worshipping community within a family home where a copy of scripture, a prayer mat, a picture of a holy place or, where appropriate, of a revered person may help to invite family members to individual or shared prayer or meditation. The influence of family members, old or young, is often a starting point for spiritual practices and may inspire outgoing service and sacrifice for others. One cannot make a generalized rule from the saying “the family that prays together stays together” but shared worship is often a good basis for human relationships. The family that prays at home may well go on to pray with the wider community in a local place of worship or, beyond that, in some more important place of pilgrimage. Family worship and community worship are held together by the intentions and experiences of each individual, and so the place of worship can be as important for private spirituality as for collective experiences.

The idea of “raising” a new generation should not obscure the fact that it is the young people themselves who rise. The place of worship can assist them in their choices and in

their recognition of their traditions and values. It may be wise to speak of both traditions and values in the plural since young people inherit and discover a wide range of spiritual and cultural elements from families, communities, nations and, indeed, from the increasingly globalized and variegated societies in which many live today. A young person may choose for himself or herself allegiance to a single tradition or may appropriate insights from a wider range of traditions; but the choice should be that of the young person and should not be imposed by a family member or religious leader. Parents have rights and duties to enable their children to receive religious teaching in a particular tradition, and schools have a duty to ensure that there are awareness of and respect for a wider range of cultures. Each young person may then choose to adopt values and beliefs according to his or her own conscience.

While families, schools and places of worship can all exert an influence and while a young person can make his or her own choice, there can often be social or political obstacles. Even where there are constitutional safeguards, prejudiced and ill-informed public opinion can lead, for example, to attempts to ban the erection of minarets on mosques in Switzerland or to the building of a mosque and social centre near to Ground-Zero in New York City. Whereas Qatar has set a good example in allowing the construction of churches for migrant Christians, there are prohibitions for Christians to build churches in Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately these examples of restriction and prohibition are better known than acts of hospitality offered to neighbours of another faith in many pluralistic contexts around the world. In predominantly Muslim countries I have worshipped in Christian churches built on land donated by Muslims. In my home city of Birmingham, England, I remember a large under-used church being redesigned so that the central section became a large community hall open to people from all communities; the original choir area became a compact church and the reception area and cloakrooms were refashioned as a mosque.

The right to have a place of worship and religious instruction is an inalienable right protected by international agreements but one of the more sinister violations of human rights which occur in some conflict situations is when desecration is perpetrated against places of worship, cemeteries or religious symbols. In civil wars in places like Cyprus or

the former Yugoslavia both mosques and churches were deliberately destroyed bringing a special sense of grief and outrage to the communities that had once worshipped there. Attempts have been made to protect, repair or rebuild, but a deep scar is left on peoples' memories. Whole communities can be left with a sense of bitterness when the place of worship serves to focus minds on human violence rather than on ultimate values.

## **2. Support and influence from places of worship which honour the rights and choices of young people**

When places of worship are properly used to support and influence all generations in their implementation of the values that their religions teach, there is a special need to cater for the needs of young people. Too many places of worship have become protected by sobriety or silence from affording a welcome to young people. Depending upon the local culture there can be artistic works, music or drama that attract young people. The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church has recently encouraged colourful clothing to be worn in church. Still more important, there are increasing examples of leadership roles in worship and service being given to young people. In education programmes for children and young people they need not have only a passive role of listening but may take part in sharing experiences, raising questions and proposing solutions.

According to Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child education should be aimed at “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities in their fullest potential; the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own; the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”.

In 2001, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 November 1981, an International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination was held in Madrid. While many of the recommendations are directed to formal school education at primary and secondary level, there is also recognition that “the role of parents, families, legal guardians and other legally recognized care givers is an essential factor in the education of children in the field of religion or belief, and that special attention should be paid to encouraging positive attitudes...” Religious education at every level can uphold the first “end” for the United Nations as enunciated in its “Charter”, namely “to practise tolerance”; we may note that this is not lip-service to “toleration” but rather the practice of building mutual respect and partnership.

Religious education, whether in schools or in places of worship, can be undertaken as a preventive measure against intolerance and discrimination. The organization which I represent at the United Nations, the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), was founded in 1900 with a membership across many of the world’s religions, and has tried to follow up United Nations recommendations on building tolerance. After the Madrid conference IARF held four regional meetings in order to promote human rights education in support of freedom of religion or belief. Muslims and Christians met in Europe, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims met in India, adherents of African traditional religions met with Christians and Muslims in South Africa, and adherents of traditional religions in Central America met with Christians in Costa Rica. There was wide consensus that families, schools and religious institutions should cooperate in promoting values of tolerance and cooperation.

All over the world and for many centuries religious communities have pioneered schooling whether in the mosque-schools and madrasas of Africa and Asia or in the Sunday schools of England during the sometimes brutal Industrial Revolution. Today while the work with children continues in a more participatory and exploratory way, there is a growing concern that older student generations should continue their spiritual,

moral and religious education. A further example of voluntary religious education and inter-cultural bridge-building in places of worship may be given by citing initiatives in some university chaplaincies. Some institutions of higher learning have a range of confessionally based associations or places of worship. I have seen mosque and church built alongside on some African campuses; I have seen Christians, Muslims and others share the same meditation areas in North American universities; in the British university where I once taught a multi-religious centre was well established and promoted not only separate worship activities but also shared discussion groups and humanitarian social services.

### **3. Spiritual values and religious traditions that may come from the past but can inspire the present and the future**

The concept of tradition/traditions does not refer only to the past. One of the pioneers of Christian-Muslim understanding, Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith, points to the “cumulative & dynamic” nature of tradition as it is handed down from generation to generation. It is as important to put a focus on those who receive as well as on those who transmit. Young people should have the freedom and the choice to accept a tradition but also to adapt it to the needs of the modern world both in the present and for the future. Religious traditions have sometimes been presented only “in the letter” and not also “in the spirit” of the original scriptural or spiritual teaching. In order to “raise” the young people of the new generation to make responsible choices of belief and life-style they should be given opportunities, according to their own sense of priorities, to learn and to practise religious rituals, to engage in humanitarian activities, to practise contemplation and meditation. Young people themselves can make their own connexions between the needs of the world which they see around them and the spiritual and moral values which are needed to address those needs.

Dr Farid Esack has described his religious upbringing in South Africa and in Pakistan. He evokes the teaching he received in Qur’an schools and madrasas and the way in which this prepared him for a courageous stand in struggles against racism and sexism. I give a

quotation from one of his eloquent works, “On Being a Muslim: finding a religious path in the world today”, One World, Oxford, 1999, pp. 160-1:

“It is not enough to say that you were on the side of Islam and the truth. Whose Islam and whose truth were you defending? The Islam of blind tradition, echoing the Quraysh of pre-Islamic paganism (‘We have found our forebears doing this’), or the Islam of dynamism, reason and creativity? The Islam of the Shah or of the oppressed? The truth of the powerful or the powerless? The truth of men with fragile egos or that of battered women? The Islam of the feudal lords and the priests or that of Asma Jehangir, the Muslim (human rights) lawyer...?”

It is no accident that Dr Esack gives the example of a woman who has struggled for the protection of human rights for all communities not only in her native Pakistan but also, until recently, around the world as Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief at the United Nations. In her expert work of protecting and promoting the human right of freedom of religion or belief, she has continued the distinguished work of her predecessor Dr Abdul Fattah Amor from Tunisia. Among many contributions to human rights work, he emphasised the importance of education for young people, as a preventive measure against intolerance, and also the need to identify the vulnerability of women, since followers of many religious traditions have misapplied their teachings and allowed sexist discrimination and marginalization. Freedom of religion or belief, including secular belief, calls for protection not only of one’s own tradition but also protection of the different traditions of one’s neighbours, women and men, near and far.

Choosing positive values and traditions from one’s own tradition and learning from similar traditions among one’s neighbours of other faiths could help to stem the prejudice and violence between but also within religious communities in places such as Northern Ireland. One welcome development in that country is that new schools are being established which are open to children from different religious communities. The violent trauma which some children have suffered from being exposed to hate-talk and violence between different religious communities could be helped by mixing at a school age for educational and recreational purposes. Religiously based schools need not restrict their catchment to children from a single tradition but should see the opportunity to teach and

live tolerance in mixed classes. In France where some Muslim girls have been excluded from public education because they chose to wear head-scarves those same girls have sometimes found a more tolerant welcome in Catholic schools.

One cannot be blind to the fact that some places of worship sponsor exclusive and prejudiced teaching not only against people of other faiths but against co-religionists with whom they disagree. Such places of worship and education bring religion into disrepute, not least with such young people who may resent what may appear as attempts at brain-washing of themselves or incitements to violence against others. While some young people may be persuaded by such teachings and may join the ranks of extremists and fanatics in whatever religion, many, and hopefully the great majority, will seek a more moderate expression of their own faith and a more respectful approach to the faith of others. But in some cases young people may be turned away from religion by violence which they have seen preached or perpetrated in the name of religion, even if such violence is really a contradiction of what religions should be teaching in terms of values that direct us to treat our neighbour as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

In sensitive and socially active places of worship, young people can be given appropriate roles of leadership, not only in Sunday schools or Qur'an schools, but also in undertaking social service ranging from visits to lonely or needy neighbours to supporting human rights causes around the world. Places of worship can provide teaching that widens their horizons from self-centredness to a vision of the needs of others. Drawing on the resources of religious teachings of compassion and justice young people can be attracted into a sense of their own responsibility for combating discrimination and ignorance and for building peace. Learning from and building on positive traditions and values in our religions we may draw strength, young and old together, to overcome the apathy, selfishness and arrogance which have enfeebled and divided our communities and undermined the credibility of our religions. Worship, whether communal or individual, should not protect us from the sometimes ugly realities of the world, but should invite and prepare us to be more faithful servants of our fellow humans and of our Creator.

## **The influence of the family in raising the next generation**

**Oliver Leaman,**

*University of Kentucky*

Although the family as an institution has undergone many changes recently, it is remarkably still expected to be the prime source of raising the next generation. In the past, and today in more traditional societies, there were few other resources available for this task, and so the family was the only framework within which this process could take place. Today however the family has radically changed, in both the developed world and also increasingly in more traditional societies, and is now much smaller, more fragile and has altered in appearance to include same sex partners, living arrangements not based on marriage, and a much greater distance between family members. This is in some ways a reflection of greater choice and wealth, with people living longer, and so outliving their partners, and a weakening of the traditional barriers that used to exist to prevent certain kinds of domestic arrangements. One thing has not changed though and that is the tremendous emphasis that society places on the family to raise the next generation, and we tend to organize things so that the parents of a child bring it up, as opposed to a potentially superior group of people, or society. Whereas in extreme circumstances children will be removed from their parents and taken into the care of the state, this is far from the norm and even unsatisfactory parents will be tolerated by society provided that their lack of skill in child raising does not fall below a certain level. The idea that the natural parents of children are the default raisers of those children is widely accepted in all societies.

There is no reason why this should be the case. The act that leads to the birth of a child does not have anything essential to do with raising it, and some parents are not interested in their children, nor are they good at bringing them up. Some unconnected adults are good at looking after children, and one might think that the best way of raising children was to leave them in the hands of those who are best at doing it. After all, we do not leave any more the teaching of children to their parents, or their medical care. Yet in a sense we do, since the primary teachers and carers for children are generally their

parents, and this is again despite the fact that they might not be very good at it. Advanced education and medical care is not carried out in the home, but at a basic level parents are responsible for instructing children in the basics of their culture, including reading and writing, and looking after them through non-critical ailments and similar events that could become dangerous if they were not effectively managed by parents at an early stage. Why do parents get to perform these difficult and often unpleasant and irksome tasks? Usually it is because it would be enormously expensive for anyone else to do it, and if we can persuade parents that it is their responsibility, then we have achieved an immense saving. If we can persuade parents that they should enjoy doing it then we have achieved something even more effective, since this belief will fortify them through the many tedious and difficult episodes of child rearing and socialization. It has to be said that in most cases it is the parents who are best able to do the job, since they take themselves to have a unique link with their children that makes them conscientious, committed and aware of the public censure that would result from failure. Some parents fall down on the job, sometimes so badly that their children are taken away from them, but most do not, and it is worth reminding ourselves of this fact even when the family has changed so radically in a comparatively short time, at least in the developed world.

Women are more likely to work, divorce is ever-increasing, pregnancy out of marriage increasingly commonplace, and sexual activity takes place at younger ages as a matter of apparent normalcy. The so-called traditional family with a working father and a mother who looks after the children has been increasingly rare for some time, and the norm has for some time been quite different, with a very rapid growth in one parent families, so that there is no other partner to share in the childcare or financial provision. Where both partners work, if there are two partners, someone else has to take charge of the primary childcare for an extended period, and the fact that partners are increasingly just that, partners and not married couples, perhaps introduces a sense of the transitory nature of the social arrangements surrounding the child.

It is then remarkable that the family even in its modern denuded state is expected to adopt the same role as in the past. I would not want to suggest that the non-traditional family is any worse at bringing up the next generation than the traditional family, but it is likely to

find it harder in many cases. Yet social expectations of the family have not significantly altered while the family has, and it is worth asking whether this is sensible or not. How much change can the family take on and still carry on its child raising functions? One factor worth pointing out is that in several developed countries the average size of the family that is most common consists of just one person living by his, or more likely, herself. One of the interesting changes in the political life of countries with few children is that resources start to be shifted more towards the old and away from children, since most voters are unconnected with children on a personal basis and may prefer such a reallocation of resources, and vote for it. Given the very rapid changes that have occurred in the last fifty years or so it is worth raising the question yet again whether the family is able to continue in its primary socialization role, the role that it had almost monopolized for many centuries.

There are reasons for being optimistic. It needs to be said right from the beginning that the idea of a golden age of the family is far from realistic. In fact, the family has been radically changing throughout history, and is very different in different places and times. One of the major defenders of the “traditional” family today is taken to be religion, yet there is nothing inevitable or even plausible about this. Religions are often rather hostile to families. In the Jewish Bible families are often sources of conflict or even murder. Jesus is critical of the family, downplaying it by contrast with those who put their faith in him. In *Mark* 3.31-4 he is told that his family want to speak to him and he asks who his mother is, or his relations, implying they are not significant. *Luke* 14.33 reports that he said that those who would follow him need to abandon their families. Abandoning wife and family for Jesus will produce a big reward (*Luke* 18.29-30). The Qur’an is suspicious of tradition, the tradition of the *jahaliyya*, based as it was on clan and family. The Prophet himself hardly had a traditional family, and the internal warfare in the Islamic world between the adherents of his wife ʿA`isha and those of his cousin and son-in-law ʿAli continues to rent Islam to this day. Although the views of the traditional religions on the family are often criticized today for their unfairness, early Islamic ethics brought an end to female infanticide and gave rights to women, while Jewish family law gradually raised the status of women within marriage, and promoted monogamy.

Religions are very flexible over time in what they allow and even promote. The traditional family, like traditional religion, is entirely a matter of what at a particular time seems to fit in with the current ethos among those who have the power to determine such issues. This is not to say that the Abrahamic religions do not have many interesting and important things to say about religion, since they obviously do. But what they say is not always entirely clear or fixed, nor is it immutable, despite what many religious people say. The exciting thing about having a book as the basis of religion is the necessity to link different passages to each other, passages which may well point in a variety of different directions and appear to be quite discordant. It is this flexibility of religion that has enabled it to survive and indeed flourish during rapidly changing times, and there is nothing so modern as the traditional.

Yet religion is often linked with the family in the sense that there is the idea that if the family exists within a religious context, it will be more solid, more soundly based, than otherwise. Since as we have seen the Abrahamic religions are often critical of the family, this is difficult to take at face value, and what in fact we should understand as the role of religion in raising the next generation is not religion but a particular culture, one in which a certain interpretation of a religion is widespread. From the context of that culture it looks very much as though the religion prescribes a particular way of life and establishes as a result certain family roles. Many people convert to a religion in which they find clear and firm rules on family behaviour, which they enthusiastically adopt in place of what in the past were chaotic and changing practices. A sense of security then emerges, and one of the benefits of a religion with clearly defined family roles and rules is that there is no need any longer to think about these issues, one just obeys the rules as set out in the religion, on a particular interpretation of that religion, and one then has the very consoling idea that our everyday actions are done for the sake of God. This is something that many religious people report as a source of satisfaction, the idea that even very ordinary actions, how they eat, perhaps, what they wear, and so on, have for the first time a transcendental significance, which is surely a highly comforting thought.

This leads us to the important issue, perhaps the most important issue, as to what sort of family is the best for bringing up children. The evidence here from empirical research is

as one would expect all over the place, and advocates of the traditional family, and its opposites, can all find vindication for their views in the research. One way of deciding is by comparing families of different kinds and working out which are more effective in raising the next generation. Of course, what counts as effective here is hardly neutral, since from a traditional point of view effective might well mean likely to reproduce the traditional family. Let us try to avoid such question-begging by having in mind criteria such as the happiness of the children, their physical well being, their mental health, their preparedness for life in society and ability to cope with the demands of education. It is not at all obvious which sort of family would do better at this. Our intuitions here often play us false, since there is a tendency to think that a child brought up within a more traditional environment is likelier to do better than one brought up otherwise, in the same way that we tend to think that a child educated in a strict school would learn more than one brought up in a more relaxed educational environment. The evidence is not in line with these intuitions, and one of the remarkable facts about child rearing is the ability of children to frustrate even the most determined ambitions of their parents, and avoid the most obvious pitfalls also. Modern families are excellent at washing their dirty clothes in public, while traditional families are much better at concealing lurking problems. This is not to suggest that the former have more or less problems than the latter, but it is worth noting that the ways in which families appear to be getting on is often misleading. Those clean, confident, respectful and well-dressed children may look wholesome, especially if they contrast with their scruffy, uncommunicative and scowling peers, but who knows what the reality is.

Surely this is wrong, though. We know from the statistics that in many modern societies in the West children are becoming sexually active at increasingly young ages, that the same is true of drug taking and alcohol consumption, that a significant proportion of them drop out of any serious commitment to education early on, and in countries with welfare states many of these young people will never work. Indeed, they may well come from families where no-one has ever worked seriously for three generations, so expectations of paid employment are low in the first place. It is not difficult to argue that all these young people have not been adequately prepared for life in any society that would be worth

supporting, although they might be able to cope in the community within which they live. It has to be admitted that there are cycles of deprivation in society, and much of this is cultural as well as material. This is not limited to the modern family, though, but exists just as much in traditional families, and poor parenting is fairly universal, although fortunately not the norm.

It might be thought that with all its problems, the modern family is better adapted to modern life, with all its uncertainties and rapid change, than the traditional family, with its solid foundation and unchanging principles. Yet traditional families flourish in modern societies, they produce many children and manage to keep many of those children, when adults, within the community fold. It is not difficult in most cases to combine a traditional lifestyle with modernity, whereas by contrast many of the products of modern families seem to find it difficult to function in their societies. Accepting a number of basic principles as those that organize your life can provide a feeling of security that serves as a very useful grounding to working and living within a society that does not share those principles. Minorities of one sort or another have often flourished in societies where most people operate in accordance with entirely different ways of doing things.

It looks as though the argument here is that anything goes, that despite how children are brought up, the next generation will more or less be able to cope with their responsibilities as adults. That is in fact where the evidence leads us, since we are aware of a wide variety of different kinds of child rearing practices operating in societies which seem to continue to survive and even do rather well. On the other hand, there is a tendency nowadays to identify religion with opposing the radical changes to family structure that have appeared. For example, in the United States the steady move towards accepting marriages which do not consist of the traditional man and woman combination is often opposed by religious groups. We forget that religions have not always been at the forefront of conservatism in issues relating to the family, and indeed are not now, at least not in their entirety. There are plenty of religious groups within at least the Jewish and Christian faiths who defend the acceptability of the non-traditional family as fitting in with religion. When Islam was established it opposed the traditional ways of treating

women and female children, ways which had been accepted for centuries no doubt as the norm and the way things have to be. There is nothing essentially religious about the defence of the traditional family, whatever that might mean. In fact, one of the most clear defences of that family is to be found in the works of Comte, who from an entirely secular perspective argued that inequality was embedded in the family, and has to be since without it the family would fail to serve its appropriate social role. Inequality is involved since it reflects natural distinctions, and once this is accepted a great deal of stability enters into familial relationships. According to Comte, without subordination of some within the family to others the family itself cannot operate effectively. What is worth noticing about his argument is that it is entirely secular, it makes no reference to any revealed text at all, although the points he makes are often similar to those of religious thinkers also. The important thing to note here is that they do not need to be, and many theological thinkers would argue that the insubordination of one gender to the other is far more a reflection on persistent social norms than anything to do with the religion.

Plato argued in *The Republic* that while the traditional family was fine for bringing up the average family, the elite need to be raised by specialists, and this is never likely to be their natural family. He had a point. Why should we assume that just because someone was involved in the act that produced children, in some perhaps casual way, that he or she is the best person to look after the child? We do assume this since were it not generally the case, society would be in big trouble. Who otherwise would bring up children? If the state does it, it costs a lot of money and the end results are not very impressive, in many cases. Since bringing up children is both expensive and very tiring it is important that most people feel that they have to do it, that it is their duty, since otherwise they surely would not. Comte is right to think that unless people feel it is natural, they would be reluctant to do it. In many cultures the act that in the end produces children is sharply separated from those children and so it is not easy for many to appreciate their responsibility for them. Here the understanding of the significance of sex in the Abrahamic religions is very helpful in linking it with the consequent family, and indeed often makes sex only legitimate when it takes place within the context of the

family. It seems likely that if you bring up children out of a sense of duty you are likely to make a better job of it than if you are unsure why you ought to be bringing them up at all. But it does not follow that that duty actually exists, in most societies there are others who could bring up children if the natural parents do not wish to, and are perhaps better at doing the job also. On this issue the rules of the traditional Abrahamic religions are significant, since they link the various parts and actions of family members to each other in a way which explains how they are connected, according to the religion, and lay out perspicuously the resulting duties and obligations that then arise. Family members understand their roles and there is often a great sense of security as a result, one of the great attractions of religion for those converting to it from a secular background.

Yet is this feeling of security desirable? This might seem to be a strange thing to ask, since surely it is a good thing for people to feel at home in their social roles and for them to grasp the meaning of the actions that they perform. They can then see even their very ordinary actions as fulfilling some divine plan and gain enormous satisfaction from that. More importantly, perhaps, if one sees child raising as a duty imposed on one by God, one is more likely to do it properly. We should be careful here, though, since however pleasant it may be to think in this way, we need to ask whether it interferes with the freedom of thought that we also tend to value in each individual. In giving themselves up to a particular view of life, are people sometimes allowing their freedom of thought to be coerced by a doctrine that is attractive yet possibly false. Traditional views of bringing up the family all rest on different religious views, and how do we know that the religion we may happen to accept is in fact the (only) true one? It might be said this is not an issue, since all the religions tend to agree on child raising, at least the traditional versions of those religions, and it could even be suggested that this is because there is a central truth about bringing up children that all the major religions have grasped and seek to encourage their adherents to embody in action.

Here we should distinguish between religion and culture, since the pronouncements of the former are invariably filtered through the latter. What we now regard as the approach of the major Abrahamic religions on the family, and also often on other issues, is in fact a set of doctrines that have developed in certain ways because of the political and social

experiences of often quite recent communities sharing a religion. There is no unanimity on how children should be raised, what they can be asked to do and when, among the Abrahamic religions, beyond the very vague idea that the family is an institution sanctified by God and imposes rules on its participants. But what are those rules? Well, these differ from faith to faith, or better, from faith community to faith community. Is it at least better to have in mind the basic idea that the family is divinely sanctioned than otherwise? It is not better if it is not true, is one obvious response, but it might still be better from the point of view of practice, regardless of its truth. Here we have to wonder whether parents being woken up in the middle of the night by a child are going to be less fed up if they think that God wants them to look after their children than if they do not really know why they are doing it.

This brings us to the nub of the difference between the traditional family, as we are using that term here, and the modern family. The former has a clear idea of what they are doing and why they are doing it. They accept the significance of ritual in their lives, if they are from a religious background, and regard it as very important to embody that ritual in their practice. Ritual can be very complex, of course, and different religious authorities may argue about it and where and when it applies, or whether it applies at all, but that is not at issue here. It is the basis of ritual that is important, and that basis is generally that God wants us to behave in certain ways. If He does, we better do it. That is a rather simple idea and provides for many people a very satisfying answer to the metaphysical questions of existence, plus to the ethical questions of how they should live, and here how they should bring up their families. By contrast, the modern family can be all over the place intellectually. After all, they know that families frequently break up through divorce, that the rules of what counts as a family changes rapidly over relatively short periods, that people often have children outside of a family and that a family may consist of very few people, perhaps all of the same gender. They will have different ideas of why they should act as they do, and not surprisingly sometimes these end in disaster, since someone is faced with a screaming child in the middle of the night who will not keep quiet, perhaps feels little affection for the child and has no idea what to do. The child may be the offspring of other adults, its carers may be inadequate and without the support of other

family members, in particular older experienced adults, and the carers can be confused, conflicted in their roles of responsibility and coping with a range of other issues such as drug or alcohol abuse, or of course just poverty. The traditional family has no difficulties in dealing with poverty, by contrast, which perhaps most of the traditional families in the world today experience, since they have a structure which explains the roles they should adopt in raising children, who counts as a significant other and usually a decent support group of others who are linked together in common beliefs and values.

Yet it has to be repeated that we do not really know empirically what sort of family is better for raising children. Traditional families are far better than their modern alternatives at hiding things going wrong. It has also to be said that the traditional family may base themselves on religious and ethical beliefs which are just wrong. Since the various beliefs that underpin the traditional family are often contrary to each other, some at least of them must be wrong. We often value people who are unhappy with an attempt at simplifying life and its aims, and whose actions and beliefs reflect the complexity and variety of points of view that are available to citizens in liberal democracies. The modern family struggles to find meaning in what it does, and in this sense is genuinely modern, since it operates within a framework of doubt, discussion and debate. Raising children within such a framework may well prepare them better for life in a world without a central ethos, where each individual will need to develop his and her own ideas about how to live and with whom. We just do not as yet know and until we do we should be very careful about producing any sweeping generalizations about which sort of family is best at raising the next generation.

Cheal, D. (2002) *Sociology of Family*, New York: Macmillan

Cherlin, A. (2009) *The Marriage-Go-Round*, New York: Knopf

Comte,

Leaman, O. (2000) "Can rights coexist with religion?", *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions*, Hawting, G, Mojaddedi, J. & Samely, A. (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 163-74

Thatcher, A. (1999) *Marriage After Modernity: Christian Marriage in Postmodern Times*, New York: New York University Press

# The Importance of School Curriculum in Implanting Religious Values

Prof. Dr. Abul Hasan M Sadeq<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction: The Need for Value Integration

There is a difference between literacy and education. Literacy refers to knowledge and skills of a particular profession, while education is a comprehensive term in which moral values constitute an essential ingredient of the complete whole. The mere knowledge and art of computing may be termed as computer literacy, but the person concerned may be termed as an educated personality only when he behaves like an educated person with essential moral values. If he is an expert of stealing by computer hacking or trouble-making by spreading viruses, he would not be considered an educated man.

Literacy involves positivism, and education involves positivism plus normativism.

Positivism deals with what was, what is and what will be; it does not consider what ought to be. An atom bomb can kill thousands of innocent people, and this is a part of positive literacy, since it does not give any value judgment on whether the action is right or wrong. Normative judgments will say that killing innocent people is a punishable offence. The desirability or otherwise of anything falls under the purview of a normative judgment, which may be implanted in a person through values. Education is not complete without values and there is a need for education in values.<sup>2</sup>

A man devoid of values and virtues falls below the rank of an animal<sup>3</sup>, causing mischief in the society. Immoral and destructive lifestyle consisting of, among other things, sexual scandals, rape and harassment, pornography, nightclub culture, broken families, single motherhood and abandoned children, alcoholism, unlimited greed leading to economic and financial corruption, political turmoil, unhealthy and anti-consumer business environment, fighting and bloodshed among nations are creating havoc and polluting the environment of this beautiful world, which mankind is supposed to maintain as the *khalifah* of Allah. Agents supposedly of peace, harmony and love have become agents of

---

<sup>1</sup> The author is President and Vice Chancellor (al-Rayees) of Asian University of Bangladesh

<sup>2</sup> Halstead, J. Mark; Jaylor, MJ, eds. *Values in education and education in values*. London: Falmer Press, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Qur'an 7:179; 98:6.

destruction. This is purely because they are deprived of moral values, neither receiving them from their education systems nor being able to acquire them on their own.

On the other hand, a person of high moral standard will lead a disciplined life, free from vices; this person has positive implications for the family, society, nation, and also the international community, improving national and international law and order.<sup>4</sup> A world full of this kind of persons would turn it into a peaceful living place for mankind. Thus, the people of the world need to go back to the moral values befitting the vicegerents of Allah.

### **Which Moral Values and at What Age?**

If human values<sup>5</sup> are based on social tradition, human wisdom and history, the set of values will depend on time and space. Behaviors such as consensual extra-marital relationship were not socially acceptable in some societies but are now acceptable there without hesitation. Similarly, a behavior may not be socially acceptable in one place but be acceptable elsewhere in the contemporary world. Thus morality varies in time and space.

In contrast, religious values originating from divine revelations are not subject to change, since they come from a super-wise Entity Whose wisdom does not need to change through time, since He can see what is good for mankind through time and space. The Eternal Being can give eternal moral values. The Creator of mankind can fully perceive without any error what is good for them and what is bad and hence undesirable for them, just as the maker of equipment is the person best qualified to provide its instructional manual. These divine values are known as religious values, and these are the ones with which that mankind should be equipped. Therefore, if any values should be integrated into the education system, religious values have the most right.

Now the question arises: at what level of education should religious values begin to be integrated? Importantly, the issue here is to implant religious values through the

---

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Catholic Education. *Religious education*. Rev. ed. Toronto: Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2006.

<sup>5</sup> University of London. *The teaching of social and ethical issues in the school curriculum, arising from biomedical research: a research study of teachers*. 2001.

education system, and not to teach students theoretical norms and values. If ‘implanting’ rather than ‘teaching’ is desired, a student’s age has a great impact on whether the student is receptive to the values. A mature student may be introduced to the desired set of values and he may be convinced of their importance, but it is difficult for the mature mind and behavior at that age to absorb these values. Implanting of values is much more likely when one is at a younger age at which he can be moulded with beneficial values. This age is the school age and, therefore, this age should be chosen for integration of religious values. Hence the school curriculum should be integrated with the desirable values.<sup>6</sup>

### **Religious Values Integration in the School Curriculum**

So far, it has been argued that value-orientation and integration are important, and that religious values rather than other social values should be chosen for the purpose, and that the school age is the relevant age for value implanting. All of the above require that the school curriculum should be integrated with religious values.<sup>7</sup>

It should be emphasized that what is important is the integration of religious values in the school curriculum, and not religious education. There is no denying that religious education is important for in-depth knowledge in religion, but that is more specific to religious schools, or religion-based subjects in more general educational institutions. What is at issue here is education of values and not religious practices, to be integrated into general school education.<sup>8</sup>

Thus integration of religious values would require a transcendent and holistic approach, instead of a piecemeal approach. That is, it is not enough to teach one or two separate papers or courses on religion leaving all other courses as value neutral, but the entire curriculum should be value laden. This is the reason why the first divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad (saws) or even the first word in the first divine revelation has been

---

<sup>6</sup> Lovat, Terence; Schofield, Neville. Values education for all schools and systems: justification and experimental update. *New Horizon in Education*. Vol 111: 4 - 13, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, Ronald D. *Religion and spirituality in the public school curriculum*. New York: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Haynes, Charles C; Thomas, Oliver. *Finding common ground: a guide to religious liberty in public schools*. First Amendment Center, 2007.

connected with seeking knowledge: “Read in the name of Allah who has created”.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the first command from God is to read, study, and acquire knowledge, but these activities have to be connected with the Creator, Sustainer and Provider of norms and values for all walks of life. Relating knowledge acquisition with this comprehensive set of divine values requires value integration across the board.<sup>10</sup>

It should be emphasized that the whole Islamic code of life is meant for creating positive norms and values in a man, and to make him a good servant of Allah and His *khalifah* in this world in order to make it a peaceful place for not only mankind but also for animals and nature. The Islamic rituals have been designed so that they contribute to this objective. For example, the ritual of *solah* (prayer) is not merely a mechanical *ibadah* (worship), but its objective, among other things, is to inculcate moral values which would keep the person on the right track: “Indeed, *solah* (prayer) restrains from immorality and wrongdoing”.<sup>11</sup> A person who presents himself in front of Allah five times a day and makes commitment and promise to obey Him cannot disobey Him by violating divine values in life. Similarly, the purpose of *siyam* (fasting) is to create *taqwa* (consciousness, self-control, and God-fearing) in the mind of the person, which is a necessary condition for getting *hidayah* (guidance) from the divine book.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the purpose of fasting is to create a human quality that is necessary for being able to adhere to divine values of life provided in the Qur’an. All the rituals of Islam that are often considered mistakenly as simple acts of worships have definite implications for implanting divine values. Along with *iman*, the rituals provide five pillars of Islam. Naturally, the five pillars alone will not make a complete house that can serve the purpose of a shelter. It would need many other things including a roof, four walls, doors, windows, and so on. Similarly, the Islamic code of life requires one to lead his entire life in adherence to the divine norms and values, without trespassing of the boundaries given in the normative framework,

---

<sup>9</sup> Al-Qur’an 96:1.

<sup>10</sup> University of London. *The teaching of social and ethical issues in the school curriculum, arising from biomedical research: a research study of teachers*. 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Qur’an 29:45.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Qur’an 2:2.

including truthfulness<sup>13</sup>, honesty<sup>14</sup>, sincerity, justice<sup>15</sup>, tolerance<sup>16</sup>, helping others<sup>17</sup>, serving the mankind and nature, refraining from all wrongdoings<sup>18</sup>, and so on.

Shaping and forming the mindset for implanting such divine values, along with other professional and neutral knowledge, should start with the nature, meaning and purpose of life in this world. This would involve the entire Islamic worldview in a manner, style and language that is suitable for school age children. This would include the concept of creation, creator, divine sustenance, the divine code of life and the relevant values in all branches, the divine book containing the values and the Prophetic *sunnah*, accountability to God for adhering to the divine values and court proceedings for this accountability on the Day of Judgment<sup>19</sup>, rewards for positive divine verdict<sup>20</sup> and punishment for the opposite verdict<sup>21</sup> in the eternal life, and so on. If the mindset of the children can be shaped in this manner, the basic foundation is laid. This can be included in the school curriculum in the form of one or two foundation courses.<sup>22</sup>

These courses will only lay down the foundation of the knowledge structure. Then the important task of value integration into the school curriculum begins. The basic philosophy of value integration is the *tawhidic* paradigm. Oneness of divinity (Allah) essentially requires oneness of the value system in all walks of life and hence in all branches of knowledge. Commitment to honesty, as required in the basic value system of Islam, will be fruitless if dishonesty and corruption is practiced in economic and financial affairs. Therefore, relevant values should be integrated in the courses concerned. The principle of tolerance becomes a joke if harm is caused and people are killed and massacred just because they belong to another faith. The norm of justice becomes

---

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qur'an 3:17; 33:35; 23:8.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Qur'an 19:51.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Qur'an 16:90.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Qur'an 2:256.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Qur'an 22:28; 76:8.; 51:19.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Qur'an 7:56; 2:27; 13:25; 3:104; 16:90.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Qur'an 2:284.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Qur'an 101:6-7; 9:72.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Qur'an 101:8-11; 13-18.

<sup>22</sup> The number of such value laden foundation courses will depend on the duration of the courses and other factors.

meaningless if people are dealt with unjustly in the family, in the society, or if justice can be influenced by greed or fear.

The integration of religious values in the school curriculum will involve application of religious and divine values in the school and, more specifically, inclusion and integration of relevant values in all the courses taught in the school. This has at least two implications.

Firstly, there is a need for preparation and writing of textbooks that integrate religious values. In doing this, authors should be very careful on several grounds: (i) only the relevant norms and values should be integrated so as not to burden the children with excess; (ii) integration should be in the right place and context; (iii) examples should be cited; and (iv) the language should be easily understandable by children.

Secondly, there is a need for training of the trainers. Most of the existing teachers in the schools are expected to be unfamiliar with such value integration in the school curriculum and textbooks. There should be arrangements for such exposure through training, even if it is for a short duration.

### **Interfaith Value Integration in Multi-faith Societies**

The foregoing discussion on the value integration of school curriculum is meant for the public schools in Muslim societies and for Islamic schools in multi-faith societies. Now we need to consider the issue of value integration in the public schools of predominantly multi-faith societies, where the children of different faiths go for schooling. It will not be proper to integrate values of one particular religion in the school curriculum in this environment. In this scenario, common values of different faiths should be identified and agreed upon for value integration. Fortunately, fundamental values are common in all the religions, such as truthfulness, tolerance, coexistence, justice, honesty, sincerity, non-violence, and so on. Leading personalities of different faiths may meet, discuss and agree upon some common norms and values. The resulting outcome will be an agreed upon set of school syllabi and curricula. <sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> The Learning Trust. *Religious education: The Hackney Agreed Syllabus*. Hackney: 2006.

## **Summary and Concluding Remarks**

The foregoing discussion leads to the following concluding remarks.

Literacy alone cannot produce human recourses of high moral standards; it requires integration of moral values, which are inseparable ingredients of education.

Integration of values in the curriculum will lead to a disciplined human life, free from immorality, wrongdoing and vices, and will have positive implications for family, society, nation, and also for the international community, improving national and international law and order. This would turn the entire undisciplined world into a peaceful living place.

Social and human values depend on time and space. On the other hand, divine and religious values are universal and not time-bound. Hence, it is religious values that should be integrated into the curriculum. Besides, religious values can touch the heart since they are a part of faith, which helps in value enforcement, so that requirement of government intervention for law enforcement will be less.

The proper age for value integration in the educational curriculum is the school age, since children can be moulded easily at this age. At a higher level, mature students may be taught moral values but the possibility of absorption of these values is much less.

Value integration should imply integration of religious values across the board, instead of some random courses on piecemeal basis. Thus the question is of integration of religious values rather than religious education.

Integration of religious values will require preparing and writing books suitable for students of school age.

Teaching of schoolchildren in an integrated value-laden perspective also calls for appropriate training of the school teachers.

# **Children's Media between Grooming and Persuasion: Religious Vision in the Case of Korea**

**Jeong-Min Seo**

*Graduate School of International and Area Studies  
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea*

## **I. Introduction**

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in Korea. The number of Muslims in Korea is estimated to be about 45,000 in addition to some 105,000 foreign workers from Muslim countries. There are eight permanent mosques, eight Muslim community centers, and 61 prayer rooms (musala) around the country. Especially in the 21st century, it is expected that the number of Muslims in Korea will increase further with the influx of Muslim workers.

With the increase of the number of Muslims, several communities have appeared in various places. Among them, the most well-known area is Itaewon located just south of the Seoul city center. From Japanese colonial times, Itaewon has been a major residential area for people from abroad. It once housed Japanese army barracks, and after 1945 a large compound in the district became the property of the U.S. army. Its neighborhood developed as a magnet for all kinds of foreign residential activity in Seoul (Kim 2008, 148).

Now it can be said that this district has been taken over by Muslims. Itaewon is dominated by a building that is unmistakably a mosque. This impressive building is a reminder of the resurgence of the Muslim community here. The first permanent mosque was established in Itaewon, constructed with a grant provided by Saudi Arabia and opened in 1976. The existence of the central mosque, cohabitation of Muslims based on nationalities, and business-oriented mind of early foreign Muslims have contributed to the rapid formation and settling-down of Muslim community in the central area of Seoul (Park, 2008, 21)

The Muslim community in Itaewon has more and more enlarged itself in terms of the number of residents and Islam-related shops and restaurants. In this process, there have erupted some conflicts with the existing Korean residents who have deep-rooted economic interests and religions other than Islam (Ahn 2008, 104).

At the same time, the increase of Muslims has brought some worries in the Korean society especially from the Christian circle. The most well-known case is the de facto closure of the Korean Center for Arab and Islamic Culture in December 2008. The Center, which was launched at Incheon Metropolitan City in October 2007, was the first cultural center of its kind in Korea dedicated to Arab and Islamic civilization (Oh 2008, 77). However, Incheon City suddenly decided to shut it down after around one year of its activities.

The city's excuse for closing the place down was vague, only claiming that it needed to build something called as a 'global center' in its place. But the alleged reason behind the closure was the pressure from some circles of other religion in Incheon City. It has been revealed that some leaders of the circles in the city described the center as a vanguard organization for Muslim missionaries. It is no wonder that Arab countries criticized the decision. Ambassadors from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and argued that the closure would not only seriously tarnish South Korea's image in the Arab world but also deal a blow to Seoul's economic cooperation with Arab states.

Dealing with this incident as a symbolic phenomenon, this research will examine the transformation process of Korean public opinion from anti-Islamism to the so-called Islamophobia. Even before the 9/11 attack, anti-Islamic or anti-Arab sentiment had been widespread in Korea due to the dynamic activities of various circles of other religion as well as the misunderstanding or ignorance of the remote region. Nevertheless, the US-led war on terrorism and Korea's participation in it has triggered a stronger anti-Islamism and consequently Islamophobia. Upon the US request or pressure, the Korean government has sent its troops to the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan. It has resulted in several attacks against Koreans in the region. And eventually the more Koreans, who have witnessed the antagonistic attacks by Islamists or opposition Middle Eastern groups,

are likely to accept the paradigm of ‘clash of civilizations’ or other radical Christian views toward the Middle East.

To demonstrate the change of the public opinion, this study conducted a content analysis on the news article on Islam in Korean newspapers. In so doing, the research would demonstrate how the Korean public opinion has been changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And suggests how to cope with this trend, this paper will attempt to find possible answer from e-learning.

## **II. The Situation of Muslims in Korea**

As it is well known, Korea is a country with only one nationality. However, there are a lot of religions. Buddhism, Protestant, and Catholic Christianity have held the leading position in the religious life of Korea for 50 years now. The roots of Islam in Korea are very ancient. The period of the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was the time when Arab sailors set up the first commercial routes around Southeastern Asia and established sea trade with the Chinese empire and the Korean Peninsula. Arab merchants and sailors reached Korea, which was then governed by the Silla dynasty. The Arabs liked the country and its people, so they simply decided to settle here. They built their own trade settlements in Korea, and these settlements were later mentioned in Arab sailing directions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As it was written in these directions that Arabs called Korea Silla, the mountainous country, which was rich in gold. Many Muslims who came to Korea decided to stay there for good. They were flabbergasted with the beauty of the country. Beginning from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Korean chronicles mention the mass resettlement of Arabs on the Korean peninsula.

It goes without saying that the vast majority of Arab merchants were Muslims. They brought their religion to Korea along with their goods. However, the change of the political situation in the 15<sup>th</sup> century eventually resulted in the weakening of contacts between Korea and the countries of the Middle East. Sometime later, these contacts vanished completely. Muslim immigrants were gradually assimilated by the Koreans, and then they dissolved in the local population. However, there can be some people found in

Korea who remember that their villages were founded by Arab merchants. They know that they have Muslim ancestors.

In 1950 the Korean War broke out. The UN sent troops to Korea to fight against the North Korean communists. As part of the war effort the nation of Turkey sent a battalion of soldiers to Korea. It sent around 15 thousand soldiers to the Korean peninsula, and they proved to be rather good soldiers. This was the beginning of first modern contacts of Koreans with Muslims. Two Turkish imams came with their fellow soldiers and began propagating Islam to war weary Koreans through education, in the Chung Jin private learning institute. Within a couple of years two Koreans became Muslims through their efforts. It is said that there are now more than 45,000 ethnic-Korean Muslims since the first two Korean converts in 1955. Korean Muslims built their first mosque, called Central Masjid, at Iteawon in Seoul with financial help from Muslim countries. Now there are more than 8 mosques and 61 prayer centers throughout the country.

Korean Muslims have started to get attention from society because of their gradual growth in Korea. Although full statistics are lacking their numbers apparently have been gradually growing in recent years. In addition more foreign Muslims are making their appearance in Korea. By 2009 there were about 105,000 expatriate Muslims in South Korea from: Indonesia, 37% Uzbekistan, 26% Bangladesh, 21% Pakistan, 16%.

Table 1. Total Number of Immigrant Muslims

Total number	104,427
Arab	2,828
Non-Arab (Turkey, Iran)	3,814
Central Asia	20,327

South Asia	42,623
South East Asia	34,835

However, due to the lack of Korean understanding of Islam and its culture, Muslims seem to be mistreated and discriminated against culturally in factories and schools. Culturally eating pork seems to be almost unavoidable while living in Korea. For example, one Muslim Uzbek worker who came to Korea as a trainee worker under a South Korean government's training program for Asians. He was unfortunately assigned to a pig farm for training even though Muslims are forbidden to raise pigs for slaughter according to their religion.

### **III. Upsurge of Anti-Islamic Discourse**

It is, moreover, important to understand how production processes work if one is to understand the eventual form and content of the discourse. In his study on the language of news media, Allan Bell suggests six circular discourse production processes of a group: 1) assessment of backgrounds; 2) relational identification (the exclusion-inclusion or association-dissociation process through definition of Us and Them); 3) co-ordination of internal interests; 4) activation – that is, production of texts and speeches for legitimisation-de-legitimisation purposes; 5) evaluation of feed-back; and 6) consolidation of the positions and interests of the group (Bell 1991, 33-35).

On the basis of Bell's idea on discourse production, I analyzed media responses on how the above-mentioned concern of the circles of other religions has been materialized. I measured the degree of the interest paid by media through examining the number of articles dealing with Islam in the Korean newspapers between 2006 and 2009. I collected the articles, which have been published since January 2006 in order to follow the

fluctuation of interest in Islam before and after the closure of the Korean Center for Arab and Islamic Culture at the end of 2008.

Articles, which contain the word ‘Islam’ were collected and analyzed quantitatively. The contents of the articles are treated in terms of three thematic categories: (1) how they interpreted the reasons and intentions behind the spread of Islam; (2) how they evaluated the consequences of the phenomenon; and (3) what solutions were suggested by them to face the phenomenon. The reason why this research selected the above newspaper is that it is the first nation-wide newspaper in Korea.

Table 2. The Number of Articles including the Word of Islam

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Number of Article	85	160	197	232	674

Source: Korean Newspapers 2006-2009

Table 1, which shows the sheer number of articles which appear in the newspaper and contain the word of ‘Islam,’ indicates that the growing interest of the circles of other religions increase dramatically. The number of articles increased three times during the period from 85 in 2006 to 232 in 2009. It means that the issue of Islam has more and more brought the interest or fear and anxiety from the circles of other religions.

### Explaining the Reasons

Table 3. The Reasons behind the Spread of Islam

The reasons or causes	Frequency of articles	Percentage
Ambition to be a hegemonic power in the world	147	47
Religious fervor of Islam itself	57	18
Support of some Islamic countries in missionary activities	32	10
Influx of Muslim workers	45	15
Others	31	10
Total	312	100

Source: Korean Newspapers 2006-2009

## Evaluating the Consequences

Table 4. The Consequences of the Spread of Islam

Consequences	Frequency of articles	Percentage
Islamization of Korea	108	50
Weakening the religious solidarity and national unity	34	16
Terrorist activities	28	13
Inviting foreign involvement	13	5
Possible conflicts with the Islamic world	9	4
Others	25	12
Total	217	100

Source: Korean Newspapers 2006-2009

## Suggesting the Solutions

Table 5. The Solutions Suggested toward the Spread of Islam

The Solutions suggested	Frequency of articles	Percentage
Strengthening solidarity among Christians	78	75
Change of immigration policy	13	12
Upgrading missionary activities in the Islamic world	5	4
Watching out for oil money or Islamic finance	3	3
Others	7	6
Total	106	100

Source: Korean Newspapers Daily 2006-2009

## IV. Conclusion

I think we all got a very clear impression during this conference of how very different the situation is in different countries. In some countries, religion in education in general is more or less absent from the public schools, while in other countries religious education

is a subject of its own. That means that the different states also have different needs - according to what historical experiences they have.

Rare--perhaps even nonexistent--is the schooling system in which a child's formal learning experience is entirely silent, neutral or objective on transmitting messages about religion and values linked to religious traditions (Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco 2001, 68-69). Moreover, it is difficult to identify a society like Korea in which a policy of separation of church and state, or a national policy of secular education, achieves a complete exclusion of religion in both policy and practice of schooling. Particularly, in a post 9-11 era and globalized society, debate and dialogue is on the rise about how and to what extent the treatment of religion in schooling shapes an individual's self-concept and world-view. How does schooling contribute to social tolerance or to intolerance, stereotypes and prejudice? In some countries like in Korea, there remain more fundamental struggles between proponents of including religion in schooling, often led by religious institutions, and those opponents who seek to "keep religion out" of schools.

Furthermore, increasing pluralism and secularism of societies and assertion of rights by minorities also call into question schooling policies that are seen to "ignore" or otherwise discriminate against minority religious traditions and values, insofar as religion and schooling are concerned (Hwang, Saenz, and Aguirre 1997, 198). The recent headscarf debate in France is the best known but by no means the only case of such controversy. In those secular States where confessional religious instruction is forbidden in public schools because it is unconstitutional, non-confessional teaching about religions is one and perhaps the only way to ensure that children will be able to develop religious literacy in schools.

In this situation, it is very important to guarantee children of minority groups and general public in understanding their own and other religions (Coles 2006, 21-26). Thus, I do believe that we need somewhat of a universal religious education and information due to the fact that there have been lots of different views. It is very confusing and complicated to catch what is the sound interpretation and understanding toward other religions (Berry, Phinney, Vedder & Liebkind 2006, 29).

In a nutshell, I strongly believe that e-learning would be a possible solution to guarantee minority groups the rights to learn about their own religion as well as to give sound information to the general public who want to know about the religion of others. For example, big companies in Korea such as Samsung, LG, Posco, and KT and so on and major religious organizations have intensified its training programs for employees and decided to choose e-Learning technology as methodology of the programs. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, CD-ROM, and mobile phone without serious interference from the government institutions and law if they do not include something illegal or problematic (Li, Tu, Edward & Ming 2002, 80).

E-learning is now becoming a widely accepted method of training and education within schools, colleges, organizations and even non-governmental or minority groups through CBT (*Computer-Based Training*), IBT (*Internet-Based Training*) or WBT (*Web-Based Training*). Furthermore, wireless technology is beginning to appear in many more devices and this marks the start of a physically independent way of staying connected. The ability to access and participate in learning without the need for a physical connection will bring immeasurable benefits, with learners truly being able to learn at anyplace, anywhere. Emerging technologies such as wireless and 3G or FG will certainly enhance the penetration and flexibility of the medium, and the quality of content must be of superior quality in religious education for children.

## **References**

- Ahn, Jung-Kuk. (2008) "South-Eastern Immigrant Muslims and Their Social Network." *Journal of Korean Middle East Studies Association* (29-1): 94-109.
- Bell, Allan. (1991) *The Language of News Media*. Oxford UK & Cambridge MA: Blackwell.
- Coles, Roberta. (2006) *Race & Family: A Structural Approach*, Sage Publication.
- Carola Suárez-Orozco & Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco. (2001). *Children of Immigration*. United States of America: Harvard University Press.

- Hwang, Sean-Shong, Rogelio Saenz, Benigno E. Aguirre. (1997) "Structural and Assimilationist Explanations of Asian American Intermarriage", *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (59-3): 190-216.
- Kim, Min-Jung (2008), "International Marriage and Grooming Children in Korea." *Korean Journal of Anthropology* (41-1): 145-161.
- Oh, Jong-Jin. (2008) "Marriage and Settlement of Central Asian Muslim Immigrants in the Korean Society." *Journal of Korean Islamic Studies Association* (18-3): 71-95.
- Park, Shin-Gyu. (2008) "The Identity of Marriage Immigrant Females and Their Social Position." *Korean Journal of Geography* (14-1): 19-31.
- J. Berry, J. S. Phinney, P. Vedder & K. Liebkind (2006). *The Acculturation Experience*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, Inc., Publishers.
- Li, Shamin. Jow-Ching Tu, Edward & Ouyang, Ming. (2002). A Model of Intermarriage Involving Attribute Exchange. *Global Economic Review* (31-3): 69-87).

#### Internet

[http://kosis.kr/nsportal/abroad/abroad\\_01List.jsp](http://kosis.kr/nsportal/abroad/abroad_01List.jsp)

<http://stat.mw.go.kr>

[http://www.immigration.go.kr/HP/COM/bbs\\_003/ListShowData](http://www.immigration.go.kr/HP/COM/bbs_003/ListShowData)

## **The family: the heart of raising and sustaining the new generation**

**Bishop Michael Lewis**

Excellencies, eminences, distinguished colleagues, I am honoured to be asked to be one of the opening speakers at this eighth Doha Conference for Interfaith Dialogue. I am privileged to be a guest once again in the State of Qatar, which has been so creative, forward-looking, and hospitable in promoting intelligent discussion and sharing of perspectives between, in particular, the three great religions that derive from the faith of our father Avraham/Abraham/Ibrahim.

I shall speak briefly, and I shall speak of course as a Christian and specifically as an Anglican bishop, indeed the Anglican bishop serving this region. There are about 80 million Anglican Christians in 160 countries. Our church in this nation, is, like others, able to exist, flourish, and serve expatriate Christians because of the generous dedication of land by command of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Emir of Qatar, to whom we are profoundly grateful. Our expatriate Christians here come from many of the world's countries, both Western and Eastern.

The Anglican Communion, to use our official title, also describes itself, metaphorically but powerfully, as a *family* of Churches. The word family is therefore integral to our identity. Sometimes, like members of any human family, we have varying perspectives on matters great and small. Sometimes, like members of any human family, we would benefit from more internal dialogue. But overwhelmingly we are blessed by being, like every human family, bound together with bonds of descent, dynamic relationship, and deep affection. And above all else, like the human family when properly understood, we acknowledge that God is our great father and parent. We are not an autonomous unit. No individual, no group, no nation, no religion is absolutely autonomous, since all are part of God's creation, God's expression of himself. Radically, any use of the word "family", including that which describes the human family in society, must be subservient to the theological conviction that all human beings are called to know that they are sons and daughters of the same Heavenly Father. Radically, therefore, family is

blessing, and family is vocation. Such a definition of family will save us from understandings of family that are too narrow, too exclusive, too triumphalistic, or too fearful.

In the great and poetic explanatory story of creation in holy scripture in the Book of Genesis, God's creation of men and women is accompanied by his blessing of them (Genesis 1:27-28). God also wills the continuation of his human creation through the generation of children, so that the resulting cascade of descendants may bring order to the world, the rest of the divine creation. All this, says scripture, was good in God's eyes. Family begins here. Here too also begin companionship and cooperation within family, since the variegation of the sexes is not just for mechanical reproduction:

“It is not good for the man to live alone; I will make him a companion”, says God (Genesis 2:18). Here too is the possibility of the development of cooperation into pleasure and delight in intimate, mutual, bonded coexistence.

Soon, sin creeps into human life, expressed in the disobedience of Adam and Eve and in the envious anger of Cain for his brother Abel. But, despite the consequences – alienation and wandering – God's purposes for his creation family are not to be frustrated. The blessing still applies, even through the sin; the vocation – the calling – still summons the human family and human families to reclaim their true identity in God's image and likeness.

As an observable feature of cultures and groupings down the ages it is possible to describe family, including marriage, as simply a very useful social institution, either explicitly or implicitly contractual: a building block of societies, a structure for the regulation and classification of relationships, for the transmission of bloodlines and inheritance, for the preservation of distinctive identities, for mutual protection and promotion. These and other functions, benignly understood, are indeed highly important, and when families begin to be threatened, or to suffer, internally or externally, to the point of dysfunction or dissolution, then the effect on societies can be serious. Much talking will doubtless be done at this conference on such sufferings, threats, and challenges.

But at the same time the concept of the human family has generally been held to possess a strong moral charge, beyond the merely functional, useful, or contractual. For example, both marriage and family have been associated at various times with the scriptural idea of covenant, deriving from covenants between God and human beings such as Noah, Abraham, and David. Two people marrying, therefore, are sometimes described as being called into a covenanted relationship with one another which is grounded in the spirituality of loving faithfulness. A family that results from such a union will also partake in such a spirituality, and it is in essence a spirituality of vocation, of calling, to a higher or deeper appreciation of what may seem only functional or descriptive. The notion of covenant needs to be applied carefully, since in scripture the highest covenants are unequal bonded relationships between God and a human being (including their descendants) in which God is unquestionably the senior partner, to be approached with adoration and awe. But any talk of covenant in connection with families most certainly raises the context of family Godwards.

For Christians, there will be further imperatives, and also some cautions, and I hope you will allow me, by way of a Christian contribution, to express them. Since Christians believe that in Jesus Christ is the full and perfect expression, within creation, of all that God is, in his love, his faithfulness, and his self-outpouring sacrificial love, they will long for every Christian relationship and every Christian family to display all that they can of Christ, so as to partake in all that they can of God. They believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that Christ is the Word – the living expressed presence – of God for all time. Therefore they will look to who and how Christ was and is in order to know how to live as individuals and as families. They will pray that it will be a reflection of Christ's love, faithfulness, and self-outpouring sacrificial love that will characterise human and family life, triumphing over innate human sinfulness and failure, not so much by human effort as by participation in Christ's paradoxical triumph on the cross. They will trust that such divine qualities are what not just Christians but all human beings may aspire to, to raise and sustain not just the new generation but all generations. Those who are not Christians will by no means express themselves in these terms, but it is important

to see what in my view must motivate Christians when they set out to promote, safeguard, and explain family.

And they will be careful not to make an idol of the human family narrowly understood, but rather to recognise that God works out his purposes with his human family in a variety of ways. They will remember the selfishness, exclusivity, tyranny, domination, and exploitation that can sometimes mar the true nature of traditional families and indeed all human relationships, as well as the belligerence towards others that can result from an excess of group pride or a desire for group prosperity at all costs. Christians will also recall that Jesus Christ himself was single and unmarried in the service of the Heavenly Father, and that, in the New Testament, he speaks to his natural mother from the cross and says to her “Take my closest disciple to be your son”, and to his closest disciple he says “She is your mother”, thus, in his greatest moment of love outpoured, widening the notion of family in the solidarity of love outpoured. For Christians, these things will be on their hearts to give even greater impetus to foster and deepen discourse about family. And they will remember the passage in St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians (Galatians 3:26-29) in which St Paul points back to the family inheritance: “If you belong to Christ,” he says to Christians, “then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.”

Whatever the differences between the great faiths assembled here, sincerely held, we can look within our family tree to Abraham, our human father in faith, who knew himself to be both blessed and called by God, and all his family with him. Acceptance, tolerance, and mutual respect will flourish most within a consciousness of such divine blessing and such divine calling. I pray that this solidarity in a huge and exceptionally significant Abrahamic inheritance will permeate our talking and thinking in the days ahead.

**Transmitting the Religious Tradition and Values to the next generation:  
Challenges and opportunities for Houses of Worship in America  
Rabbi José Rolando Matalon**

*Congregation B'nai Jeshurun - New York City*

In America, Jews and other religious minorities have encountered unprecedented freedom and integration. Three important characteristics of religion in America -the separation of religion and state, the voluntary nature of religion, and religious diversity- have been embraced by those religious minorities as a blessing.

At the same time, the American context presents significant challenges to the conventional and established methods of transmission of religious tradition and values. This presentation will address several of these challenges as well as the opportunities, in particular as they affect the Jewish community:

1) The challenge: American culture fosters freedom and autonomy, and Americans are exposed to an abundance of competing options in terms of ideas, value systems, meaning-making opportunities and spiritual paths. America presents a big open field for people to choose from, or to decide not to choose.

The opportunity: Houses of worship and religions institutions must compete in this open market and must therefore reach for the best in their traditions, they must be creative in outreach and in transmitting their tradition in a way that speaks to people in meaningful ways, while striving to remain true and authentic and while attempting not to remain on the surface but going into the spiritual depths. We must reach their hearts and minds, we must try to hear their real questions and try to answer. People won't give us much time or second chances.

2) The challenge: Identity is becoming fluid and flexible in America, the old boundaries of culture, ethnicity and faith are coming down. While they don't feel they have to reject their inherited identity, young people no longer consider themselves limited to their

inherited identity (and an increasing number have more than one inherited religious identity). They feel free to meet and marry across boundaries, as well as to construct new composite identities.

The opportunity: We can help young people figure out who they are, who they want to be, and to forge a vision of themselves. We can show them what they can draw and learn from their spiritual traditions as they wrestle with these questions.

3) The challenge: The young generation of Americans has been suspicious of religion, which it perceives as being out of touch with the major issues of the day, as being exclusivist and divisive in the new globalized and open world, and as having significant responsibility for the violence and hatred that plague humanity.

The opportunity: we can show them how our religions traditions address the real issues of life: love, friendship, loyalty, work, money, suffering, evil, injustice, violence, etc. We must be honest and show them religion's role in divisiveness and violence and we must show them religion's role in dialogue and peace. We must show them a religion that is actively engaged in generating respect for all and peace. We must speak out loudly and clearly about these issues.

4) The challenge: the young generation is part of an increasingly individualistic culture no longer guided by communal norms and a sense of communal obligation, and they will primarily respond to that which they consider personally meaningful.

The opportunity: we can show them the power of community, we can expose them to the value of service, responsibility, duty, obligation, interdependence etc and the crafting of a life of purpose.

5) The challenge: As their peers of other faith traditions, the vast majority of young Jews are largely illiterate about their particular history and philosophy, traditions, rituals and observances.

The opportunity: we must work to make prayer and ritual meaningful and relevant so that we can help them uncover the power of prayer and ritual, as well as the blessings of a life of deep spirituality, of connection with God, with values, with self-examination. Growing numbers of young people feel confused and perplexed, detached and spiritually empty; they seek guidance and direction, vision and hope. This is a moment of great opportunity for religious traditions to rise to the challenge by responding with renewed relevance for today's world, by offering a framework of belonging and community, as well as a sense of purpose and duty.

## **Rabbi Marc Schneier**

*Vice President, World Jewish Congress and Chairman, World Jewish Congress United States; President, The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, [www.ffeu.org](http://www.ffeu.org)*

For generations, there has been a series of misunderstandings by Jews and Muslims on what the other religious community believes and practices. These misperceptions and other societal and political factors have unfortunately led to tensions between our two communities. Both the Jewish and Muslim communities are descended from the children of Abraham and like any sibling relationship it is vital that our communities remember our shared roots and strive to trust and support each other.

The sacred task we all face as parents is raising our children with a solid foundation of religious values and traditions. Today, more than ever, we share a solemn responsibility to ensure that our children grow into caring and responsible human beings.

In Judaism, we teach our children that what matters in life are values and not valuables. As noted in Deuteronomy (8:11-14), the Torah specifically warns us against materialism because it will lead us away from God. *“Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commandments, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”*

The Mishnah points out that when a man leaves the world, neither silver nor gold nor precious stones accompanies him, but only the Torah he has learned and the good works he has carried out. Judaism, like Islam, is a practical, down to earth guide for living a fulfilling life where one’s personal needs are satisfied by taking care of one’s family and being of service to others.

In that same vein, Judaism and Islam instill the direct responsibility of reaching out to help others in the community. Jews are commanded to give charity or *tzedakah* of one

tenth of our earnings. Similarly, Muslims are required to give zakat. We as parents must not only teach this to our children, but role model it as well.

And role models are what we are to our children. We nurture their every step and every decision. And especially in today's world, we must lead our children by example. The Ten Commandments not only transmit to our children a moral code that will guide them through life, but as a result of our parental behavior the laws provide a compass for our children to measure the concepts of integrity, respecting oneself and others and balancing work and play. In the process, our children learn to appreciate and understand that *"The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord and he watches all paths."* (Proverbs 5:21) I am now co-authoring a book with Imam Shamsi Ali, spiritual leader of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, the largest and most prestigious mosque in New York City. Imam Ali and I are analyzing difficult and controversial passages from the Torah and the Quran. We are presenting the voice of moderation when reviewing these sacred texts, making this book an invaluable resource in advancing Muslim Jewish relations to communities worldwide. At the end of this past summer, Imam Ali and I wrote a joint op-ed for the Washington Post, entitled "The Spiritual Convergence of Rosh Hashanah, Eid al-Fitr and 9/11." The following is a passage from that piece and most appropriate to my speech today. *"Both the Torah and Quran contain numerous passages enjoining Jews and Muslims respectively to love and protect the 'stranger' in their midst. In Leviticus 19:34, God commands the Jewish people, "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The Quran praises, "Those who show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves" (Surah 59, (Exile) Verse 9). When the great Rabbi Hillel was asked to sum up the entire Torah in concise fashion, he responded, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn." Similarly the Quran enjoins "That which you want for yourself, seek for mankind."* There are no more important lessons than these to teach our children.

When we reach out with our children to embrace those around us, both neighbor and stranger, we are joining forces to improve our world. In 2005, I became the first rabbi to speak to a group of students from the Razi School in Queens, NY, the only Muslim day school of its kind in the New York Metropolitan area. This program was attended by over 200 students and was broadcast on Arab television around the United States and had a tremendous impact on the community. We led by example.

For two millenia, since the time of Hillel, our rabbis have described the primary goal of humanity as that of *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world, and striving for a state of shalom or peaceful wholeness. We have a moral obligation to do all we can to give comfort to the sick and ailing, to help the weak and powerless and to improve our communities.

Both Judaism and Islam share this common belief system. In this context, in 2008 The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU) introduced the first-ever Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> in cooperation with the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim Public Affairs Council and the World Jewish Congress and with the support of His Majesty, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Over 50 mosques and 50 synagogues representing over 100,000 Muslims and Jews throughout the United States and Canada joined together to confront Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and to strengthen the relationship between the Jewish and Muslim communities. We led by example.

Last year, the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues culminated in 100 mosques and 100 synagogues joining together on the theme “Building A Common Agenda” to embrace social issues together as one community. Topics included saving the environment, fighting poverty, immigration reform and confronting Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. Twinned congregations joined us from seven European countries, including Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Netherlands. In France, where Muslim-Jewish tensions have been especially high, 19 mosques and 19 synagogues twinned with one another. We led by example.

In two weeks, we will once again lead by example. The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> of Mosques and Synagogues is scheduled for November 5-7, 2010 and Latin America will be joining our worldwide network. To date, programs are being planned in

Argentina and Brazil. We will also extend our reach in North America and Europe to maximize participation of mosques and synagogues across these continents and have been asked to initiate programs in Australia, Israel, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda.

Our world, our children's world, is a better place when we come together to build ties of friendship and trust with each other. Our similarities are ultimately much greater than our differences. Muslims and Jews, all the children of Abraham, share a common faith and a common fate. As noted in the 2008 FFEU public service announcement which ran on CNN featuring six imams and six rabbis joining together to denounce Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, *"We are rabbis and imams standing side by side, knowing that our words and our actions will determine our future."* The overwhelming success of the Weekend of Twinning<sup>sm</sup> proves that Muslims and Jews across North America and Europe are keen to connect with each other and to build a movement dedicated to nurturing communication, reconciliation and cooperation between our two communities and creating a better world for our children.

We are uniting people across the globe to work together. From New York to California, from Canada to Paris, Russia to Doha and everywhere in between, Muslims, Jews, imams and rabbis are leading discussions, workgroups and panels on ways to confront hate in our communities. We can build sustainable ties of understanding and trust and we can lead by example. In the end, it is our worth before God that is important, not our wealth. In both Judaism and Islam, our rigorous and sustained commitment ensures that our children will grow to maturity committed to service to God, service to our own people and to all mankind.

In closing, I would like to quote my partner Russell Simmons who summed it up beautifully in an oped piece he wrote last month in USA Today, *"It's our responsibility, as we raise a generation of post-9/11 Americans, to teach our children the mutual tolerance and respect that informs our founding documents, and that inspired past generations to extend and expand the rights available to all Americans. As we are taught from Proverbs 22:6, we should "train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." We should also remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "If we*

*are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."*

## **Concluding Statement**

**Dr. Ibrahim Bin Saleh Al-Naimi**

More than 220 participants and representatives from the three Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) who came from nearly 60 countries met at the 8<sup>th</sup> Doha the Conference of Interfaith Dialogue, held in the Qatari capital, Doha, from 19 to October 21, 2010, under the theme "The role of religions in the upbringing of generations".

The conference was opened by His Excellency, the Minister of Justice for the State of Qatar, Mr Hasan Ibn Abdullah Al-Ghanim, who welcomed the participants and stressed the urgent need to come out with recommendations which emphasize the importance of religion in the upbringing and preparation of future generations. The conference discussed the theme from three main perspectives: the role of the family, and the role of educational and social institutions, the impact of media on young people, and the role as well as impact of religious observance in the upbringing of generations.

1. Role of the family in the upbringing of the young generation.  
The family has a special responsibility just as it also has a great opportunity to provide an education which encourages tolerance and respect for the 'Other'. Since the existence of the family as an institution is a great blessing, the participants expressed their concern at the potential loss of many children who lack family support. There is also a need to ensure that children are able to see beyond their own special needs and are capable of opting for compassion in place of competitive rivalry. Children by their nature are very vulnerable and impressionable. Violence, whether domestic or political, has a negative impact on them. The conference called upon all religious communities to fulfill their responsibilities and duties towards the family, and to consolidate its status and function as the basic unit of society and the

space in which children first learn the importance of dialogue and cooperation.

2. The role of educational and social institutions and the media in the upbringing of young people.

The school system, the media, and other social institutions can play a pivotal role in preparing the youth about how to carry out both their local and global responsibilities. Similarly, the same institutions should also challenge all forms of discrimination and stereotypes. At different stages of human history, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities have either been persecuted or misunderstood. It is therefore important to overcome and defeat ignorance and to respect and value difference. The conference called upon schools and media institutions to empower the young people to search for truth. Technological advances in the area of media have created greater opportunities in the way values are disseminated. However, they have also created greater risks of the potential abuse and misuse of such technological tools. The conference called upon all religious communities to encourage schools, social institutions, and the media to develop curricula, social projects, and media programmes which promote the spirit of respect between religions and other cultures.

3. The impact of religious observance in the upbringing of generations.

The places of worship - like school, the family, and social and media institutions - can have a serious impact on the upbringing of children and young people. Moreover, religious observance can potentially be exploited and manipulated to spread a culture of violence and exclusion. The conference discussed, among other things, "Religious upbringing and modern challenges in an era of globalisation", "How do we restore religious observance as an active role in the education of future generations?", and

"The impact of the role of religious observance in consolidating sound religious principles and values." The Conference appealed to all religious communities to promote the role of religious observance in preparing the youth to take upon themselves the responsibility of cultivating the values of love, compassion and cooperation both locally and globally. The conference's debates and discussions were enriched by a session led by a group of students from Qatar and the Netherlands: "Youth's vision for interreligious dialogue and the role of religion in the upbringing of generations". Their session and contribution emphasised the great need to listen and learn from both the positive as well as negative experiences of young people. This is also a point which was expressed by many participants during the different sessions of the conference.

During the closing session, participants expressed their gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Hamad Ibn Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, and to the people and government of Qatar for their excellent hospitality. They also thanked the organisers of the conference: Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar, and the University of Qatar.

### **III. DECLARATION OF THE CONFERENCE**

Over 220 participants from 58 countries - Jews, Christians and Muslims - met for the Eighth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. They acknowledged the generous hospitality of HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani and of the State and people of Qatar, and paid tribute to the organizers of the conference, the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Qatar University. The Minister of Justice, HE Mr. Hassan Bin Abdulla Al Ghanim, at the opening session of the conference welcomed the participants and spoke for the need to make and to follow up concrete recommendations on the theme of the conference “Raising the New Generation with a Foundation of Values and Tradition: Religious Perspectives.” The Conference addressed three main themes: the role of the family, the role of schools and media, and the role of places of worship.

### **The Family: the Heart of Raising and Sustaining the Next Generation**

Families have a special responsibility and opportunity for an education which will encourage tolerance and respect for neighbors and strangers. While the family can be a great blessing, concern was expressed about the vulnerability of many children who lack family support. There is a great need for children to look beyond their own needs and to replace selfish competition with compassion for others. Children are idealists by nature and are repelled by violence –whether domestic or political.

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY AS A FUNDAMENTAL UNIT IN SOCIETY AND AS THE PLACE WHERE CHILDREN FIRST LEARN TO PRACTICE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION.

### **The Role of Educational, Social and Media Institutions**

Schools, social institutions and the media can play a vital role in preparing young people for local and global responsibilities. Any form of discrimination or prejudice must be challenged. All three faith communities, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, have experiences of being victimized or ridiculed, it is therefore very important that ignorance be overcome and that differences be respected. Educational and media institutions should allow young people to search for truth and to make their own choices. Together with the

great technological advances in the field of media comes great opportunity for the dissemination of values, as well as the great danger of the misuse of media for the degradation of the lives of young people.

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEDIA TO DEVELOP CURRICULA, SOCIAL PROJECTS AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS WHICH PROMOTE SENSITIVITY TO OTHER RELIGIONS AND CULTURES AND THE RESPECT OF DIFFERENCES.

### **Places of Worship: Supporting and Influencing the Next Generation**

As well as the importance of the family, of schools, social institutions and the media, it was seen that places of worship can provide many good influences in the upbringing of children and young people. However it was also recognized that places of worship might be misused to provoke exclusivism and enmity. Group discussions addressed issues such as: “Religious Upbringing and Contemporary Challenges in a Globalized Era”, How to Restore the Active Role of Worship for the Next Generation”, and “The Role of Worship in Implanting Religious Principles.”

THE CONFERENCE CALLS UPON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE PLACES OF WORSHIP TO PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY, FOR IMPLEMENTING VALUES OF COMPASSION AND COOPERATION.

The concluding session was enriched by the contribution of a group of students from Qatar and the Netherlands on the theme “A Youth Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue and the Role of Religion in Raising Generations.” This contribution by young people fulfilled a wish expressed made at many points during the conference to listen to the experiences, both positive and negative, of young people who will themselves take responsibility to build a world with more justice and peace.

**IV. ABSTRACTS OF ARABIC ARTICLES (TRANSLATED  
INTO ENGLISH)**

## **Importance of school curricula to instill religious values and a culture of religious tolerance among the followers of religions: Palestinian curriculum model**

**Bishop Atallah Hanna**

Education plays a significant role in establishing security and stability in society through the cultivation of shared values in the hearts of students, and bringing them up upon such values while promoting the language of dialogue, logic and tolerance. This study aims to clarify the importance and role of the school curriculum in cultivating religious values and a culture of religious tolerance among followers of different religions. This paper will also examine textbooks on religious education, national education, civic education, and Palestinian Arabic language for the school levels (1-5), which were first implemented in the academic year 2000 / 2001. This paper hopes to show or uncover the values of religious tolerance, peace, pluralism, and the curriculum's ability to cultivate such values in students as well as the impact of such values on students' conduct and behavior. I have adopted a descriptive approach in this paper by describing the realities on the ground and analyzing the content of the Palestinian curriculum. I have also deployed the same method in identifying major trends and perspectives among teachers of Islamic and Christian education in Palestine as well as positive elements of the Palestinian curriculum. The study has concluded that the school curriculum plays an important role in the process of fundamental changes in values, attitudes and systems, and the transfer of culture and art, and provides appropriate conditions for the growth and development of students physically, mentally, socially and emotionally, and promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, groups, and religions. The study confirmed that the culture of tolerance and dialogue is an alternative culture to that of violence and intellectual deviation, and the extermination of the 'other'. It is also the antithesis of intolerance, extremism, fanaticism, and the monopolization of truth and knowledge, domination and subordination. Our world today is in great need of tolerance, effective and positive coexistence between people. With regard to the degree of importance accorded by the Palestinian educational curriculum to the values of tolerance, dialogue, communication and peace, the study has concluded that the school curriculum, especially

the Palestinian Islamic and Christian curricula play a prominent role in promoting moderate views, in preventing extremism and terrorism, and in rejecting conflict among human beings in general and among Palestinians in particular, and in maintaining the language of reason and positive and constructive dialogue and establishing a society based on justice, equality, and equal opportunities for all. The results of the study show that while all ‘normal values’ are emphasized in the content of the Palestinian school curriculum to varying degrees, there are certain values which are most frequently repeated, such as the values of peace, tolerance, respect, freedom, and democracy. The Palestinian curriculum gives prominence to the respect of religions, tolerance and coexistence between the followers of different religions, especially Muslims and Christians in Palestine, as well as respect for difference and pluralism. Lessons in some textbooks carry titles on tolerance, respect for others, and respect for difference. The study concluded by providing a set of proposals and recommendations to enhance the educational values of decency and tolerance through the school curriculum, as a necessary revision of curricula. It has also recommended that the curriculum’s goals and value should be clear, and linked to pedagogical strategy. There should also be a national strategy for preparing students in different levels of education to counter intolerance and terrorism in its various forms, for equipping them with the moral values which enables them to live in a way that is of great value to their community and country, for educating them in critical debate and acceptance of the ‘other’ so that they may learn to solve problems in the spirit of forgiveness, justice and equality. The national strategy should also reassert the role and function of religion in developing and disseminating the positive values of tolerance, respect for others, and the rejection of violence, intolerance, and social exclusion.

## **The role of religious education in the development of interreligious dialogue and ‘tolerance’**

**Dr. Bahej Mulla Hawish**

We currently face real challenges characterized by perceptions of “Otherness” which normalize exclusivist ethical standards of behavior and practices which ultimately result

in a culture of intolerance and violence. We must prevent ideological thought from kidnapping and recruiting our future generations for infringing on different religions. In order to achieve tangible positive results we should exercise self-criticism in the process of socialization during religious instruction of our children and contribute to resolving the dilemma of education already suffering from conflicts of curriculum. In establishing the doctrine of human brotherhood and encouraging positive thinking in our children we must teach them to respect religious freedom and freedom of expression and conscience, and to maintain cultural and emotional currents. We must seek to achieve the true reality in which we live on the common ground between us all.

## **The impact of family breakdown on the weakening of religious and moral values in children**

**Dr Surur Qaruni**

Since the beginning of human history, the family has always played a pivotal role in the lives of children. It has always been the only source of sanctuary as well as an important source of information, and has provided the first space in which children develop their values, confidence and sense of pride while forming and constructing their identities. Technological developments have resulted in a radical shift in the centrality of the family and its role in the development of children. This change has been particularly evident in the last decade in which we have witnessed the proliferation of satellite TV channels and social networking sites on the Internet where children now spend more time than they spend with their parents and families. Moreover, ideas, forms of behavior, and cultural practices, and misconceptions which are far removed from basic moral and religious values are being disseminated using “sexy” or “cool” methods which present many dangers and challenges. This has not only been a major challenge for the children and the family but it has also added a burden on parents. They are now expected to be well versed in the special characteristics of each level and stage of development as the child grows. Thus, now more than ever, they play a significant role in cultivating moral and religious values on one hand, and acting as successful role models who demonstrate how the emotional and intimate needs of men and women can be fulfilled and met through the

institution of a strong marriage. In the case of a family breakdown, whether it is through legal divorce, a separation, or domestic violence, a great sense of insecurity and confusion is created in the children in addition to their loss of the main and natural source of comfort, love and compassion, moral values and ethics created for them by God so that they may not look for alternatives outside the family thus risk becoming victims of abuse and exploitation. A dysfunctional family is not capable of providing a home environment which can protect children from such dangers and challenges.

## **Religious upbringing and modern challenges in era of globalization**

**Dr 'Afifi Hijazi**

The 20<sup>th</sup> and well and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have been characterized by cultural, philosophical, and political developments which have presented challenges to those working in the area of religious education and child development. Such developments have presented both a challenge as well as an opportunity to Muslims to redefine “religious upbringing”, its ‘general’ as well as ‘particular’ objectives within the context of globalization and modernity. This paper seeks to provide such a definition while, inter alia, examining the main contemporary challenges faced by those engaged in “religious upbringing”. I have divided the challenges into what I call “internal challenges” which have a bearing on the individual’s faith, as well as “external challenges.” I have also provided an analysis of the advantages as well as disadvantages of the “cultural openness” resulting from globalization. I also offered what I believe are the “correct” methods of facilitating “religious upbringing”.

## **The impact of family breakdown in the degeneration of religious and ethical values in children**

**Dr. Sa'ad al-Din Al-'Uthmani**

The family unit is considered the foundational basis as well as the first environment in which a child learns and develops his or her social skills and interpersonal relations. One of the important functions and roles of the family is the cultivation of religious and moral values in children. However, there are times when families face difficulties and problems

which eventually result in their breakdown, thus, rendering them incapable of fulfilling their functions and roles. A number of field studies have established a direct link between family breakdown and high levels of juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and addiction, and gangsterism. Children from broken families are more likely to be sidetracked and led away from the religious and moral values of the family towards various forms of anti-social and immoral behaviour. Thus, the preservation of the family as an institution, as well as the protection of individual families from breaking down, are important tasks which require a concerted effort at different levels of society ; both at official as well as community levels. This, therefore, calls for the development of integrated family policies by governments in collaboration with various institutions of society. Likewise, there is also a great need for the establishment of specialised family centres which engage in field studies while also providing practical advice on issues relating to family. Such centres should then develop effective mechanisms for intervention in solving family problems and preventing breakdowns. The media should also play an important role by producing programmes which generate an awareness of family issues and how to deal with some of the problems faced by families.

## **Towards a reform of religious education for Peaceful Co-existence between Peoples and Nations (An analysis of the Tunisian experience in religious education reform)**

**Dr Salim Buwayhi**

The educational system in Arabic and Islamic countries has been characterized by a serious crisis throughout the periods of cultural and intellectual decline experienced by the Arab Muslim world. Despite repeated attempts to reform it since the late nineteenth century, it has always been limited and limiting, rigid, insular, and archaic. Globalisation has deepened and intensified the crisis in education in general as well as religious education in particular. This has presented new challenges and many questions regarding the kind of individual that such an educational system is designed to produce, the values that she or he should embody, and how to improve religious education both in terms of form and content. This paper critically examines some of the problems facing the

education sector in the Arab Islamic world and the ways to improve its institutions to ensure quality and high standards. Also included in this paper is an attempt to define and analyse the reform of religious education in Tunisia and its special characteristics. The Tunisian experience is worth studying and examining since one of the aims of the continuous and regular review of the methods of teaching religious education in different educational institutions in Tunisia is the need to cultivate the values of religious tolerance, moderation, and to enhance interreligious dialogue while paving the way towards new horizons of openness and fruitful cooperation for the sake of human co-existence and international peace.

## **Religious upbringing and its impact on mental health: Towards a Programme in Psychological Counseling.**

**Dr Hanan Mahmoud Taqsh**

A human being is made up of body and soul. Both should be cared for since ill-health in one also directly affects the other. The family plays a primary and central role in neonatal care and nursing until the child develops into a social or socialized being who has internalized the values and belief systems which helps and enables him or her to integrate into the community. Among the many aspects of socialization imparted by the family, is “religious upbringing” which can be described as the transfer of religious knowledge to the child. It is here that the family should ensure that it does not passively transmit the knowledge thus indoctrinating the child, but it should consider and reflect on the proper function and role of such religious knowledge and how it compliments other areas of the child’s development, particularly the psychological and mental areas of development since it is now widely acknowledged that religion can play a significant role in counselling and dealing with social and psychological problems. There is currently a wealth of knowledge on different methods of physical care. However, there is still very limited knowledge on the holistic formation of individual personalities and identities since most of the psychological studies have focused on the diagnosis and treatment of disorders at the expense of other areas of mental health which are no less important. This paper explores how such an integrated approach can be achieved through the use of the

pillars of faith in Islam in mental health and preventative measures which empowers the individual with the psychological abilities and skills to face and deal with the difficulties and challenges of life. Since the family is not the only institution responsible for “religious upbringing”, it is possible to consider how the pillars of Islamic faith can become part and parcel of curriculum responsible for the psychological counseling and guidance of students.

## **Child development and the role and function of the media in a School Curriculum**

**Dr. Ali bin Abdul Khaliq al-Qarni**

The formation of a child’s personality as well as how the child is prepared for life are no longer elements of child development that can be regarded as the sole responsibility of the school system. Other institutions and discourses do play an equally central and crucial role in the education of individuals as well as the construction of their identities. The media, with its power and influence, is the most effective of all the factors and actors which have a lasting impact on the education and development of children. It is therefore important for education as an institution to develop in a manner that takes into serious consideration today’s pedagogical realities in which the media plays a central and influential role. Technological advances have produced what amounts to a radical communication revolution in modern society where a child now spends about 22 thousand hours in front of a TV screen before he reaches his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday while the same child spends only 14 thousand hours in a classroom. In order for a school to fulfill its mission of preparing a child to face the concrete realities of life and the future, it must equip students with the necessary life skills they need in order to successfully deal with the demands of modern life by exposing them to cultures other than their own. This will hopefully enable them to co-exist and interact with the ‘Other’ in a way that benefits society in an era in which the world has become a single village. If we accept that the academic curriculum is an effective tool which equips and empowers a child or pupil with the such skills, we should accept that a level of literacy in media and the related subjects are now necessary skills which should be provided if at all the curriculum is to

achieve its desired aims and objectives of developing in a child innovative critical and analytical skills and the ability to use various forms of media in different cultural settings and contexts. The media is now an important part of contemporary and popular culture in many developed countries. Thus, many global agencies led by UNESCO have expressed great concern at some of the media messages of unknown sources and origins which are targeted at young children and the negative impact this can have on their development. The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States is very much aware that a balanced and holistic development of a child as well as how the child is best prepared for future life requires a diligent, concerted, and insightful effort supported by a curriculum implemented by competent teachers. Thus, the Arab Bureau of Education has made media studies one of its important projects and priorities which it hopes will lead to the development of a critical and analytical skills among students working in different disciplines while also providing them with the means to make ethical judgments on how to positively utilize and deal with various means of modern communication and media such as TV, radio, press, internet, advertisement, to mention just these few. The development and dissemination of a media culture while at the same time empowering and equipping students with the necessary media skills and expertise will hopefully produce an atmosphere and environment conducive for dialogue between individuals, peoples and groups, and between followers of different religions. This is particularly important since our world today is in desperate need of a dominant culture that promotes co-existence, solidarity, peace and harmony.

## **The role of the media and communication technology on the youth**

### **Dr Ahmad al-Halwani**

The media and other modern means of communication (communication technology), as well as open satellite channels have had a growing impact on the youth. This is an issue which has led to new avenues in the field of education and youth development. Due to the openness of modern communication technologies and their unlimited access, there is a great need for a detailed and deep academic field study which investigates the impact of such technologies and how the youth can be empowered to identify their positive

elements. Thus, the media and modern technologies can then be seen as complimentary tools which fill a major gap in the existing school and university curricula in such a way that they help the educational and home environments, as well as society as a whole. This new phenomenon calls for an investigation into the seduction, appeal, and fascination of the youth with the media and communication technologies. This study will focus on those aspects of the media and modern technology which can have a destructive and negative impact on society as well as on the methodological tools of engaging in dialogue with the youth.

## **Religious upbringing and modern challenges in an era of globalisation**

**Aghar Muhammad Abdul Karim**

This paper seeks to address three central themes:

1. The importance of the religious upbringing of the youth.
2. An analysis of some of the challenges faced by parents, schools, and other institutions involved in the religious upbringing of young people in a postmodern globalised world.
3. Some of the mechanisms and methods that can be adopted in order to preserve and maintain religious upbringing.

The paper argues that religious education should play the most important role in a child's development and upbringing. In a postmodern and globalised world like ours in which all foundations of morality have been challenged, religion remains the only source, foundation, and point of reference upon which most people still have faith. A person's faith in and commitment to a religion and its moral/ethical teachings act as an internal mechanism of self control that guides one's behaviour and attitudes towards others. Laws and legal systems on the other hand aim to police and govern external behaviour. People can easily modify their public behaviour in order to conform to the letter of the law while capable of breaking it in private. The paper proposes that there should be a shift from a language that speaks of "interreligious dialogue" to a language and mindset that speaks of "dialogue between followers of religions" since it is people and not the abstract concept

of “religion” who talk to and with each other. People by their very nature are very capable of changing and adapting their positions when presented with new challenges and realities. The concept of “religion” on the other hand is based on what are often fixed and rigid theological doctrines. However, followers of all religious traditions are often united by shared and common values. It is these values which should form the basis of dialogue.

## **Religious Education and the Universalisation of Values**

### **Ghayth Mubarak al-Kawari**

Religions have historically been manipulated to advance various forms of extremism, exclusivism, conflict, and other negative issues people now associate with religion. However, at the same time religious people have also been at the forefront of those fighting against extremism, exclusivism, and resolving conflicts. We have seen how since the Enlightenment whenever people tried to rid society of religion or tried to marginalise its role and function in society they always ended with a culture incapable of cultivating morality and ethics. Calls for a return to religious traditions as foundations of moral values in society have always produced three main approaches:

1. Those who adopt a very rigid and narrow reading of their religious texts which have resulted in exclusivist meanings which do not recognise the ‘otherness’ of the ‘other’.
2. Those who attempt to discredit or dismiss religious texts in general.
3. And those who adopt a ‘moderate’ and middle path.

Whatever one’s position on these matters is, the fact that there has always been discussion and debate on whether or not society should return to religion is in itself evidence that religion cannot be dismissed as an important and legitimate point of reference or foundation in society.

# **The Importance of the Educational Curricula in Cultivating Religious Values**

**Dr Lamyah Jawhar Hayah**

This paper argues that in order for educational curricula to be effective and successful they should take into serious consideration and value the input of specialists from a wide range of disciplines, the teachers who will be responsible for implementing the curricula, the parents, and other actors in society. At primary school levels, from the age of 4 to 10, the curricula's focus should be on developing both the child's intellectual and psychological faculties along with basic religious values which are based on love and respect for others regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or social background. Such values should also cultivate within a child the importance of protecting and looking after our natural environment.

## **Educational Curricula and Religious Values**

**Father Dr Filotheos**

Education has always been a priority and an issue of great importance in any country. Historically, it was the responsibility of the administration of education, and then the responsibilities were passed on to the Ministry of Education. Within a Christian context, the provision of education started in the church since each church always had a school or classes responsible for disseminating religious education. The curriculum and method of teaching was based primarily on the memorisation of The Psalms which were important in religious rituals and worship. Thus, the church continued to function as the first school until the primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutes or universities were established. The focus in the religious schools attached to the churches was on the close study and memorisation of scriptures and other religious texts alongside subjects such as maths. Muslims in Sudan had similar programmes and arrangements where the Mosque functioned as a school providing an education which included the memorisation of the Qur'an. There is even a famous case in Sudan of a religious school which the Coptic Church gave as a gift to Sudanese Muslims so that they could provide Qur'anic teachings and Islamic studies to their Muslim children. Since the origins of education its provision have always been associated with religious institutions (the Church, Mosque, and the

Synagogue) we should be working towards restoring the role and function of religion in education.

## **The Role of Religions in the Upbringing of the Youth: The Impact of Religious Observance**

**Theophilus George Saliba**

The paper argues that religion is one of the foundational basis upon which an individual's weltanschauung and identity is based. Psychologists agree that the impact and influence of religion on an individual's identity is unparalleled. A human being is by his nature emotional, and religion has had a greater impact and influence on people's lives since it inspires and satisfies an individual's emotional needs. We have always seen throughout human history how people are prepared to die rather than give up their faith and religion. Likewise, those who have been previously denied fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the right to practice their faith and religion, will always exercise their religious right first before any other right whenever their full rights have been restored. Perhaps this is the reason why historically there are more people who have been martyred for religious reasons than any other cause. The development of an individual in society can be divided into four main phases: The home, the individual's community, the school, the stage when an individual is capable of making ethical and moral choices on the basis of his upbringing. Religious observance consolidates the religious values upon which an individual is brought up.

## **The curriculum and its role in the consolidation of religious values**

**As'ad As-Sahmarani**

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping and forming individual identities and also in the way that the individual relates to others in his or her community. Thus, in order to improve the individual and his community or society the focus and attention should be directed on the kind of education which has produced that individual and his or her society. A good and holistic education should be able to provide for and satisfy the individual's spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and physical needs. Educationists agree

that a curriculum should be very clear in terms of the following: a) Its aims and objectives; b) Content; c) Teaching methods; d) Progress timetable. An individual is a social being who, by his very nature, needs the company of others in society. However, society is also made up of individuals from diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, and philosophical backgrounds. In order for an individual to enjoy and benefit from the companies of others in society, he or she should be educated in a way that recognizes, appreciates, and values that diversity and difference. This is precisely what the school curricula and its religious content should be designed and developed in a manner that takes into serious consideration the pluralist nature of society and human beings.

### **The family's role in the upbringing of children: A religious perspective**

**Dr. Abdul Kabir Al-Alawi al-Madgri**

The family and the relationship between husband and wife have been described in the Qur'an and other Islamic sources as the foundation of society. It can be argued that every aspect of Islamic teachings, laws, and education are designed to uphold and consolidate the important role of family to both an individual and society. Along with the many benefits that Western modernity and liberalism brought about, they also ushered in a number of social problems which either led to or were a result of the breakdown of the traditional family. Individualism or the individual has been privileged over the importance of the traditional family or indeed that of society as a whole. The challenge for us Muslims is how to embrace some positive aspects of modernity without becoming victims of the same social problems now affecting some Western societies. It is here that the role of the family and that of education are vital in the religious upbringing of children. This paper proposes a way forward which, while grounded in Islamic religious values, is cognizant of modernity and some of its positive aspects.

### **The Importance of the Curriculum in Cultivating Religious Values**

**George Nahas**

This paper seeks to place the discussion about “values” within a contemporary discourse since the concept of “values” – valeurs – is relatively new. However, societies have

historically taken the notion of values for granted and have always considered it as an integral aspect of their cultures. Since religion has always functioned as the medium through which local cultures are formulated and disseminated, legitimate questions can be asked about the interrelationship between local cultures and religious values, and also how values which start as aspects of a local culture become “globalised”. It is therefore important to investigate and debate how such local conceptions of “values” are integrated into education or become the basis upon which schools and universities curricula are based.

## **The impact religious observance in consolidating sound religious principles**

### **Dr. Rashid Qarawi**

This paper argues what sets religious societies from others is that within societies which are organised and based on religious principles, all aspects of the individual’s identity such as the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional needs, are fulfilled. An Islamic society cannot successfully achieve its goals of cultivating sound moral and ethical values without the Mosque which plays a significant role, through religious observance (*ibada*) in this process. According to Islamic traditions, the Prophet first constructed a Mosque and established brotherhood between the *Muhajirin* (immigrants from Mecca) and the *Ansar* (helpers/ host community of Medina). Thus, the Mosque becomes a safe and common space in which Muslims do not only pray but interact with each other and establish relations of the same basis of brotherhood as established by the Prophet. In this way, the Islamic values of compassion, unity, tolerance, and caring for others do not only become abstract concepts enshrined in the texts but are translated into action through daily interaction and communication through this sacred space. Thus religious observance and worship does not become mere rituals to be performed daily but also a means through which community cohesion, peace, unity, and moderation and other sound moral and ethical values are practised and disseminated.

## **The impact of family education for young people: The Fort**

**Dr. Akram Kalash**

The Qur'an uses the metaphor of a Fort to describe the union and interrelationship between a husband, wife, and their family. Just as a military fort serves to protect those who are in it, the institution of the family serves the same function in protecting its members. A valid marriage contract and good marriage form the foundation of such a fort; a strong and happy family. All religious traditions have always recognised this fact and it is for this reason that they have emphasised teachings and values which consolidate the institution of family. In order to protect the younger generation in the same way that a fort protects its residents, society should preserve and protect the institution of family from breaking down.