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Reading the Signs of the Time

Contemporary Challenges for Christians and Muslims

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Preface

What is the most important problem humanity is facing on its way into the future and what can be done to overcome it? This important question brought to and united in the city of Vienna from October 19 to 23 in 2000 a small but deeply concerned group of Christians and Muslims coming from different parts of the world, all trying to answer it from their own perspectives. The discussions that followed furnished an opportunity to take up different points of view, ponder over them together and give them a proper place in the common deliberations of the group.

In the course of the dialogue it transpired that despite their different standpoints the participants had a common horizon of shared problems, a sense of being together in the name of God, and a deep religious commitment to the need for common action in respect of the disturbing world affairs. At the end of the meeting it was agreed upon to act as a common study group duty-bound to deal with the problems pinpointed and to work out possible solutions. With this perception and commitment, the group institutionalized its proposed work, named itself as the "Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table" [VICIRoTa] and constituted a small Steering Committee to run its affairs within the framework of its agreed principles.

The genesis of this initiative lies in two international dialogue meets held at St. Gabriel – the first in 1977 on the theme of "The God of Christianity and Islam", and the other a few years later on "Hearing His Word: Man as the Hearer of the Word of God in Christian and Islamic Traditions". These meets paved the way for further exploring together the proper relationship between religion and society in view of the problems and tensions faced world-wide. Then began in the capital of Austria a great exercise, later on called the "Vienna Dialogue Process". Two important international Christian-Islamic dialogue conferences took place in 1993 and 1997 on the themes of "Peace for Humanity" and "One World for All" respectively. In addition, some Iranian and Austrian scholars held two joint conferences, in 1996 at Tehran on "Justice in International and Inter-religious Relations",

and in 1999 at Vienna on "Values – Rights – Duties: Fundamental Questions of a Just Order of Living Together from Christian and Islamic Perspectives".

It was with this background that VICIRoTa was born in October 2000, with a view to promoting peace and justice in the world in a fraternal spirit of 'togetherness in dialogue', its aim being to uncover spiritual foundations for this great cause locating them in the depths of religious traditions and to translate them into common action based on a shared responsibility towards God and His creation. The communiqué issued at the end outlined VICIRoTa's aims and objects, ideals and basic policy and plans of action for the future.

The outcome of the deliberations at the founding assembly of this new dialogue forum is being presented in this first volume of a new series of books and monographs proposed to be periodically published under the banner of VICIRoTa.

The contributors to this volume neither could nor wanted to give exhaustive answers to the general question what problems humanity is facing on its way into the future. They have presented their respective perceptions and participated in mutual discussions – and all these are included in the present volume. What is common to all the contributions and discussions is the persuasion that today mankind has arrived at a turning point that is more deep-going and comprehensive than whatever happened before in history. Humanity now finds itself as a single community sharing a common fate. The social processes, impulses and discoveries, conflicts and crises, of the human world are no more restricted to any particular region or people; they now have a global impact. For this reason, all the strategies at all levels – economic, political, and cultural – and all attempts to solve the problems arising out of this global change of social relations can also succeed only if pursued *together*.

Due to the long history of mutual differences, commonness can develop only through a fraternal and cooperative dialogue. This is what VICIRoTa stands and endeavors for – with an unflinching faith in our common God, a firm conviction that what can unite us is and will always remain stronger than whatever can divide us, and a shared belief that a continuing dialogue – which sets out anew day by day avenues of search for what may unite us – is absolutely necessary. This first collection of VICIRoTa debates towards these goals, it is hoped, will make its aims and objects clearer and its endeavors globally acceptable.

On behalf of VICIRoTa we extend our thanks to all who helped in establishing this new international dialogue forum of Christians and Muslims and made the publication of this work possible. Special thanks are due to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Science, Education and Culture, and the Municipal Council of the City of Vienna. With gratitude we feel obliged to Professor James S. Rooke for reading the text and for his manifold kind and understanding advice. Our thanks are due also to all those at the St. Gabriel Institute for Theology of Religions who assisted us in this great task including, among others, Mrs. Gertrude Gruber, Mrs. Petra Gerl, and Mag. Brigitte Sonnberger.

May our common endeavors serve the cause of peace in the world. For both the Christians and the Muslims God is 'God of peace'; they know and believe that whoever wants to serve Him must also serve the cause of peace.

Andreas Bsteh – Tahir Mahmood

April 2003

The Contemporary Value Crisis as a Threat to Human Life

M. Modjtahed Schabestari

What I am presenting here are a couple of questions and perhaps also some answers. It is my main intention to present to you a certain problem to be discussed. And perhaps I myself shall not be able to give a clear answer to it.

For me, the lack of values and binding standards is the most important obstacle for humanity on their way into the future. The lack of values and binding standards in our times is the greatest threat to human life and destroys man's identity and his/her feeling of happiness and their hope for the future.

In the situation described above, we as representatives of two world religions, of Islam and of Christianity, are confronted with a very important issue, which is: Do we have to look back into our tradition, in order to find values and standards supportive of life, or do we have to go beyond this tradition, in order to be able to experience a new meaning?

I am of the opinion that Islam and Christianity have to seriously examine faith as the foundation for both religions, in order to find out to what extent faith really can, in the world of today, make the life of man meaningful and true to accepted standards. I think that this can come about, if faith shows its truthfulness so profoundly that it enables us to make thereby an experience of true values.

Is it not necessary for us to distance ourselves from the formulas of our faith as we have presented them so far, which confine us to the domain of our own life, in order to be able to really search truth anew and to find it? In my view this can happen, if we do not experience our faith as a place of flight, but as a criterion of truth, where we want to encounter God. If we consider our faith not as a place of evasion, but as a place of encounter with God, he will grant us a space where we shall be able – as mentioned before – to seriously examine this faith, and once again scrutinize this faith and its relatedness with truth and meaningfulness and the aforesaid experience of values. When we, as representatives of religious communities, address the politicians of this world, in order to appeal for justice and sup-

port of those who are suppressed, we ourselves must be in the position to persuade these politicians of our new experience of values and of the standards we accept. This can come about if we succeed in conveying our experience of values that was mentioned above to the politicians, so that they come into a position to experience these values themselves. My question is, can we be mediators of this experience? Can we really cope with this task?

The politicians in our world speak of justice and similar concepts from a pragmatic viewpoint. As representatives of those who adhere to religious communities, we cannot take up this position, namely this merely pragmatic position. We are not allowed to do this. We speak of truth, and it is not sufficient for us that, if the issue is various injustices, we only take the side of justice in a pragmatic way like the politicians and release various resolutions after our meetings. In fact, it is our main task to explain and make people experience why justice is a truth and what kind of truth it is. And we can elucidate this, if we can persuade other people of these truths. I would like to reply therefore in the affirmative to the question exposed above, namely that our political task as representatives of world religions has another denotation than what is normally understood as a political task. Actually, it is our task, as representatives of Islam and of Christianity, to examine the issue, whether and how we can attain the aforesaid new experience of truth and values ourselves. Before addressing other people or the politicians, we first have to examine ourselves, as representatives of the religions, as theologians, as to what are our real positions, inwardly and spiritually, what are the experiences we ourselves have made. Whether, departing from our faith, we can make a true experience of values today, or not. If, concerning this important problem, our investigations bring a satisfactory result, then we have taken a big step towards finding a solution to the problem of the above-mentioned lack of values and binding standards, which inhibits mankind on their way into the future.

It is this question, as I said already, that I would like to stress mainly and that I would like to have discussed.

Questions and Interventions

what exactly does today's value crisis consist in?

POTZ I would like to be a little provocative. Is the present really so value- and standard-less? When we want to teach the world, do we not, as Christians and Muslims, have a problem of credibility? For, at least in European history, the times of ample Christian values were not what one would call the most beautiful times. This is why I think that we should be rather careful about this argument. In the Middle Ages, Christian societies fought crusades. In the 20th century we also had societies with mendacious values. Therefore, if today one says to young people, "You have lost all values", then their answer is, "Which values? Do you mean the values that led to World War I and World War II?". Here of course also a certain generation problem is implied. Thus I am a little sceptical and not so pessimistic concerning our present culture's lack of values and of orientation. I think that we indeed have new values. Here I think particularly of today's intense realization of human rights concepts. They imply a high degree of values. Hence, there are many values in our society, which we have to realize and put into practice. They are above all human rights, and as Christians and Muslims, like all other people, we have to take our stand in this respect.

SCHABESTARI I agree that, when one speaks today of lacking values, one often means that the values of the past got lost and that the issue today is to revive them. This is not at all what I mean. In fact, much of what was considered to be a value led to wars and catastrophes. Our lack of values is rather a theoretical problem, which is that we are not able to ground our values properly. This is our problem in ethics and moral philosophy. We have no solid foundation for the values. It is just our pragmatic assumption that we need values. Yet, such a merely pragmatic viewpoint cannot be sufficient for us as followers of religions. We are concerned with the truth and therefore also with the truth of the values. Of course we have many values today. Yet, we live just half-heartedly with these values, we have our difficulties with them. And in my view these difficulties can be traced back to the problem on what to ground these values. What I am trying to find now is how to overcome by means of experience these difficulties of grounding values, because I hold the opinion that the question of grounding values actually is the question of experiencing them. I consider this inadequate experience of values to be our problem of today.

KHOURY Since it was said that today basic values are lacking, my first question is: are the values themselves lacking or is there a lack in the practical life of society as regards the chances to experience them? Thus, what would, according to Professor Schabestari's view, be at stake for our society to become healthy again?

A second question concerns the fact as to whether one would have to invent the values anew or whether the issue would not rather be to elaborate them anew on the basis of our respective traditions, so that they can be an effective critical authority, even for correcting the defects in our society and in politics. If we want to invent them anew, would this not broach the question of their credibility as well as the question where their bindingness should be derived from.

are the values lacking or the right moderateness? GABRIEL For me the term 'lack of moral standards' also implied something else, namely that we have lost the sense of moderation. In classical Greek philosophy, the value of moderation characterizes what is essentially human. The opposite is immoderateness, which is also injustice. In my view this implies a fundamental deficiency of our culture. The Olympic Games' "Higher, Faster, Stronger" as it were has become the motto of our culture and of the whole world. And the result is that humaneness gets lost. It also contradicts the tradition of the religions. For, insofar as man is in the sight of God, he finds his moderateness. I would not be so pessimistic as to say that our time has no values, but something that I miss is man's own characteristic knowledge about the right moderateness.

SCHABESTARI Actually I was not concerned with moderateness, but with the standards to go by, with what the Arabic term *mi'yār* means. However, I would also agree if one links the problem I meant with the term immoderateness.

knowing about experience and the possibility of conveying it MIHÇİYZAN I was very impressed by your reference in the context of experience to the question of truth, right at the beginning of our encounter. This seems to me to be indeed a very important point, because you link it from the outset with the capacity of persuasion. Subsequent to what Mrs. Gabriel has said, I would therefore like to ask, how I can acquire both, the knowledge of having made an experience and of being able to convey this experience. I share your opinion that therein – in whatever formulation – lies the core problem of our time. Yet, I would not so much

consider it to be matter of lacking values or standards, nor of lacking truth, but rather the difficulty of being able to make an experience at all and then to expose this experience persuasively. I would like to wind up my contribution with the question whether one could imagine a criterion regarding an experience which is not only one that I made myself.

SCHABESTARI Regarding an experience, I cannot offer a general criterion with which everybody can identify themselves. I can only say: if there is a serious dialogue, in which everyone has the feeling that the topic at stake is not only a philosophical one, but also existentially important, then I can say that the issue here is an experience of this kind. This goes beyond an intellectual, philosophical discussion, which remains purely theoretical and does not appeal to me either humanly or existentially.

beside the religious values, also taking into consideration pragmatic aspects S. MAHMOOD You said that there is a lack of values and of standards. You also raised the question how we could acquire new values. Do we here turn to the traditions of our faith or should we turn elsewhere? This would mean a new challenge, especially for people who believe the doors of *idjtiḥād* to be closed. This is really something to reflect on.

However, I agree also with Professor Potz: we do not lack values, we have many values. The question is only, whose values. And the issue cannot only be that spiritual and religious leaders discover and examine those values and then hand them on to the politicians. At stake is rather involving the great masses of people, humanity itself, in this process. To them the values have to be handed on, they have to be invited to find the fundamental values together with us, whatever their origin may be: religious, spiritual, moral, as well as secular, democratic, or also pragmatic. For we cannot ignore the pragmatic aspects of life either. Human rights are based on pragmatic principles. However, we cannot also ignore our religious traditions that are very much a part of our pragmatic experience.

not a lack of values, but of the experience of values SCHABESTARI I have the impression that the term 'value' used by myself has perhaps been a little misunderstood. It is not my opinion that we have no values today, rather that I speak of a deficiency in experiencing values. When I say that we have no values today, then I mean to say that we have no values that impress us deeply and challenge us existentially. Here I would not like to speak of 'certainty', because certainty denotes a psychic situation, which can come and go. However, in my view

Ingeborg Gabriel

The 20th century was an era of gigantic change in all areas of human existence. It was characterized by technical progress with its positive but also negative consequences, which changed life radically. The 21st century confronts us with the challenge to provide these developments with sense and a humane dimension. The distinguished religious thinker and researcher *Teilhard de Chardin* expressed this concisely: "Progress means to become more humane, or it means nothing."¹ A new cultural and religious consciousness developing in our era in manifold ways corresponds to this search for a humane forming of our world in change.

1. Justice as a basis for human coexistence

Justice represents the central category of human coexistence, starting with the family, continuing with nations and religions up to the world community. Without the readiness and ability to realize justice, these communities in the long term are endangered in their existence. The classical Greek philosophical definition of justice is: "Every human being shall receive his or her due as a human being." In this context, I cannot go into the critical objections, which have been raised against this definition. The most significant of these most probably is that what the individual is entitled to was interpreted and determined differently in different cultures and periods of time. Today, these different opinions on the historical and cultural dimension of justice are emerging in view of a new cultural awareness in a more explicit way. But at the same time, these differences in the comprehension of justice in the communication-technology-linked world of today necessarily become the subject of dialogue. Human beings coming from different cultures and religions are confronted with the question, which of the different models, ideologies, institutions can lead to just solutions. This question implies that there indeed are goods of a material and immaterial

it is this being existentially challenged by values that is missing. There are enough values that are written down in books and about which politicians speak and discuss. Yet, these values need a solid fundament, and this is missing. Therefore I speak of lacking experience of values. We live in a time when everything is called into question, also philosophically. I also accept a pragmatic viewpoint, however it alone does not suffice. As followers of religions, we need more than pragmatism, also in theology. I think that we, when we speak about God, we speak about the truth, and this is more than a pragmatic point of view. Therefore our ethic should also go beyond the pragmatic standpoint, even though I agree that politicians need a pragmatic standpoint. This has to be accepted, but in my view we need something that goes beyond it.

OTT I would be grateful for some clue how you imagine the link between an experience of God and an experience of values, about which you spoke. How does this go together?

SCHABESTARI I cannot give a philosophical answer to this important question. It is however my persuasion that by some people God is experienced as the source of all important values, which means that man feels challenged by God, for instance to do justice. Whether this can be the basis of a system is another question. This is not what I maintain. However, we are concerned with the fact that a human being can feel challenged by God, for instance to engage in the cause of justice in the world.

the lecture is concerned with the original intention of this dialogue project

BSTEH At this point I would like to call to mind the original intention of our endeavours, which Dr. Mock, as a politician and as a Christian believer, formulated as follows at the opening of our first conference: "Above all, however, we have been trying to realise this conference because international cooperation must not

focus merely on day-to-day matters. Of course it is the task of politics to solve the – urgent – problems of everyday life; otherwise it becomes useless. But of course politics is also obliged to tackle the fundamental questions of ethos and humanity; otherwise it loses its ability to open new perspectives, otherwise it becomes politics without hope."¹

¹ In: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*, New Delhi 1998, p. 15.

¹ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Sur le progrès* (unpublished), quoted from: Th. Broch, *Das Problem der Freiheit im Werk von Teilhard de Chardin*, Mainz 1977, p. 326.

kind, which every human being as a human being is entitled to; that justice is more than a relative or subjective idea, even if opinions with regard to contents and solutions differ. In order to find concrete attempts towards solutions, serious examinations are needed, which are free from false claims of absolute truth and ideological immunization. But this alone is not enough. Above that, a deeply founded motivation is needed in order to realize more justice. The monotheistic religions share this central concern with the humanistic traditions of European Enlightenment. This broad consensus, in my opinion, is a source of hope, in spite of the fact that concrete ideas of justice differ due to different cultural and religious contexts. That is exactly where there is also a chance of a constructive discussion, a peaceful contest for humane solutions to the manifold problems of our world.

2. Secular ideologies and justice

At this point, one should recall that justice is also the ultimate aim of those secular ideologies, which have characterized world history since the 19th and 20th century. The legitimation and power of motivation of Marxism consists in the fact that it promises a classless, i. e. just society after class struggles and revolutions. Liberalism demands political justice in the form of human rights as civil liberties and rights of participation, that is a state under the rule of law and democracy, as well as economic justice. The latter shall be realized with the free (world-)market as best possibility to guarantee an optimum distribution of goods. The Marxist utopia of justice retrospectively appears as a tragic historical experiment, which destroyed millions of human lives, and which discredited – a fact that today has an extremely negative effect – the idea of a just social distribution through political measures. But the ideology of economic liberalism, which claims to establish justice with the help of the market alone, is inherently utopian as well. The free market lacks a regulatory counter-force – in this respect, Marx's criticism was correct – which would keep concentration of wealth and therefore also an increasing unequal distribution of income. This is proven by history as well as the increase of the gap between poor and rich in the past decades. The strong point of liberalism is that the political idea of liberty, which is embodied in human rights and in the establishment of correspondent institutions, is a possible regulative counterpart against these tendencies of growing inequality. This however requires the active commitment of the persons affected.

3. Conclusions for the present

What are the consequences of this concerning the question how to realize justice as the basis of national and international coexistence?

Firstly: an extensive analysis of the situation is needed to evaluate the potential of existing legal and institutional instruments. For the believers of religions, this presupposes the recognition of the fact that these institutions, although they are secular of origin, can be a contribution to the humane shaping of the world in accordance with the will of the Creator. The tragedy of Marxism, but also of religious revolutionary ideologies, is that they radically despise the existing order and often want to get rid of it by use of force. This is, above all, true for civil liberties and rights of participation of political liberalism. The elimination of misery and poverty, i. e. the accomplishment of social human rights, is in the same way a *conditio sine qua non* for a peaceful coexistence. This is to say that the accomplishment of civil liberties and rights of participation have to be complemented by the creation of a world-economic order which deserves this name. As the Indian Nobel price winner A. K. Sen explains to us, civil liberties are a value in themselves.² But it also holds true that liberty rights and social human rights, as the Conference on Human Rights at Vienna in 1993 emphasized, are indivisible. The realization of social human rights, i. e. the fulfillment of the basic needs of all human beings, wherever they might live, is, as it were, the second leg in international order. And it is the challenge of our era to use available human creativity to make it possible. What kind of institutional mechanisms are necessary to come up with a new distribution of material goods? Which forms of life correspond to the limitation of goods and of natural resources? How can human greed, which asks for more and more, be contained? These are the fateful questions of the 21st century. It might seem to be an utopia to find a satisfying answer in view of dissimilar global balances of power, a neo-liberal economic ideology, and fundamentalistic separating tendencies. And still, it is the only human and therefore also religious way towards finding a peaceful and human coexistence.

Without the mutual efforts on behalf of the religions, and especially the monotheistic religions, which are fundamentally obliged to justice, coping with this task is impossible. This is also true for the fact that justice can-

² A. K. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press 1999, pp. 54–87.

not be created only by institutions. They rather grow from a commitment to justice, which individuals choose and cultivate in liberty. It presupposes the knowledge that we have duties towards God and our fellow-beings, and that our value as human creatures depends on its realization. Justice is more than a problem of reason and technology. Human coexistence needs human beings who are ready and apt to acknowledge the other as a person with equal rights; who know, as the Qur'ān and the Bible explain in the same way, that they are responsible for the realization of justice. This person-centered approach is largely neglected in a thinking that is, above all, orientated towards institutions and rights.

It is a priority task of religions to demonstrate this and to support the commitment to justice in particular. This is the basis for the development of new, just solutions for problems in a rapidly changing world. This is also acknowledged by non-religious parties. The international study "Our Global Neighbourhood", for example, states: "The most important change that people can make is to change their way of looking at the world. We can change studies, jobs, neighbourhoods, even countries and continents and still remain much as we always were. But change our fundamental angle of vision and everything changes – our priorities, our values, our judgments, our pursuits. Again and again, in the history of religion, this total upheaval in the imagination has marked the beginning of a new life ... a turning of the heart, a 'metanoia', by which men see with new eyes and understand with new minds and turn their energies to new ways of living."³ In order not to dry up, the attitude of justice has to be fed from the deeper sources of a 'spirituality of justice', the God-relatedness of the individual.

But at the same time, this attitude has to be put into practice under the conditions of the present time: and that is in an increasing pluralistic society at national and international levels. Non-denominational associations, the so-called NGOs, play an important role in this context. An example, which can be taken for many others, is the women's movement. These associations of women influence public opinion and the shaping of politics with the aim of reducing discrimination against women and to facilitate for them a full participation in social life. The NGOs concentrate the powers of individuals engaging for justice and make their voices heard

³ *The Commission on Global Governance* (Ed.), *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford University Press 1995, p. 47.

at the political level. It would be good to think about how religions could engage themselves more intensely in order to fulfill their task to show commitment to the human future and the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the believers have to engage in politics, in the shaping of national and international structures and organizations: which contribution could and should the UN, the World Bank-Group, etc. make towards a just international order? Which structures have to be created in order to realize a new global social contract? Religious groups should make concrete statements on these and similar questions. This presupposes the readiness to co-operate with all those who engage themselves for justice. At issue are the more humane solutions, respectively the fight against egoism, greed, and ideologies enslaving human beings.

Here the believers are supported by the knowledge that justice is also the eschatological aim of history. There will never be a perfect justice in this world, but God will create perfect justice, in the creation of "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pt 3,13). This shall protect us against fanaticism of justice, force as well as resignation in coming to terms with prevailing conditions. At the same time, it is the strongest motivation to "seek the kingdom of God and its justice" (Mt 6,33), i. e. to engage oneself for it, doing all in one's power, in order to realize that kind of justice which mankind needs to survive in the 21st century.

Questions and Interventions

one justice
for all?

KHODR In certain religious circles, statements concerning the topic of justice always are somehow embarrassing to me. Do the monotheistic religions really believe that there are the same rights for every human being? Does a Jew for instance really believe that he owes the same justice to the non-Jew, the Gojim, as to his Jewish fellow-believers? Does not the Muslim's or Islam's theory express the belief that there is one justice for the Muslims and another justice for the Christians and again another one for those who profess another faith? Did Roman Catholics in the 19th century not still hold the opinion that they were obliged to assert – as this was done 1864 in the Syllabus of *Pope Pius IX* –, that there is no freedom in religious matters and quite generally no freedom of thought? When we officially profess the Charter of Human Rights, is this in fact not some kind of double-talk? In brief: do we really believe that there is a justice which is rooted in God himself and, grounded on him, holds in the same way true for every human being?

GABRIEL My lecture possibly sounded too harmonizing. Yet, in a Christian perspective I would decisively understand myself as bound to speak of a universal justice, of a justice we owe to every human being. Also to our enemies. This would as it were be the outward form of justice, which is our obligation. In this context one would certainly also have to speak of the relation between justice and love, where justice as it were ends and love begins. In the same way one would, from a historical perspective, also have to speak about the question why it has been so difficult, especially in the religious domain, to allow the respective space for the freedom of opinion and thought. However, here this would go too far.

A great challenge for any understanding of justice of course remains the well-known fact that we have conceptions of morality that rather refer to our own group, perhaps not on the intellectual and theoretical level, but after all on the existential one. The term 'insider morals' denotes it. Therefore one will realistically have to proceed from the fact that on this existential level the effective universalization of this conception will always and at all times remain a great challenge.

on the changes in
the understanding
of Marxism

KHIDOVATOV Some historical remarks on the concept of Marxism: At the time of Soviet totalitarianism, Marxism served as a curtain to cover reality. However, already in the 19th century, one has to distinguish be-

tween early Marxism in the middle of this century and the Marxism at its end: whilst, in the middle of the 19th century, for *Marx* the dictatorship of the proletariat was oriented towards controlling the mass of the people and to safeguard the government against wrong developments, for *Lenin* the dictatorship of the proletariat was a dictatorship of the one class without limitation, without rule, without law. Later on the dictatorship in the sense of *Marx* became the ideology of the Social Democrats in Germany, whilst in the sense of *Lenin* it became determinant for the political development in the Soviet Union.

A last remark on the motto of *Marx* that religion is the opium for the people: sometimes opium serves as a medicine, sometimes however it is harmful. As long as religion is the personal persuasion of man, it is a medicine for the people, if however it is turned into a dominant ideology, it can do great damage.

GABRIEL It was not my intention to speak about Marxism in general, but to point out that it had a fundamental inspiration to do justice to the people. The tragedy came about when one moved over to apply a completely wrong understanding of justice to the organization of social relations. Here I cannot go into further details in this respect. In the lecture, however, I mentioned how fatal a wrong concept of justice can be – and here it should be our task to reach an understanding of justice that is truly humane and not cynical.

justice in view of
human equality
and inequality

KHOURY There is no doubt that in this context a more precise definition of justice would be at stake too. In my view one should distinguish here between two concepts. It is beyond doubt that there is *the* human being in general and *the* human beings in concreto. In general, as being human, all humans are equal; as concrete human beings, however, they are in many respects unequal. Therefore, all human beings are 'unequally equal'. Equal they are concerning their fundamental needs, for instance in the sense of human rights. Unequal, however, they are regarding the different nature of their concrete needs. In this perspective, justice would be concerned to provide the same guarantee for human beings' needs, which differ in many respects. This was also mentioned in the lecture, where the *Aristotelian* definition of justice was pointed out: that everyone should be given what is due to them. Yet, the way it is defined more precisely differs from culture to culture. In our world, where cultures get more and more close to each other, the issue would therefore be to take this different na-

ture of the various cultures into careful consideration and to define also the concept of justice not on the basis of a certain cultural tradition, but in the dialogue of cultures.

Hence, two levels would have to be distinguished: the one where justice means the endeavour to guarantee the fundamental rights of man, which means to guarantee them in the same way for all human beings. The other is that where in the dialogue of religions, in the dialogue of cultures, efforts are made to attain a differentiated definition of justice, which is in keeping with the different natures given.

BSTEH A short time ago, there was a concrete example concerning the claim not to understand justice in the sense of levelling; this was in the context of pregnant women's right of a period of motherhood protection as it is guaranteed in Austria: in certain countries such a legal regulation was rejected particularly on the part of extreme feminists, based on the argument that there have to be equal rights for all human beings. Since all human beings are equal, women would indeed have to work up to the day they give birth to their children.

POTZ In this context the fact was of course overlooked that the principle of equality is breached if one does not deal differently with different matters. If one does not take differences into account, this is the very occasion when people are not treated equally. That women become mothers and that in this respect specific legal regulations are needed, does not however justify any discrimination in another sphere.

'in-group morality' possible more and more only for humanity as a whole As to the question of 'insider morals', which has already been mentioned in the preceding contributions – that in fact for one's own group, in which one lives, a higher standard of justice is claimed than for those groups, which also exist –, then this is one of the challenges that will be decisive for the future: we have to

learn that this in-group morality concerns humanity as a whole. In this respect there is no alternative in a globalized world.

women's rights need criteria of their own S. MAHMOOD I have to ponder the idea that Marxism set out raising the claim of re-establishing justice, then liberalism raised the same claim and now it is the turn of feminism. I am asking myself whether we do not

think in political terms referring to civil and political rights, when justice, rights, etc. are at stake? Where the issue is women's rights, is it not necessary to apply yet another kind of criteria?

GABRIEL This question is also on my mind. In a seminar, for which we chose the title "Women's Rights as Human Rights", our concern was of course the question of equality and differences. What would be the aim of such endeavours? In this context I ultimately have the *Aristotelian* idea in mind that every individual has to be granted the possibility to develop their own potentials.

The next question then is what people need to do this. And there is first quite a number of requirements, which are the same for men and women. However there is also a series of aspects that are of a different kind. The example quoted by Father Bsteh shows very directly that the solution cannot be to deal with all people in the same way, regardless of existing circumstances. Yet, this has to be defined precisely – last but not least in the intercultural and the inter-religious dialogue. Presently we are in any case not in the position to assess that it is precisely this or that which confers on women their very own dignity. In my view one would be wrong not to see that here much intensive thinking and dialogue is still needed.

about the necessity of constant growth ... MARBOE I would like to come back once more to the concept of intemperateness that is rightly connoted negatively or to the necessity of moderation – in the sense of a criterion of ethical conduct. Yet, is not the whole economic system of the West based on the notion of growth? Alternatives like Marxism – communism did not succeed. Thus, without a certain constant growth the economy does not seem to work. At least according to the opinion prevailing today.

... and the notion of a 'sustainable development' There seems to be a direct contradiction between the claim of moderation and the economic requirement that time and again what has been achieved has to be surpassed in the interest of its sustainability. In this field of tensions, the notion of 'sustainable development', which has been fostered in the course of the last years, can be seen as a certain hope. In the domains of environment legislation and development cooperation – also within the frame of the United Nations – this notion is about to find recognition, even though as to its content not much has been specified so far. In the domain of current economic life however, it has not yet acquired a position of its own.

task of politics to provide common welfare GABRIEL It will not be easy to find a solution for the problem mentioned last. Here just two things may be pointed out: there is a tendency today to see all spheres of human life from an economic point of view, which

leads to a kind of proliferation of economic thinking in all domains. Can action be taken against this current development? In this respect one possibility would be to strengthen the political level, whereby presently one would have to proceed from a globalized economy and fragmented politics. Politics would however – unlike the economy – have the task of promoting common welfare and of providing a just order of living together.

intemperateness
to be at first
overcome in the
individual

The deeper problem however seems to be the individual. In this respect one has to agree with Professor Schabestari: at first intemperateness has to be overcome in the individual. Values have to be revived time and again in ourselves, have to be turned into a living experience. According to the genuine biblical understanding, the true grounding of human identity lies in this realization of values. For human existence has its foundation in faith, which is of course not based on a theoretical concept, but which is, in the sense of the Old Testament, the realization of the relationship to God and justice among humans.

Education as a Key to Overcome Poverty

Saleha S. Mahmood

0. Introduction

The issue that challenges us most today is a composite of several inter-related socio-economic variables. The world-wide proliferation of serious poverty and economic deprivation, aggravated by the increasing pressure of numbers from burgeoning populations among poorer nations and peoples, all contribute to intensifying conflict and competition among segmented and increasingly heterogeneous populations. This is spurred on by greater geographic mobility facilitated by technological advancement and spurred by differential distribution of opportunity in the developed and developing world. Added to this is the depletion of our moral and spiritual resources due to the increasing marginalization of religion and its removal from the public space in modern secular societies.

1. State of the world

As we approach the closing of the very last year of the second millennium and the first year in the twenty-first century we find the state of the world in much the same political and social turmoil and flux that has characterized it through the last millennium. Riddled with similar and indeed widening conflicts; triggered by the same issues of economic injustice and exploitation, racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance, fuelled by political expediency and even, indolence and apathy, the modern world appears to be hurtling down a spiral.

Yet, all this is happening while there has seeped in a silent revolution that is about to transform our lives in more profound ways than we can truly grasp or even comprehend. That is the revolution riding on the waves of information technology which makes information the new commodity for barter and exchange and which increasingly provides the most effective instruments of waging and winning wars of fortune through the arsenal of information. As in the centuries past, power is measured not just in terms of who has the material resources but who controls access to these

resources. Thus, today's gatekeepers are the information brokers who determine the market trends as well as the nature and contents of the information (equivalents of goods and services of the previous era) to be floated for market consumption.

Today's wealth lies in information – advance, accurate, and timely – and moves on the strength of information technology, itself a by-product of the rapidly maturing industrial age. Thus, progress in this area may theoretically happen in leaps and bounds but is hampered by the immense weight of grave reality that imposes limits on the heights of achievement as it delimits the depth of denouement to a bottomless pit. These limits are expanded by the ever-widening gap between those enjoying prosperity and those encountering poverty, and this is contracted with the increasing proximity of the gold coast and the slum. That adds to the discontent and sense of deprivation.

It so happens that as the world celebrates the triumph of the human mind over the challenges of nature and the limits of human capacity, and even as it masters modern technology, it groans under the burden of poverty, of rapidly growing populations facing hunger and disease, and increasingly ravaged by wars of economic competition, of racial and ethnic conflict all of which decimates the moral as well as material fiber of human societies.

Over a billion people, of the six billion in the world today, live in abject poverty; even more having no access to health care or safe drinking water and almost all living in an environment that is threatened in a most serious manner. Yet, the idea of 'sustainable' development has been hard to sustain in a world hurriedly moving towards globalization, which avoids the irritating checks of immediate limitations and concerns for long-term sustainability and permanent depletion and environmental degradation. This is an age of instant gratification just as it is of instant information.

Modern technology will move mountains and re-arrange the face of the earth to suit the demands of the 'consumers' and of those who set the market trends. We get as good as we demand and what we demand is not perhaps the right 'good'. No one knows for sure as to where mankind is headed at the dawn of this new age which has been ushered in at the closing of an eventful period. This is the period which saw the transformation from primitive to civilization in one giant leap for mankind, spread over just a couple of millennia, carrying us from the depth of darkness to the blinding lights of an unknown future.

Thus, the two main trends that have taken the widest hold around the world are also interrelated. One is the rising burden of economic debt and poverty that an increasingly larger number of people on the planet earth now groan under. The other trend, which is both directly and in-directly connected to the first, is the rising tide of racial and ethnic conflict in this increasingly pluralistic global society. To add to all this, new human tidal waves created by the demographic imbalance in different parts of the world today and spurred on by differential economic opportunities, are moving with hurricane force winds across state erected borders. Anxious guardians of ethnic, cultural, or religious preservation are waging wars of ethnic cleansing, and cultural purification and blatantly resorting to human as well as cultural genocide to ensure their territory and to guard their territoriality.

In an age witnessing the grossest violations of the moral and ethical principles of justice and human rights, there is the widening demand and vociferous assertions of rights of the disadvantaged, those of the depressed and the marginalized who are in frustration, resorting to taking justice into their own hands. Whether in Zimbabwe or South Africa, in Kashmir or in Nigeria, in the streets of Belfast or in Bethlehem, in Rammallah or in Ramgoon the seekers of justice stand on the wrong side of the law and are caught red handed with stones and slings and 'illegal' guns, and arms, for all legitimacy is reserved for the operators of the 'state apparatus' who officiate over the ceremonial observance of (their) law and (their) order.

How long, one may ask, will it take for the world to react and respond to the dangers of a fragmented humanity that sits on the fault-lines of racial and ethnic divide, simmering under the molten lava of religious and ethnic conflict, duly combined? How long before we realize that in the minority experience lies the greatest catalyst for change and reorganization of the world order, which may turn out to be for better or for worse? What does it take to make that an informed decision, that the only viable way is to seek equity and the greatest good for the largest numbers of persons and to eschew violence and conflict?

The main challenge today lies in ending the violence of poverty and at the same time stemming the rapidity of environmental degradation. Indeed poverty is the most serious and basest of violence often perpetrated by man against mankind. For endemic poverty is not just a result of the indolence of the poor, but of the greed and inhumanity of the rich and the powerful; not due to natural catastrophes such as earthquakes floods, famine, drought and climate change but due to human indifference, to

greed and arrogance which fuel the efforts of the rich to get richer and force the poor to get poorer.

Over a billion people of the 6 billion in the world's population live in abject poverty, and close to a billion go hungry every day. Women and girls form half of the world's population and male children a quarter. Thus three quarters of the population in all societies, developed or less developed are poorer and economically vulnerable. With the majority of the world's population living in the so-called third world and in poorer countries, a similar proportion in their populations are women and children who are traditionally poorer and more deprived. Labor force participation of women is low and land ownership for most is non-existent. The rich get richer while the poor get the children and the women and children get poorer. The cycle of poverty continues through the generations and perpetuates it.

2. How do we eliminate this cycle of poverty?

The key indeed is in education – education not only to provide a means of livelihood but also to promote meaningful living. However, the role of education in the elimination of poverty will be effective and enhanced only if we include spiritual values and religion in the education and socialization of our children. It is only when we learn to apply ethical and moral values to our lives and in our interpersonal relationships that we shall see the elimination of injustice and the management and control of greed and selfishness, which are fuelled by rampant competition, and proliferating conflict.

As we all know, we come empty-handed into this world and return empty-handed, except perhaps for what we have sent forward in good deeds. This is what our faith traditions inform us. Thus, worldly success may be an indicator but not a guarantor of everlasting success and salvation. Indeed our very survival in this world provides a challenge of enormous magnitude. The utilization and application of moral and ethical teachings present in all religions could make this a just and fair world, which is a pre-condition for a peaceful world.

3. Faith and action

Our religious and spiritual traditions teach us to have faith and to rely on Divine providence. But from the perspective I have of the faith in a revealed religion, Islam, there is also the emphasis on personal initiative, in-

dividual judgment, and positive action. It is ultimately left to human discretion and human will to utilize that guidance. We must have faith but we must also undertake action based on that faith. We must do our best and then leave the results to God and He will dispose of it in whatever manner He sees fit. This is the concept *al-qadā' wa l-qadar* in Islam – believing in God's will as the final disposition and in fate and destiny. It is indeed not fatalism, but faith in God's will, that provides strength in weakness and brings humility in strength.

We must tackle the burden of poverty among the countless millions around the globe in the most aggressive and ruthless manner possible. We have a new war to fight and new arsenal to develop which will annihilate hunger and deprivation and contain greed and injustice. This massive task has to be handled on a global scale for poverty is being globalized much in the fashion of the contemporary economy. Indeed globalization has become the Trojan Horse of current economic ills and widening disparities, bringing in soldiers of fortune and economic opportunists on a scale yet unrecorded in human history.

4. Role of religion in eliminating poverty

All faith traditions have a rich heritage to guide and support efforts for the elimination of poverty and restoration of social justice. From the perspective of my religion, Islam, I can say that as a way of life and not just as an institution of religion traditionally defined, Islam has rich teachings relating to economy and society that would, if applied effectively virtually eliminate poverty. To name a few provisions enjoined in Islam, such as the Islamic law of inheritance, interest free Islamic banking, the restrictions on usury, prohibition on hoarding, prohibition on games of chance, the encouragement of spending, of consumption in moderation, on use of natural resources as a trust from God and as inheritance to our children – all would promote healthier economics and prosperous societies.

The law of inheritance for example, if applied fairly, would enhance woman's economic status. Statistics around the world show that women own less than one per cent of the land in their respective societies. However, due to the application of the Islamic law of inheritance in Saudi Arabia, Saudi women own 40 percent of the land in Saudi Arabia! There is economic empowerment for you without assistance from the feminist movement!

Interest free banking required by the Islamic *shari'a* now becoming popular and well recognized as an effective instrument of fiscal health. The rules of lending are fair and equitable, unlike some recent experiments in micro-credit, where loans are disbursed to women with under-written conditions, such as that women borrowers will not get pregnant for the period of the loan, etc. There can be no such stipulations in Islamic lending. Islamic economy encourages growth and free enterprise, as risk-taking is made an essential condition of investment and legitimate, lawful gain.

5. Give religion a chance

We Muslims and Christians are witnesses to the great wisdom enshrined in our respective faiths and we are all partners in the same journey of the faithful. Let us discover those commonalties and let us enrich ourselves with the wisdom that our Creator has imparted on us, to roam, to seek, and to find. For we are by nature, explorers – of the sea, the land and the universe. We have witnessed the parting of the seas and the splitting of the moon. We have yet to witness the warming of the earth to embrace all living creation with adequate sustenance, with food and fulfillment for all and hunger and deprivation for none.

Let us come together, people of faith and partakers of spirituality, Christians and Muslims alike, to delve deeply into the depth of our resources – moral, material, and spiritual – and to draw from it the mortar and the building blocks that will contribute to the construction of a new world order based on just and moral principles of equality with equity, peace with justice, and tranquility with spirituality.

We are gathered here today to address issues that we consider the most problematic facing the contemporary world and to deliberate on what we consider to be the possible solutions. To attempt either of the two exercises is a matter of great challenge. To move in that direction, the formation of this Vienna International Christian-Muslim Round Table is indeed a first step in the right direction. I congratulate the organizers of this Round Table and particularly Professor Andreas Bsteh, for his wisdom, courage, and direction as well as deep insight that has encouraged and guided us to pursue this challenging path, of asking the difficult questions and of seeking the even more difficult answers. We now have no choice but to go forward in our search for common solutions to our very common and grave problems.

It is my recommendation that the first task of this Round Table should be to work towards the formulation of a draft document that may be entitled as "Convention on the Elimination of Human Suffering and Deprivation". It would contain an appropriate preamble and necessary articles and clauses that would state the main problems faced by humanity at large. In the first part of the Convention common problems faced by humanity should be classified as Critical Areas of Concern. In the second part a Platform for Action is drafted, which would spell out the concrete steps to be taken to address these problems, drawing freely on our rich religious and spiritual traditions.

Questions and Interventions

economic development despite interest-free banking?

KHIDOYATOV Subsequent to the important expositions of Professor Mahmood, for me a question arises, which particularly concerns the countries with a Muslim majority, but also other countries in Central Asia: how can one imagine a further economic development without today's banking system that works with interest? Does the Qur'an not forbid *ribā*, working with interest?

education and economic development

S. MAHMOOD For me as a sociologist, economy is an issue of fundamental importance for every society, also in the Islamic countries. Basic to most problems, are the economic problems of underdevelopment and they originated far back in history. For many of the Islamic countries have undergone the experience of the colonial period and under these circumstances they decided against this kind of development by denying their children the chances of education at that time offered to them by their colonial rulers, which means that they kept them away from the British and French schools etc. Around the world, this brought about a relative educational backwardness, which however, if one wants to redress it, presupposes economic development. This is a vicious circle. For, without education there is no economic development and without economic development there is no education.

sponsoring not only for governmental-conformist bodies

As to the Islamic banking system, the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia is presently making efforts to help the many Muslim countries and minority communities all over the world by sponsoring development projects.

It is a matter of course that all development banks, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, deliver development assistance to and through the respective governments. Hence, the delivery of actual help for development projects depends upon the quality of the governments. This problem has now been recognized by the international banking institutions concerned. In order to make it possible for people in need to really benefit from the financial assistance and development aid, more and more Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs) have been directly engaged. Directly means without giving the governments the chance of choosing which NGOs are provided aid and if they are to their liking, i. e. are politically

correct or not, and thus decide on their own, which of the NGOs are to receive the assistance. In this context it is particularly important to emphasize that in this respect women's organizations tend to get marginalized even more. The banks' directly dealing with them, however, eliminates that element of discrimination. In this way the women are no longer at a disadvantage and excluded from the different development projects.

new interest in an interest-free banking system

Moreover, reference has to be made to the fact that the experiment of interest-free banking now meets with a world-wide interest. Thus there are for instance several institutions that have introduced this interest-free banking

system in the United States and in Europe. Of course particularly Muslim clients are interested in looking for interest-free investments.

Here they are of course also confronted with a great lack of understanding on the part of those who believe that interest is good and profitable. When a Muslim investor wants to invest in something that does not bear interest, it is difficult to explain to the investment broker his need to avoid interest-bearing investments. If the explanation given is: "because it is forbidden", the lack of understanding on the part of the broker remains. If, on the other hand, one says that one does not want to be involved in business deals that have to do with alcohol and tobacco (another necessity for the Muslim investor), then one can always count on agreement and understanding. This indirect way of explanation is also necessary in other cases in order to get people to understand things which otherwise would simply not be understood.

can education not also have destabilizing effects?

BSTEH In the lecture it was said that a position of priority is due to education, when the issue is doing something to remove poverty in the world. Yet, since the position of the poor is not on the side of power in this world, one would after all massively destabilize the

present balance of power, if one supported education for the poor. Are there not many things in our world in any case that thrive substantially on the fact that people are considered to be fools, unable to fight themselves for their rights? Would therefore education as the chance for the rightless to claim their rights not to a high degree be a factor that would lead to a destabilization of the existing power-system? Would not be inherent therein the beginnings of future revolutions?

KHOURY If education is dangerous, then all the more so illiteracy. Uneducated people are at the mercy of a small elite which manipulates them.

Within their own country they have no chance to free themselves and even less so within a worldwide frame.

S. MAHMOOD In fact, education is a double-edged sword. We however need a sharp knife. Without education people can be misled, can be exploited and so on.

On the other hand, the French Revolution first started with empty stomachs. Poverty – and the ignorance of poverty on the part of the wealthy – is the crux of revolutions. All fascinating, esoteric ideas about ethics and morality do not stand up against these hard realities. For the masses these ideas are luxuries when people are destitute.

what has existed so far is left behind by the developments of today Speaking about a path from darkness into the bright times included for me still another important element: that of a *blinding* brightness, into which we have entered now. This means that the ‘lights’ of knowledge, enlightenment, and information are so bright that consequently we again see nothing, we are as though blinded and stand again in the darkness. Our world is flooded by information, through the phenomenal development in the field of information technology and modes of delivery, etc., that we are not able to see yet what this actually means for us. Do the present pressing developments not leave behind everything that has existed so far?

access to information technology – the dominating theme People who have a say today are not the people of wealth, of knowledge or of faith – they all have in fact surrendered their eminent position and their influence to the younger generation, who control the media and the information technology. They know how to control and handle it, they also know how to create havoc by putting a virus into the system. Today information moves with unimaginable speed, and whoever has access to it has access to power. This is a phenomenon emerging in a completely new way, leaving the old problems behind. Who is controlling our thought processes, who is controlling our information sources? As I see it, they are after all those who have access to information technology, to computers and to the internet, the future leaders – whatever will happen, whether we like it or not. The medium now is the message.

religious values and secular education In the relation between education and religious-moral values both are at stake, learning to know religious doctrines and principles *and* access to the secular world. Formerly one was almost exclusively dedicated

to one *or* the other, today however we need a combination of both. Whilst on the one hand today we see the consequences for having wanted to focus on religion only and for rejecting all secular approaches from the very beginning, the secular societies on the other hand have to pay for having wanted to rid themselves of religion altogether.

In this respect several secular states such as the United States of America, several countries in Western Europe, and even in India, based on their secular constitutions, insist on excluding religion from public life, but the political realities lead them to increasingly pay attention to the religious factor.

When I visited South Africa some time ago, I found in the Muslim communities, people were very worried about the future of their children. Many families kept their children, above all girls, at home, simply because they did not want them to attend integrated schools, where time and again acts of violence occurred. On their query as to whether it is advisable to allow their children to get their education in such a diverse and even threatening environment, I advised them to indeed enable their children to attend school as long as no immediate alternatives were at their disposal and to provide at home supplementary education. What they should not do is to deprive their children of education, because otherwise they would be left behind and remain marginalized, as did generations of Muslims who rejected the education provided for their children by their colonial masters in Asia and Africa.

justice means giving everyone the chance to develop themselves A final word on the right understanding of justice: I think that here the issue is in the first place not giving people a certain share or giving everybody the same, but quite simply giving them the opportunity to do what they would like to do. And this opportunity is given to them to the extent they are equipped with education. Conversely, one deprives them of their chances for the rest of their lives, if one deprives them of education. In this sense one would have done injustice to them.

a key position is due to sustainability POTZ Should in our discussions a key position not be given to the concept of sustainability, which was brought into play by Dr. Marboe and also taken up by Dr. Mahmood? As in the discussion concerning environment protection, the issue concerning the question of education is also paying due attention to this concept. In my understanding sustainability

implies to a high degree the component of a qualitative growth, whether this now relates to the domain of ecology or to that of the educational development of our mental and intellectual capacities or to any other domain. This applies for instance also to the links between the social position of women, the number of children they have and education particularly of girls. Demographic quantities as a criterion ultimately have to be matters of the past.

As Christians and as Muslims, let us try to give answers to the topical questions here. For sometimes it seems to me that we answer questions that nobody asks any more. We have to respond more intensively to the pragmatic aspect of today's existential problems that confront us on the basis of our responsibility for creation as a whole.

asking the right questions is the most important task

S. MAHMOOD One can but underline what has been said last and it is completely in keeping with the general topic of our deliberations here at the Round Table, in connection with asking the question what is the most important problem that humanity faces on its way into

the future. In fact our foremost challenge is not providing answers but finding the right questions. Questions, as long as they are logical, are always legitimate. They are open to everyone to make statements about them. Thus, by no means the impression should be given that we have the monopoly on answers to difficult questions. Perhaps it is therefore our foremost obligation to ask the right questions.

giving enough time for growth

As to the concept of sustainability, I would rather emphasize the continuity of growth than quality. Today quick results are expected everywhere, also as regards

the question of ecology. Today's consumer society wants quick answers, quick solutions. Ultimately this is the reason why up to now there has been no sustainable growth: since from one day to the next there can be no immediate, of outstanding quality results. Sustainable growth is only possible when enough time is given.

The Problem of Violence – and No Solution?

Georges Khodr

Humanity is struggling with numerous problems, which are related to the present technological, political, and cultural conditions. Yet, the chronic problem which has been inherent in human existence since its beginning, is what *Cain* put into words when he killed his brother: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gn 4,9). In modern terms, this means: "Am I responsible for my brother?" This is precisely the problem of violence expressed in various forms, the worst of which is belligerent actions and the like. This is violence, as witnessed within the same community or within a group of neighbouring peoples or between communities living together without loving each other. It is as if the individual human person or any given community were unable to say: Here 'I' am, and there are 'you', and over there are 'we'. It is as if the widespread conviction in the Old Roman maxim: "For his fellow-man, man is a wolf", is one that is prevailing. The natural consequence of this idea is: I shall kill my enemy before he kills me, because I believe that he is altogether a danger to my interests, to my thinking or my religion, or to my way of living and my personality.

The 'other' challenges me by his mere existence, by his qualities, his way of acting, his solidarity with the other members of his people, or his religion, his alliances, or any other affiliation. Consequently, if he lives on, he endangers everything that I consider as due to me. Therefore, I shall kill him before he kills me. And if I have no chance of killing him, then I will suppress and persecute him; this will prevent him from saying to me: "move over, so that I can take your place."

Hence, I make up theories, in order to prove that I have been here before him, that I am more important than he is, or that he is harmful. And I will intensify my own tensions and the tensions between him and myself, in order to make his life unbearable. Actually, under these circumstances differences are experienced as being unbearable from the beginning, because to the violent one the word 'difference' means conflict: and hence the mere existence of the 'other' creates the conflict. And I make up reasons to destroy him: his colour, his language, or his religion. Because he is not exactly like me, and his community has no way of merging with

mine, he must disappear. And until this can happen, I must turn him into a scapegoat.

And since I need to justify my own power, I make God my partner. For I must be the representative of God, in order to ground my killing on truth, or on eternity, or on the philosophy of history. Seeking this kind of legitimation, the Nazi-soldiers needed to write on their belt-buckles: "God with us"; the crusader, as well, needed the cross on his tunic in order to crucify the unbelievers on it. God was invoked in the army of Byzantium, so that he might grant to those who are faithful victory over the barbarians. And, whether this is expressed in words or not, in all armies the assertion is: "No one is victorious but God!" However, the difficulty becomes still more formidable when the two armies fighting each other belong to one and the same religion. There is a kind of divine authority that plays some role, by means of which the persecutor justifies his persecution, even though the persecutor is an atheist.

After World War II, taking into account all that happened, humanity embraced the idea of peace among peoples, as expressed in the UN Charter. Already before, and in a still deeper and more profound way, *Gandhi* had made his call for "non-violence" to his compatriots. His commitment had a great moving impact, for indeed, it was as if he had extended the issue far beyond the level of rights, to raise it up to the level of faith. Of course, peace is the major interest of all peoples. Yet, the conviction – as is presently the case in Western Europe – that on-going peace is possible derives equally from the conviction that the destruction of one people by another benefits no-one. It seems that it is only amidst wars of destruction that the world was brought to understand that a just or an almost just peace is better than endless killing. I believe that we are now about to go beyond the pragmatic attitude towards peace to the belief in peace.

Here, it seems necessary to refer to the interest of peoples at war. The problem is that judgements (of the referees) on neighbouring nations at war are always related to the interests of these nations, who recognize democracy in a certain country or deny its relevance to some others, according to their own perspective. Out of it results a crisis of trust between the big and the small nations. If peace is based on the welfare of all, then what about the crisis of trust between the South and the North, which in simple terms has to be described as desperate?

If one reflects on the term 'war criminal', this expression may be considered controversial because it depends highly on which side of the con-

flict one is placed. The result is that a decision has to be made concerning the legitimacy of authority to clarify what is to be considered an act of violence, or rather a reaction to violence. A Palestinian child, for instance, who throws stones at an Israeli soldier: is the child initiating violence, or reacting to it?

Moreover, there is also violence as defined by law. Is, for instance, carrying out the penalty of death to be considered as an act of justice or of violence? If we do not get rid of our conviction that we represent the rule of God over the lives of others, we will remain prisoners of violence and will, time and again, participate in institutionalized killing. Certainly, the state cannot maintain itself, if the rate of crime is not kept low and the criminals, if need be, are not prosecuted by force of arms. In the case of a general, nation-wide uprising, it is unfortunate that bloodshed cannot be avoided. In this case, saving the country requires us to suppress the few, and to fight them even before one can negotiate with the rebels. This is what we should always be aware of. It may be important to know that these are the limits of non-violence we strive to impose. Do we not know that the law exists because of sin?

What is more important than international law, to which only a minority submits, is education for non-violence based on the hope that peoples, communities and groups will learn to understand that peace is more useful and sustainable than war, whatever its form may be. It should be noted here that a philosophy of peace demands a high level of civilization and cultural maturity.

Cultural progress, however, can never fully develop without love. A possible answer to *Cain's* question could be expressed in these terms: "Yes, you are the keeper of your brother and you ought to give life to him. To exist, for you, cannot mean to consider yourself as absolute and to see the other only as part of your absolute being; to exist rather means to be aware of the other, as a divine blessing for you. The least you can do in this case is to be fair and the best is to be loving, for indeed, love is the utmost expression of justice." "Greater love has no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends." (Jn 15,13).

Dying out of love is giving life to the other; thus the 'other' exists through your dying for him. That you die is the only way to remove the guilt and to go beyond every international organization and every law, through the understanding that brings you to welcome and receive every other human being in his freedom, his being different, his weakness, his limits, his colour,

his language, his religion, or his ideas about religion, whatever they may be, close to you or totally unrelated.

It is important that you show to the other that you love him. Yet, what is most important is that you tell him: you are loved by God. Because only then is the meaning of his being, his existence, his destiny, and his usefulness in this world fully expressed; his intrinsic value comes from God's love for him.

How can this be implemented in the life of communities, religions, and peoples? Is it possible for a closed society to change into an open society, ready to accept the opinion of others and generously interact? This is an issue, which occupied *Henri Bergson* (1859–1941) in his book “The Two Sources of Morality and Religion”¹. His answer was that only those who are inspired by the spirit are capable of breaking through the walls which surround closed societies. It is God who can make this happen, for He alone has the power that gives life.

There is no magic formula to overcome violence. Education and the law – we have already referred to them – are two very modest attempts to promote humanity in its striving for peace. Yet, if peace is one of God's attributes, as is said in the Qur'ān (Sūra 59,23), by seeking peace, we live, encountering God in the depths of our human existence. Now, on another level, we may ask, are there any theoretical reflexions about this very issue included in religious dialogues? May one enforce the laws of God with the sword or by suppressing freedom? Are those who want to act in the name of God allowed to silence the voice of the others by means of violence? This is the answer of a saint from the Orient, *John Chrysostom*, “By your agreeing to have the heretics killed, you lose membership in the Church”. For indeed, we need to make a difference between the error and him who errs. For it is God who has granted him the freedom to err and also to reconvert, at a moment that God knows in his infinite wisdom.

Questions and Interventions

education
towards non-
violence and
Gandhi's tradition

S. MAHMOOD Subsequent to the expositions of the speaker, I would be grateful for some explanations concerning the suggestions for education towards non-violence. Does Msgr. Khodr think of something similar to *Ghandi's* tradition?

KHODR Bearing in mind everything *Mahatma Ghandi* (1869–1948) said and wrote, it will not be possible to deal with the question of non-violence without the inward attitude of courage. As I see it, this completely corresponds to what Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount.

Augustine and
the theory of a
'just war'

Until *Augustine*, Christianity did not know the theory of a just war. In fact, in the Roman army the Christians were mostly conscientious objectors. They were objectors for reasons of conscience and were treated accordingly.

When *Augustine* wrote his great work on the “*Civitas Dei*”, the Barbarians were so to say at the door to the Roman Empire. Believing that in this situation one had to have realistic ideas, he designed the ‘theory of the just war’. This theory was accepted in Christian morality, and the crusaders also claimed it. *Bernard of Clairvaux*, on the other hand, completely adopted the Islamic philosophy and theology of the *djihād*.

In the Byzantine Empire things were a little different. One fought defensive wars only, without actually developing a great theory about them. If you like, this did less damage than the Western idea of a ‘just war’ with the well-known history of its development up to the history of the crusades. Realistic as this theory appears, as I understand it, there is no biblical foundation for it. This applies to every theory of a legitimate war of violence, of violence committed with reference to Christian thought.

historical
background of
Gandhi's
philosophy of
non-violence

KHIDOYATOV Seen in a historical perspective, it was the consequence of the uprising against British colonialism in the year 1852, when the British authorities quite generally forbade the Indians to have weapons. This fact possibly also became one of the motivations for *Ghandi's* philosophy of non-violence – a philosophy which developed a new method of political combat by means of passive resistance and of non-participation in evil. It was linked with the idea of “non resistance against evil” developed by *Leo Tolstoi* (1828–1910). What was however also decisive for *Ghandi's* vision of a peaceful revolution was

¹ H. Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932).

the massacre of Amritsar in the year 1919, when more than a 1000 Indians were killed by British soldiers.

change of religion and *Ghandi's* resistance to proselytization T. MAHMOOD The spiritual father of our nation, *Mahatma Ghandi*, was a strong opponent of the right to freedom to change religion. He is recorded as having said: "If I had the power and authority, I would put an end to all proselytization." He obviously rejected any change of religion and as it were wanted to freeze all religions at the point where they were at that time. Since Msgr. Khodr knows *Ghandi's* works, his opinion on this would interest me.

reminding each other of one's responsibility in confronting the truth KHODR I think there is a very human kind of evangelization, namely to remind all human beings of their responsibility in confronting the truth – *ad-da'wa*. This idea also is in the very nature of Islam. It says that you are free to say what you believe – and that the other is free to accept it or not.

In today's usage also the term 'dialogue' corresponds to this. Since the Plenary Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Upsala (1968), this term has been widely used in the ecumenical domain as well. As Arabic Christians, we neither want to christianize the Jews nor the Muslims, we want to hold a dialogue with them. We do not know what will develop from this living together of the followers of the different religions. God knows. In the world to come, however, we, Muslims and Christians, will live together reconciled. What we need in practical life is not evangelizing, but the understanding of one for the other and that one does not kill the other. We above all have to avoid humiliating the other. Any kind of humiliation, of *idhlāl*, is unbearable. Thus, I for instance felt the former conduct of Maronite Christians in the Lebanon to be profoundly humiliating: although themselves a minority, they would have prevented for ever and ever that I – of course under the necessary preconditions – as a member of the Orthodox Church could become President of the country. There should simply be no such kind of mutual humiliation.

'just peace' instead of 'just war' KHOURY To mention a point concerning the topic 'just war': one of the recent documents of the Conference of German Bishops does not speak of a just war but of a just peace.¹ There one may welcome a very new concept.

¹ Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (Hrsg.), Gerechter Friede (Die deutschen Bischöfe; 66), Bonn [2000].

And concerning *Cain's* question: "Am I my brother's keeper?", which was quoted at the beginning of the lecture, Islam and Christianity would certainly answer: "Yes, you are your brother's keeper." However, does this only mean brother in the faith, or does this concept go beyond the borders of one's own religious community, meaning also brother in mankind?

the social level and the level where the truth is searched BSTEH As I see it, as regards the questions discussed here, an important aspect is making the distinction between the social level where I may be who I am, guaranteed by the law, and the level where truth is sought, the level of conscience, where again, guaranteed by the law, I have to have the freedom to be who I want to become. Whilst on the social level for every human being the same right to be who he is has to be guaranteed, whether he is Christian, Muslim, Jew, or Buddhist, Atheist, or Agnostic, on the level where room for making decisions is open to man – in the sense of his life-long search for what is true and good – it should be possible for him/her to become who he/she wants to become.

This also implies the freedom of being allowed to listen to the other telling what is true and holy to him: the Christian listening to the Muslim telling him why he, as a Muslim, considers the Qur'ān as the ultimate guidance for his life, and the Muslim, listening to the Christian saying why to him, as a Christian, Jesus means salvation, truth and life. I have learned to be grateful when a Muslim explains to me the reasons for his believing that Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets. And I am glad to invite a Buddhist to share with me his experience of seeing the Buddha's doctrine as the only way to liberate oneself from the cycles of rebirth.

I am, therefore, persuaded that on the social level it should be guaranteed by the law that every human being may fundamentally be who he/she is. On the level, where truth is sought, this also implies my readiness to share with my fellow humans not only the practical things of life, but above all also the path of my search for God. Conversely, an essential part of my life is being interested in my fellow human beings not passing over in silence what is most precious in their lives.

On the level of the search for what is true and holy, which is our task until the end of our life, particularly in the interest of a peaceful living together of all peoples in the world of today, there is much that has to be resolved within us and shown in the right light. There quite a new space for free development should be created to enable every human being to be who he/she wants to become.

KHOURY Yet, in this respect it will not be sufficient if man has the freedom to be who he wants to become, it also has to be possible for him to say this in public; thus not only to listen to what the other says, but also to communicate himself accordingly.

in political and social life everybody is my brother

KHODR In political and social life, I also see every human being as my brother – without making any difference. Therefore I can also not understand how one can speak of a solidarity among Christians or of some-

thing similar in the sense of a political entity. Being baptized, we form a mystical body of Christ, but on the road, in social and public life, we are equal to all other human beings. Throughout many Christian periods, as in medieval Europe, in Russia, and up to Roman Catholic Europe of the 20th century, one can find a deeply rooted misunderstanding of the Christian religious community in the sense of a secular-political reality. In this perspective there is for me Christianity, but no Christendom. This applies to the political level.

Another matter doubtless is the domain concerned with the search for truth. Of course a believer should also be ready to communicate his religious belief to others, if he is asked. And if I did not want people to find their faith in Christ, I would not be a disciple of Jesus. It is self-evident that I prefer a dialogue with Jews or Muslims. What I do not want is aggressive preaching or evangelization. Nor do I personally make any effort to baptize a Muslim. In any case it seems to be important for me that we live a common life in society and, as far as this is possible, also mutually share our spiritual values.

In Islam, apostasy, *ridda*, is a specific problem. Yet I know that renowned Muslims hold the opinion: when somebody wants to turn away from Islam, he should do so.

I am much more concerned with the problem of mixed marriages between Christians and Muslims. In this respect really dramatic things occur. I can imagine them, those who, as young people, face this dilemma – for instance a talented young Christian and an equally talented young Muslim girl, who love each other and want to share life in a family. Then time and again really dramatic situations can develop, and we have to face up to this against the background of our contemporary understanding of freedom.

Right to Religion: Law and Practice Dichotomy

Tahir Mahmood

1. The crux

The most important problem, which humanity is facing 'on its way into the future' is as I see it, the conspicuous conflict – rather a head on-collision – between the theoretical professions and the actual practices relating to the liberty and equality of mankind in the context of religion and belief.

Our laws – both national and international – loudly speak of the freedom of religion with all its essential attributes, our day-to-day practices evidence widely prevalent religion-based miseries and plight of the worst order. One is flabbergasted to see how admirable are the theories of the time, but how deplorable the realities of the day in respect of mankind's inter-religious relations.

2. Right to religion in international law

Since the fourth decade of the last century, international law has, through many successive documents, recognized and proclaimed religious freedom as a basic right of humankind. The United Nations was born in October 1945 out of a firm determination of the free countries of the world "to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours".¹ As a specific manifestation of the doctrine of tolerance, religious discrimination of all sorts was wholly outlawed by the UN Charter for the purposes of respect for, and observance of, all the other human rights and fundamental freedoms of the world's inhabitants.²

In December 1948, while adopting for itself the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the civilized human world had specifically proclaimed religious freedom as one of the most sacred and inviolable human rights, saying: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief, and freedom – either

¹ Charter of the United Nations 1945, Preamble.

² Ibid., Article 1 (3).

alone or in community with others, and in public or private – to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”³

This Declaration, inclusive of all its provisions, was unanimously adopted as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all Nations.”⁴ Respect for the individual’s religious freedom was thus enjoined as an essential attribute of the socio-legal culture of the modern Man – binding on all societies and all States of our times.

In 1966 the global fraternity of Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which also made it obligatory for all the States of the world to guarantee everyone, without distinction as to race, colour or National or ethnic origin, the “right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”⁵

The same year was adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) which laid down at length five important principles relating to religious freedom, viz.:⁶

(i) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which shall include freedom to have, or to adopt, a religion or belief of one’s choice ; and freedom – either individually or in community with others, and in public or private – to manifest one’s religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

(ii) No one shall be subjected to any coercion which would impair his or her freedom to have, or adopt, a religion or belief of his or her choice.

(iii) Freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief could be subjected only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, and the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

(iv) Parents’ and guardians’ liberty to ensure religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions shall be respected.

(v) Advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or intolerance shall be prohibited by all the States.

In November 1981 the UN General Assembly proclaimed a major document exclusively dwelling on religious freedom, viz., the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Asserting that “religion or belief for anyone who pro-

fesses either is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life” and that freedom of religion and belief should therefore be “fully respected and guaranteed”⁷, it issued a stern warning that: “Discrimination between human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the United Nations’ Charter, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enunciated in detail in the International Covenants on Human Rights.”⁸

Detailing at length all aspects of the basic human right to religious liberty, this Declaration required each one of these to be accorded specific recognition in all National legislations in such a manner that everyone, everywhere, should be able to avail of all these in actual practice.

Lastly, on the 18th of December 1992 appeared on the world statute-book the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. Applicable to all Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities all over the world, this document exhorted the Nations of the world to “protect the existence and identity of all Minorities” and proclaimed that all the Minorities in all the countries of the world “shall have the right to profess and practise their own religion, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.”⁹ Specifying all the essential attributes of the basic religious freedom of the Minorities, it directed all the Nations of the world to “create favourable conditions” to enable all the Minorities living in their territories to fully develop their respective religious faiths.¹⁰

So this has been the progress of the international legislation during the last 55 years, throughout which international law has formally recognized religious freedom – in all its forms and manifestations – as a basic human right of mankind, any violation of which would be regarded as nothing short of stark inhumanity and uncivilized conduct.

3. Right to religion in domestic laws

National legislations of the modern world have also not been lagging behind in accepting religious freedom as an integral constituent of the citizens’ fundamental rights and civil liberties. Provisions to this effect are

³ UDHR 1948, Article 18.

⁴ UDHR 1948, Preamble.

⁵ ICEAPRD 1965, Article 5.

⁶ ICCPR 1966, Article 18.

⁷ DEAFIDBR, Preamble.

⁸ DEAFIDBR, Article 3.

⁹ DRPBNERLM, Articles 1-2.

¹⁰ DRPBNERLM, Articles 4-5.

found in the National Constitutions all around the globe – in both the developed and the developing countries – and in both the East and the West.

In India, the National Constitution enforced in January 1950 assured all individuals, as a Fundamental Right, full freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion. And for all the Indian communities, it recognized important rights like establishing and maintaining institutions for religious and charitable purposes; managing their own affairs in matters of religion; and owning and acquiring property and administering it in accordance with law.¹¹

Elsewhere in the Sub-continent, the Bangladesh Constitution of 1972 declared that “every citizen shall have the right to profess, practise and propagate his religion and every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.”¹² And, remarkably, the same provision was repeated in identical words in the Pakistan Constitution of 1973.¹³

In the Sub-continent’s neighbourhood, the Iranian Constitution of 1979 specifically recognized all the Minority religious groups and their freedom to perform their rites and ceremonies and act in conformity with the dictates of their own creed in respect of personal status and religious teaching.¹⁴

In the Arab world, while the UAE Constitution of 1972 prohibited any religion-based discrimination between the Emirates citizens,¹⁵ the Egyptian Constitution of 1980 ensured that “the State shall guarantee the freedom of belief in and practice of religious rites.”¹⁶

On the African continent, the Nigerian Constitution of 1972 declared that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief and to manifest his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”¹⁷ And the South African Constitution of 1994 proclaimed that “Every person shall have the right to freedom and opinion, which shall include academic freedom in institutions of higher learning.”¹⁸

¹¹ Constitution of India 1950, Articles 25 – 30.

¹² Constitution of Bangladesh 1972, Article 20.

¹³ Constitution of Pakistan 1973, Article 20.

¹⁴ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 25.

¹⁵ Constitution of United Arab Republics 1972, Article 25.

¹⁶ Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 1980, Article 46.

¹⁷ Constitution of Nigeria 1972, Article 35.

¹⁸ Constitution of South Africa 1994, Article 14.

Countries of all the western continents – Australia, Europe and the Americas – have equally subscribed since long to the theory of religious freedom being a basic human right. On their statute-books are found some recent legal provisions directly talking of religious liberty. In El Salvador, for instance, the new Constitution of 1994 guaranteed “free exercise of all religions”¹⁹, while in New Zealand the Human Rights Act of 1997 declared religious belief, or unbelief, to be a “prohibited ground of discrimination.”²⁰

In the United States, the International Religious Freedom Act enacted in 1998 asserted that “the right to freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States” and that “Freedom of religious belief and practice is a universal human right and a fundamental freedom.”²¹

4. Failure of the laws

This brief sampling of select international charters and national statutes would demonstrate that neither the laws common to the whole world nor the local municipal laws are in any way deficient in recognizing and proclaiming religious freedom and equality of the individuals, groups and communities, as an inviolable human right of fundamental importance. The pertinent question, however, is are the modern national and international legal theories on religious freedom and equality, found on the global and municipal statute-books, actually in force, and in fact reflect the ground realities of the contemporary human world? Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered in the affirmative.

Modern world’s legal theory on religious liberty as a human right is indeed superb in its text. In actual practice it is, however, often outrun by the ugly incidents of aberrations, deviations and violations, occurring in various parts of the globe. Why is it so? What has gone wrong, and where? Why, on the threshold of the 21st century, man is violating in practice the human right to religious freedom and equality, which he has fully recognized in theory over the years? And, what remedial steps can, and should, be initiated to check these inhuman trends? These are indeed the crucial questions to be carefully examined by the contemporary human fraternity.

¹⁹ Constitution of El Salvador, 1994, Article 23.

²⁰ New Zealand Human Rights Act 1997, 21 Article.

²¹ US International Religious Freedom Act 1998, Preamble.

The reasons for the growing trends of religious violence in the world lie in the unfortunate erosion of the essential teachings and values of religion. All our great religious faiths emphatically tell us that piety and godliness lie not in symbolic rites and rituals but in promoting mutual love, compassion and sympathy for the fellow human beings – in accepting their human right to their own respective ways of worshiping the Creator, in giving them full freedom to choose for themselves any of the various such ways available. Our salvation indeed lies in focusing our attention, and concentrating our thoughts, on these common humanitarian teachings of all our religions. We must not forget that in the 21st century Man cannot behave in respect of religion as he unfortunately did in the ancient times and in the medieval ages. Now, in our present age, religious freedom can be recognized, respected and practised, as a fundamental human right, only for the protection of humanity, and not for its destruction.

We the followers of the two world religions – Christianity and Islam – together constitute the dominant majority among the citizens of the contemporary human world. We do owe a very special obligation to humanity. Let us unite to effectively discharge this sacred obligation. The attempt to locate in one another's ancient scriptures things which may appear unpalatable will lead us nowhere but to mutual hatred. There is a lot in either of them that would bring us closer, make us wiser, and enable us to lead mankind to a more peaceful and humane existence in all parts of the globe.

Let us, then, have our pick by a dispassionate and intelligent choice and press them into service of our own mutual benefit and for that of all our fellow human beings. In doing so we shall be rendering a great service to our own noble faiths.

Hindu caste-system prohibited but still present

KHIDOYATOV During one of my frequent visits to India, I read in the introduction to a textbook for the first year the very strange words: "In India God created four castes: the Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras."

In my view this inequality is an insult to a great part of the population. How could one end this discrimination of the Śūdras? It is well-known that a Śūdra may be very rich and successful, but he will never be able to become a Brahmin. How can one explain this in a democratic country like India? How can one abolish this system? It will always be possible to commit to paper an ideal constitution – thus for instance the Soviet Union had, of course in words only, the best of all European constitutions – yet, what about the caste-system in the case of India?

T. MAHMOOD At the beginning of my statement I dealt with the divergence between theory and practice. I only presented the beautiful view of the different constitutions in order to argue that the constitutions of the states around the world in their wording guarantee freedom of religion, but hardly, if at all, put it into practice. Almost everywhere. In India as well. The fact that in India Hinduism as a religion divides the majority of the population not only religionwise, but quite generally, into different groups, namely into the four main castes, is well known, just as is the discrimination implied for great sections of the population.

The Indian constitution prohibits this system. Yet, at the same time in this constitution regulations are to be found which are apt to perpetuate the system. The fact that in Islam and in Christianity there is no caste system surprisingly time and again is a danger insofar as it may be used against the Muslim and the Christian communities. This happens in the following way: a number of economic laws were passed in favour of the economically weaker sections of the population; they are, however, legally restricted to the lower castes. The consequence is that they do not apply to Muslims and Christians, no matter how weak they may be economically. The pretext for this is precisely the non-existence of the caste-system in our two religious communities. In addition, a Hindu who becomes a Christian or a Muslim, is no longer entitled to those above-mentioned economic arrangements meant for the support of the low Hindu castes. Thus the caste-system has not only been perpetuated, but is also used against the non-Hindu communities. The fact that in the Sub-Continent, especially in India,

castes exist legally, is well-known. Despite the constitution, which not only prohibits discrimination on grounds of being part of a religious community, but also maintains that there is no discrimination on the basis of belonging to a certain caste, in the country the practice of discrimination on worldly grounds continues to proliferate – just as, in other parts of our world, religious discrimination is rampant.

the right to change religion POTZ In the lecture the Human Rights Declaration of 1948 as well as the Human Rights Pact of 1966 were mentioned. What explanation is there concerning the omission of the guarantee of the right to change religion in the Human Rights Pact as opposed to the Human Rights Declaration, in which this right was still guaranteed? It is said time and again that this has to be attributed to the influence of the Islamic states majority. How should this be interpreted? In the assertion that one has the freedom to adopt a religion, as contained in the Pacts, can one also consider the possibility to change religion be included?

T. MAHMOOD I cannot say whether in connection with the negotiation of the covenant mentioned influence of any kind was exerted. However, I know that there is an Arab Declaration of Human Rights as well as an Islamic Declaration of Human Rights signed in 1981. Both documents refer to freedom of religion without any qualifying conditions.

In my view the discrepancy between the Human Rights Declaration and the Human Rights Pact, rightly referred to here by Professor Potz, is the beginning and not the end of the development. When one looks at later documents, one finds that they were fully ratified by the major Muslim countries of the world. Among the latest documents ratified there is the Declaration of the United Nations concerning minority rights, which expressly refers to all facets of religious freedom, including the right to change religion. This was also ratified by most Muslim countries. Therefore it is not permissible to look only at one particular document among the later conventions, which were passed after the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and to infer from it what the attitude of a particular group of followers of a particular religion is towards the human right to religion. I am not defending any particular country, which possibly played a special role as regards this question.

I at least hold the view that in the sense of the Muslims' religious doctrine change of religion is not prohibited. *Abū Bakr*, the first Caliph, is known to have said: "*lā ridda fī l-islām* – in Islam there is no change of religion."

Yet, one should not only listen to this, forgetting what the Holy Qur'ān says: "*lā ikrāha fī d-dīn* – Let there be no compulsion in religion." (Sūra 2,256). Much more weight is due to this than to what *Abū Bakr* or any other Caliph said.

theory and practice of religious freedom particularly controversial

OTT Why did you not say that the most important problem of our time is human rights, but limited the question of human rights to the domain of religious denomination and religious practice?

T. MAHMOOD Within the framework of the general topic of our conference, I have tried to make clear that, as I see it, the greatest problem concerning the right to religious freedom is the conflict between theory and practice.

KHOURY On the Arab or the Islamic side, Human Rights Declarations generally add at the end of the respective declaration: with reservation as to the *sharī'a*. Particularly as regards the question of religious freedom, this often seriously calls into question the words of the Declaration. For the *sharī'a* – and subsequently many Muslim jurists – relies on this point less on the assertions of the Qur'ān than on tradition. Beside a passage in the Qur'ān (Sūra 4,88 f.), on which many jurists rely in this question and point to it as an assertion directed against religious freedom, there are some *Ḥadīths*, which prohibit on pain of death anyone from changing his religion. In one of them it is said: "You shall kill whoever changes his religion." (*Tirmidhī*, *Abū Dāwūd*, *Bukhārī*). I completely agree with the interpretation supported by Professor Mahmood, however I do not see yet how to face the fact that the majority of scholars in the Islamic world still hold the opinion that as regards the Islamic faith apostasy demands the death penalty.

T. MAHMOOD Towards the end of my statement I said that the attempt, made by Christians and Muslims to locate in one another's Scriptures things that do not seem to be acceptable, leads us nowhere but only to mutual hatred. However, and this is my persuasion, in both Scriptures there is a lot which would bring us closer and would open up for mankind a brighter future. In this sense I quoted two commandments from the Qur'ān – "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Sūra 2,256) and: "For you your religion, and for me my religion" (Sūra 109,6) –, and I plead with the international communities of Christians and Muslims to focus on them. The Muslims can also point to a number of Old and New Testament passages directed against freedom of religion. Yet, that is not a point to help us to move further on the path of the dialogue. I plead for starting out from those points where we agree.

KHOURY I support your position, knowing that it is also held by a scholar who is a great authority in the Islamic world. My concern is the question how I can proceed from the Islamic sources and, together with other Muslim scholars, find a way which leads into a common future. Even though *Maḥmūd Shaltūt* of al-Azhar and others hold the same opinion as you, it still remains my great concern to get to know and assemble arguments, which one can expound in this question in a dialogue with scholars who hold a different opinion. The issue is to speak to them as well, in order to seek with them new ways, which are based on solid factual arguments.

T. MAHMOOD Doubtless this constitutes an important task for the future. We should make every effort to persuade those who hold a different opinion to accept our view on this decisive question concerning freedom of religion.

how do certain insights get to the basis?

GABRIEL I am very grateful for the extremely interesting expositions of Professor Mahmood and for the discussion that has just taken place. As to the discrepancy between the legal position and reality, concerning the Right of Religious Freedom, for me the question arises, whether in our religions we have developed sufficient instruments of education leading towards tolerance. How and on which level could this task be tackled more intensively? Indeed – particularly as concerning this question – the issue is time and again that certain insights and consensus developments, which have already been achieved on a certain level, would have to penetrate down to the basis.

T. MAHMOOD For my part, I can only support this important conclusion. It is a decisive task for the future. Both Christians and Muslims confront it. I know that major sections in the Islamic world would not agree with what we are saying here. This is exactly why we expect much of what Professor Bsteh has started for us. What we are doing here sheds light on what is necessary in different parts of the world. There we should take it up as well.

Humaneness Has to Grow by Direct Human Encounters

Heinrich Ott

The most important thing for mankind today and tomorrow, on the threshold of a new intellectual era of world history, is, in my opinion, dialogue – the dialogue between human-beings, between me and you, in small, manageable groups. For only a face-to-face encounter can produce a creative and effective political and cultural reflection and action. In an era, where a largely anonymous mass civilization and mass communication, spreading more and more and ever increasing, envelops our world, this subject deserves the highest attention.

1. The danger of anonymous manipulation

Undoubtedly, for instance, anonymous cybernetic communication (or perhaps more correctly: interaction) today is essential for the very dense and complicated network of guidance activities, which have become necessary for the contemporary condition of the world and of mankind, in various areas such as traffic, nutrition, economy, health, ecology, safety politics, etc. There is no doubt, therefore, that electronics have become indispensable for the world as it is today. But one has to ask oneself, whether there might also be dangers for mankind and human beings in 'electronic culture' and in 'modern information society', what these dangers consist of and where the energy can be found to meet them. On the terminology used: when talking about 'electronic culture' and 'modern information society', I am not only thinking of internet, about which I personally know nothing so far, but am also referring to a much older phenomenon, namely mass media in general and television in particular. The essential problem is that information can be broadcast more or less anonymously, and may reach and influence masses of people so that thereby a special kind of manipulability emerges.

At the same time, one has to take into account: the great number of people in the mass is not capable of creative, consistent, and sound thinking or acting. They cannot calmly weigh the pros and cons. They let themselves be carried away by a clever and charismatic demagogue in a wave

of enthusiasm or indignation. They cannot, however, feel and estimate the true weight, the background and perspectives, the potential of a word or a thought. This is only possible, where 'thinking' that is otherwise too brief and simplistic, where e. g. pure ideology or propaganda is examined and analysed by manageable groups of human beings, in an intense and patient common effort and judged accordingly.

2. The need of direct dialogue in politics

People in the mass, in a strict sense, have no thinking ability. A huge mass of people can only reason if it is 'split' into small, manageable groups. It needs guidance through dialogue! – I would like to illustrate this with an example from my native country: in Switzerland, we have an extensive tradition of direct democracy. We have to vote as a people on questions of legislation and leadership of the state on approximately four weekends per year. We like this system and are convinced of its quality, although it also has its weak points, such as a possible slowing down in certain changes of political policies. – Before a referendum, there are also always opinion polls. Actually, the opinion polls are very often unreliable. For one knows that opinions are often formed only shortly before a vote, and as a result of innumerable dialogues in the family, at work, amongst friends, acquaintances and neighbours – in short, wherever politically interested people want to take on their share of responsibility and start conversations with each other.

This is what I mean by 'leadership by dialogue'. The great mass of people, i. e. the citizen of a state gains a certain wisdom from dialogue, a practical sense of discernment and of proportion for what is reasonable in a certain situation. Democracy – so to speak – then is no longer a mass of atomized individuals who formally have a right to vote, but are easy to manipulate. The mass has gained a structure and therefore is mass no longer.

3. The need of direct dialogue in education

I have given an example from the field of politics, but the problem, which we have to face, is not limited to the political area in a stricter sense. In all areas we encounter the phenomenon of the blindness of the masses and the wisdom of dialogue in manageable groups. I think, for instance, of the mass universities, which exist today, where the premises are not capable of coping with the mass of students. It is of little use to rationalize

the curriculum by sending the students home with reading assignments and letting them take their exams later. We cannot speak of real academic studies in this case. There still remain the possibilities of mechanizing the pure transfer of knowledge, but real education, which leads to insight and the maturing of insight, comes about only through dialogue – in the dialogue of those who study with those who teach, as well as dialogue among themselves between those who study and those who teach. Basically, the borders are blurred due to the fact that wherever education is more than merely the dissemination of factual knowledge, we as teachers also learn from our students. The culture of disputation in the Middle Ages should be an outstanding historical example for this!

4. Creating small units – and protecting them

What should be done? In general terms, it would be necessary to increase and protect the cells where room is left for free dialogue. That way, one can also create (for instance) smaller educational establishments. The increase of dialogue in smaller groups could in most cases more than compensate for the presence of a famous professor, who would have to hold a seminar in front of more than 100 students, provided that the professor himself instructs his students and later assistants and colleagues in such a way that they not only copy the master but are able to pass on what they have learned and understood in the sense of a real dialogue. – The same is true of democratic politics, in which the often informal free 'intermediary instances' of so-called civilization are needed, so that as many humans as possible can join in the process of thinking.

These two examples are sufficient for the moment. The protection of free dialogue and in particular its protection against manipulation and the indiscretions of a published opinion, which is often presented as 'public opinion', is important as well. Media which do not understand or respect the requirement of discretion (therefore of distinction!), can sometimes even suppress at source free, unrestrained further thinking!

5. Two final remarks

Finally, I want to add two points:

In our time we are facing enormous problems of mankind, which concern mankind as a whole. Three of them have been put together and men-

tioned in the title of the great ecumenical assembly of all European Christian churches, which took place in my home-town Basel in 1989: "Justice – Peace – Protection of the Creation". What I have started to explain today, therefore refers more to the method with which and in whose spirit one would have to proceed and would have to tackle these huge problems. It seems to me that no solution to a problem will succeed or make any progress, if the doctrine of thinking in small groups is not taken into account.

For us who are assembled here as religiously engaged contemporaries in order to think about our age, the theme now mentioned could be of special interest. For God does not pay attention to the mass. What seems large to us, is not large to Him. He, who can see the innermost movement of the human heart, has turned his eye towards the manifold individual human personalities and to the contact with each other, in which they are engaging and which is also a part of their own self. He doesn't look at the mass, but at everything individual, firm, and solid. That way, *Albrecht Bengel*, one of the so-called Swabian fathers – those early, mystically oriented Protestant pietists – could say: "The minute something becomes fashionable, God doesn't join in anymore ...".

Questions and Interventions

dialogue under
the sign of actual
relations, but also
of asymmetry

MIHÇIYAZGAN It is a good thing that now the problem of these actual relations is being broached. Thereby we resume dealing with the domain of human experience and personal engagement, which was so important for Professor Schabestari. On the other hand one is aware

of the great scepticism that postmodern theorists have in principle as regards the dialogue concept. In addition, there is the problem of asymmetry, because in the dialogue he who is speaking always ranks first and the listener's position is only second best.

the dialogue is
performed
differently in the
different relations

OTT The dialogue is not a matter of mere symmetry. Particularly in pedagogical dialogue, some priority is due to the teacher, a priority over the learner. This is quite natural. Yet, the teacher orients himself at the same time towards the learner, adjusts his mind to him, hence, conversely the learner also activates the teacher, quite apart from the fact that through his questions he can motivate the latter's mind, sometimes through his contradictions also.

When one begins a dialogue with adherents of other religious communities, one does not hold the view that one possesses the truth oneself, whilst this is not the case with the other. Every believer faces rather the mystery of God and is therefore someone in search of the truth. Even when he has found his faith, he still remains at the same time a searcher all his life. In dialogue he may expect to be enriched in this or that respect, that perhaps also his certainty will be shaken in a positive way. Particularly for inter-religious dialogue, this component of mutual enrichment seems to me to be important.

dialogue
is essentially
exchange

KHOURY If dialogue is essentially an exchange, then every partner in the dialogue is always a listener and at the same time a speaker, a learner and a teacher all in one. Particularly for inter-religious dialogue, this exchange of giving and receiving is essential.

religious dialogue
– in an
existential depth

BSTEH Beyond the intellectual level, where the issue in dialogue is to exchange knowledge and insight, also to learn and to want to understand what is new, religious dialogue particularly plumbs the depths of our very existence. The one shows himself, facing the otherness of the other, hopefully certain that they are indeed both on their way in search of God.

Therefore, the asymmetry implied in opening oneself to the other, showing oneself to him, seems to be essential particularly for religious dialogue. Here not only are contacts made of foreign policy as it were made, but also the inward dimension of one's own being are opened up for the other. This of course presupposes many things, above all the mutual trust that, in one's own search and herewith also in one's own uncertainties, one is accepted by the other, and is joined with him, particularly as one who is on the way and has not yet arrived at the goal.

original asymmetry wants to hold the dialogue In the encounter with God one will of course mostly have to speak of an asymmetry, which – in the 'speaking' of God and the 'listening' of man – will be the basis of the dialogue. It is an asymmetrical process, which, in itself however, draws level with itself, by man's experience of himself as being called by God to give an answer, not only any answer, but specifically himself. The word of God indeed wants to let man become one who answers, the revelation of God indeed wants to reach its goal only in the faith of man – as *Karl Rahner* never got tired of telling us. Seen in this way, the initial asymmetry thus cancels itself out, in that man, when listening to the word of God, experiences himself as being called to become the answer given to God, who gives himself to the former in the revelation of his word.

In the dialogue of the believers, where one conveys to the other what it is that moves him on the path he treads in search of God, this happening between God and man, between man and his God, is continued, disclosing itself to the other. Hence, an asymmetry that initially opens the respective dialogue is resolved and becomes an encounter, a mutual giving and receiving, as Professor Khoury has emphasized above.

how can it be handed on to the basis? KHOURY What may succeed excellently in the small group, because there, as Professor Ott said, reason and thought are alive and can thus lead to new knowledge – how can this living process in the small group then be opened up to the many, for the 'mass', of which it is said that in itself it is no place for independent perceiving and thinking? Thus, how can, what is possible in the dialogue of the small group, be opened up for the 'basis', be handed on to the mass?

democratic co-operation in the domain of media OTT Perhaps something like a democratic cooperation of the mass media consumers with those who produce it is possible. As an example one could for instance refer to the letters to the editor, which one can write

to the newspapers and see this as a possibility which is an effective feedback of the basis. Widening the field, one could here also think of the concept of *civil society*, of the *intermediary powers*, which in fact set democratic life properly into motion and kept it going. Particularly in societies where state authorities have no working relationship with these intermediary institutions and treat them with distrust, one can understand the potential influence exerted by these civic movements, which want to have the right of debate and decision. Accordingly, they can be seen as a social reality, which is suitable and capable of letting the dialogue of the small groups seep into society as a whole.

asymmetries must not be institutionalized POTZ It seems to me that dialogue can only succeed when merely short-term strategic advantages develop, as is for instance the case in the relationship between teacher and learner. If the inherent asymmetries were to be as it were institutionalized and so provide a certain partner in the dialogue with permanent advantages, which did not counterbalance each other in the course of time or cancel each other out, there is no doubt that dialogue would not have succeeded.

nobody is always right OTT This refers to a point that seems to me to be very important. An attitude of mind, a spiritual process freezes and takes on a doctrinaire form to the extent that a certain strategic advantage becomes permanent. A party that is convinced of always being right – as sung in a communist song – errs or deceives itself. There is nobody who is always right, there cannot possibly be someone like that. In contrast, a short-term 'strategic advantage' is only desirable, but in certain cases results from the subject matter itself.

asymmetries in the pedagogical process, but not in the inter-religious dialogue S. MAHMOOD I am referring back once again to what was mentioned above under the catchword asymmetry. It is definitely there in the pedagogical dialogue. In the inter-religious dialogue however, things are very different. Often there is just a one-way communication, although at first one starts expecting also to be heard oneself, to be appreciated and accepted. Among the so-called partners in the dialogue one often in fact encounters people who are not at all willing to listen to others. They are simply there in order to give their own message. Given this fact, how can we bring about a situation where one really listens to the other and both sides start a true dialogue equally with each other?

OTT The special situation, where believers of different religious communities meet each other, is indeed different from the dialogue usually held, where we constantly hope to be able to persuade the other. In contrast, the principle of the inter-religious dialogue should be, to understand the other better. Different from the dialogue within Christianity, where the issue is, ultimately to find or to regain the unity of all believers within the faith and the true unanimity of the Christian Churches, the issue in the inter-religious dialogue cannot be the ultimate unity of all religions, because neither in their origins nor in accordance with their inward orientation, are they intended for such a unity.

common bases
to be maintained

KHOURY Aware of all the differences, we have to maintain the common bases existing and to overcome repeatedly arising misconceptions. Thus, for a long time, for too long a time, it was the current view held in the Catholic as well as in the Protestant Church that the God of Islam was not our God. And there are still Christian theologians who hold this view. On the Christian side an important step was made by Vatican II, by declaring that the Muslims "along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind"¹. Once the believers have developed a living awareness of this, many other misunderstandings can be overcome. Thus it is in keeping with the inter-religious dialogue that the believers of different religions not only understand each other better and listen respectfully to what the other says and why he says it, but also discover certain aspects which are common to them and sometimes see therein a basis for a common moral conduct.

OTT The basic knowledge that we as Christians and as Muslims pray to the same God is especially given to us theologians, so that we may pass it on and explain it to other theologians and believers.

self-knowledge
in the mirror of
alien-perception

Another important target of the inter-religious dialogue can be seen in the fact that sometimes we only become aware of certain components of our own faith in the encounter with those of a different faith, in the mirror of what is alien to us. Then it is possible not only to respect the concerns of the other religions, but also to accept them as something helpful.

common
responsibility for
the poor and the
oppressed

BSTEH An important aspect in the dialogue between the believers of the different religious communities, particularly in the Christian-Islamic dialogue, will always be the critical exchange of opinions and of knowledge, how they can meet their indivisible and common responsibility for those who suffer, are in need, are oppressed and rejected. Here I personally think of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25–37). It certainly must not be as with the priest who is the first to pass by him who has been robbed and is half dead – probably because his 'holy duty' calls him – and the Levite, who is perhaps equally concerned with his religious obligations and passes by on the other side. There is just one thing they are forgetting: their personal responsibility for the man in the ditch, for him who has been robbed and rejected, which God wrote into their hearts and which there is no way to avoid, not even the holy duties in the Church, the Mosque and the Temple. As I understand it, what Jesus is concerned with in this parable is the indivisible responsibility of all those who, on their way, pass by him who is helpless. Seeing him nothing releases us from the duty to help him. In this way I also understood at least the impulse given to us by Professor Schabestari at our first Iranian-Austrian Conference in Tehran (1996), where he said that in their societies Muslims and Christians should understand each other as "born and factual allies and partners of the suppressed"².

OTT The experience of values mentioned in Professor Schabestari's lecture seems to lead up to what has been said about the parable of the good Samaritan. Here we are, it seems to me, following the same line.

¹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*", art. 16.

² M. M. Schabestari, Die Muslimen und Christen gemeinsamen Glaubensprinzipien und praktischen Pflichten als tragfähige Stützen ihres gerechten Zusammenlebens, in: A. Bsteh – S. A. Mirdamadi (eds.), Gerechtigkeit in den internationalen und interreligiösen Beziehungen in islamischer und christlicher Perspektive, Mödling 1997, pp. 386 f.

Concluding Discussion of the First Day

the chances
of a face-to-face
dialogue

BSTE^H Professor Ott said that the face-to-face encounter, dialogue in small, surveyable groups would be what is most important for humanity on the threshold of a new age. This is also the opportunity for this Round Table. In his view inherent therein is the potential for "creative and effective political and cultural reflection and action"¹, in confrontation with a largely anonymous mass civilization scattered all over the earth. What brought us together here was indeed the perspective that in this small world of our Round Table something could happen that would contribute to resolving those questions which the great world faces on its way into the future. We do not know nor should we question whether we can really make use of it. God alone knows everything. And this is enough. For us, there is now the chance of a concluding discourse in the evening of this first day of our deliberations.

God remains
unapproachable

SCHABESTARI Are we to expect an inter-religious dialogue to lead to similarities? As to the question concerning God, dialogue can certainly lead us towards a deeper knowledge, of how many-sided and unapproachable this topic is in its very nature, so that from the first, we cannot expect the other one to give the same answers. As regards this question, Christians and Muslims may share their views, which are for instance different from what is decisive for a Buddhist. The topic itself, the question concerning God, does it not remain so unapproachable to our grasp that it is perhaps difficult to state in the end whether and in which way we as Muslims are different from the Christians and can really speak of one God or, according to the circumstances, mean another God?

Regarding this question, I rather tend towards the view that, as long as I am within the framework of my own concept of God, much remains unclear, because for me He is unapproachable in a way that is impossible for me to speak clearly about. When, however, I speak with others who have a different concept of God, this lack of clearness can brighten up a little, to the extent that I see that to them God also remains a topic so deep and remote that neither my concepts nor the concepts of others reach his divine reality.

¹ Cf. above p. 57.

rather dealing
with questions of
our world

This could be quite different, if, in our dialogue, we deal with questions of justice or similar topics of our world. There it would be easier to find out whether between us and our partners in dialogue, there are, or there are not, similarities in our views and positions, and where the similarities and differences are.

spiritual
experience can
help along in
the question
concerning God

KHODR Mainly in the Old Church of the East, but also in Islam, there seems to have been a tendency towards a kind of apophatic, i. e. negative theology: that we can only say that God is there, but that we are not able to grasp him beyond that nor to speak of any attributes of God.

Still, in some passages of the Qur'ān it is mentioned that there are Christians who call themselves Naṣārā, and that these Christians have wrong ideas about God, saying that he has a son and the like. In this tradition there are today also Muslim theologians who say that the Christians are no true worshipers of God. Although they are no polytheists (*mushrikūn*), they are still non-believers (*kāfirūn*). Conversely, in the fundamental texts of Christianity there is of course nothing comparable about the Muslims, since they only came later. Yet there are many apologetic treatises of a later date, where many very bad and misleading things are written about Islam. For the dialogue between Christians and Muslims, such questions can have far-reaching consequences and make it very difficult.

What can help here is spiritual experience. Different from a purely abstract theology it can lead to the insight that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

where is the focus
of our dialogue?

T. MAHMOOD It seems to me that at this point a clarification is necessary, whether in this dialogue project we are delving into questions of an inter-religious dialogue or are holding a dialogue between two communities, which certainly know about the different concepts of God, of religion, etc., but who are concerned to come closer to each other. Personally I am of the opinion that the latter is the case and that we want to do something for the well-being of humanity.

common respon-
sibility nourished
on our faith in God

BSTE^H Our efforts are nourished by our faith that God created the world and that we have a responsibility in this world. When within the framework of such an encounter we also become aware again of the differences in this common faith, this can only be good in the sense of a mature knowl-

edge that the basis of our dialogue is a very delicate one and cannot as it were be 'handled' by us. As Professor Schabestari and Msgr. Khodr emphasized, faith in God confronts us with a mystery and in dialogue also we must not convey the impression that each of us as it were 'has' God. God is not our property, we are his property. Our dialogue lives by our making it mutually known to each other that for each of us God is infinitely greater than we are and that his ways are not our ways. It is important for our kind of dialogue that this dimension can enter into it.

Like Professor Mahmood, I am also convinced that, grounded on the preceding talks in this circle, we have found a basis which enables us to bear a common responsibility. Last but not least this is supported by the fact that all who participate in this Round Table have accepted the invitation to hold a dialogue, in which at issue are the problems humanity faces on its way in to the future.

one cannot simply quote God

It is clear to all of us that particularly here one should not delude oneself as to the question concerning God. In the individual religious traditions, is God there not often quoted as though between inverted commas? Yet, can God really be quoted as one otherwise quotes human beings? Somewhere, I think, our living in the sight of the divine mystery also has to be integrated as a supportive part of our common search for responsibility for the world. And therefore, for us, this search may well also be characterized by differences of opinion, without their importance being central to our common efforts here at this Round Table. For here the focus is – as we are aware of our common responsibility before God – the responsibility for the world, which we want to share.

there are basic similarities in our faith in God

KHOURY In awe of the transcendent God and knowing that there is no complete similarity in our concept of God, we still may proceed from a basic common ground in our faith in God, particularly also as regards our responsibility in the world and for the world. In the doctrines of both our religions it becomes sufficiently clear to us that we believe in the same God and know that we are called, together to serve the work of his creation.

There is a negative theology in Christianity as well as in Islam. Yet, faith cannot live by it alone. At first it rather lives by what one can say about God, even though one knows that there is no adequate expression for the infinitely great reality behind this. In order to keep this awareness alive, negative theology is necessary as an indispensable corrective.

for many the question concerning God is a non-question

S. MAHMOOD As to the question concerning the concept of God, we should keep in mind that for many people in our world this question is no question at all but a non-question. As it became recently obvious to me at the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in New York, this also applies to many religions represented there. As a Muslim or as a Christian one could even feel like a minority there. For the majority it is, as mentioned above, a non-question. Thus we should not only concentrate on the question of the Christian or Muslim concept of God, but at the same time look for other approaches towards co-operation, keeping open the possibility of engaging in dialogical exchanges with other religious communities also.

a level of reason – and a level of the heart

OTT In no way would it be possible to talk about God as about an object. On this object level assertions are made such as "A is unlike B" or "X is not the same as Y". Such differentiations are often correct, perhaps even necessary – although there are cases, where it is not so easy to decide as between 'like' and 'unlike' – because dialogue is something which flows. However, when one speaks about God and 'divine things' that cannot be objectified at all, the circumstances, the act of speaking is of a fundamentally different kind. What could help would be to differentiate between the level of reason and that of the heart. On the level of reason, in our Christian religious community the concepts of God are certainly not simply the same as in Islam. This, however, also applies to the inner dimension of any particular religion or denomination. On this level, perhaps every human being has a different concept of God. Yet, there is also a direction of the heart, which is above all active in praying, for instance in a Christian community during a Sunday Service, where, although every individual brings along his/her personally different conceptual understanding of God, all in their prayers still direct their hearts to the same God, invoke and worship him together, a direction that finds its way up to whom they are addressing.

the dialogue of the cultures has a weight of its own

KHIDOYATOV Although our two religions in their beliefs have a very different conception of God, one must not overlook the great, impressive civilizations both have created. Just as the Islamic civilization reaches from Andalusia via India to Malaysia, this is also the case with Christianity. And in this respect we should not only think of the dialogue between both religions, but also of the mutual influence exerted between the two ex-

tremely rich cultural worlds in the course of human history. It will hardly be possible in the dialogue between the two religions, nor within our own religious communities, to get to the point where all have the same concept of God. In contrast, however, the dialogue among civilizations in the sense of their co-operation and of their mutually exerted influence has a weight of its own. In our world we should pay increased attention to this and cultivate it.

internet as a possible compensation for a face-to-face dialogue? MARBOE In a time characterized by an ever faster development of the means of mass communication, bringing to mind the value of small groups and of the creative exchange of ideas, which is possible in them and which can result in common actions, as Professor Ott outlined in his deliberations, was particularly valuable.

However, for me the question arises, to what extent could a special function nevertheless be assigned to the internet: whilst the traditional means of mass communication such as television, the radio, and the press, as a rule are linear in their orientation, the internet offers the possibility of reacting immediately, of answering at once in the form of letters to the editor etc. Could one see, in the flux of modern mass communication, elements offering a constructive dialogue?

bodily presence as a sacrament OTT There is something like a sacrament of bodily presence. In the internet this would however be unattainable.

yet, there are also dark sides linked with it MIHÇIYAZGAN The essential importance of the face-to-face dialogue in the small group was already brought into play by Professor Ott. When he now in this respect refers to the irreplaceable importance of bodily presence, this would, in addition, introduce the idea of corporeality as a whole, which Professor Schabestari's statement already suggested, when he spoke about experience, which is certainly not made in the head only, but also in the heart and in the belly. Yet, at this point things also get difficult. For bodily presence means not only a harmonious togetherness – that face-to-face we always perceive in the other only the creation of God. It simultaneously entails very much rejection, when we think just of the bodily presence of man and woman. Thus on the one hand there is what is beautiful and necessary for ways of experiencing in depth, which are certainly not only of an intellectual kind and on the other hand there are also very difficult, dark sides linked with this bodily presence.

cinema and television can also trigger creative reflecting

GABRIEL Despite all the emphasis on the irreplaceable quality of the face-to-face, which is possible in the small group and can bring about much that is creative, in a similar way, via the cinema and television there is much that can get to people that makes them think, in other words something that triggers things in them. In point of fact, I am thinking here of a documentary on the situation in South Africa after the end of the apartheid policy, of a film dealing with the processes of reconciliation, which now take place in this country, with the work of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" etc. Many people were very moved by this film. Should such topics, such as possible reconciliation, not be brought to people increasingly via the cinema and television, because in this way also people can be motivated towards a creative confrontation with reality?

instead of searching similarities: life emerging in the dialogue

SCHABESTARI In the course of history, all the statements of the religions about God have been made differently and have been interpreted in different ways. Therefore, there is no solid ground for speaking of common statements, as this was said earlier. In my view the dialogue between the believers of the different religions should go beyond the phase where one thought that each religion disposes of its own understanding of God, and that now the intention of the dialogue is, in discourse, to get to know this difference more closely and to seek at the same time similarities within this difference.

The disadvantage of proceeding in this way would first be that, for instance in the Christian-Islamic dialogue, one would thus have excluded the understanding of the Buddhists, the Hindus and all other religious communities. However, can one really without doing damage to the cause at stake, omit the inclusion of so many people in a serious search for the true understanding of God? Another problem is implied in the historical reality of all our concepts as already mentioned and in our endeavours concerning truth in general.

Should we therefore not go beyond speaking of a search for a common understanding of the concept of God, as well as for a common responsibility? Is not the concept of responsibility also differently understood by the different religions? If, however, it is difficult to find a common meaning for this responsibility, should we, in our deliberations, not take up another concept, such as that already broached by Father Bsteh, of sharing

the "life emerging in the dialogue"? Life, this also includes the religious dimension. And then one could consider dialogue as an existential way of life. This would perhaps rather help us, better than a handful of concepts concerning similarities and differences.

shared
responsibility –
a responsibility
performed in the
dialogue

BSTE^H I understand the concept of shared responsibility in the sense of a responsibility performed in the dialogue, in the sense of a common ground that is – as certainly in a friendship or in the partnership of marriage also – not built upon uniformity, but derives its being from what is different. Making similarities possible

is inherent in this difference between the cultures, the civilizations, up to the difference between one human being and another. Hence, there is a difference which – in contrast to the difference that causes quarrel – in itself constitutes a common ground. This is what I mean here.

During one of our conferences in St. Gabriel, *Walter Kasper*² spoke of a "dialogue unity", of a unity that is performed in dialogue. Thus also a common responsibility could be understood, which obliges us to act in union within the difference of our respective moral groundings. A common ground of this kind not only needs to be settled within the difference, but is as it were constituted by it.

a dialogue that is
always open to all

Moreover, we have always said in our documents that every kind of partnership between Muslims and Christians must never be understood as being exclusive, but always as a co-operation between them, open for others.³

If, in our world that is becoming more and more one, we are called to share a common living space with each other and with all other human beings – whether they understand themselves as followers of a religious community or not – and to find a basis for living together, then the togetherness of this life will be as different as the differences in fact are, although of a different kind, between Muslims and Christians, between Hindus and Muslims, between Jews and Christians, or also between believers and agnostics or atheists.

² *W. Kasper*, Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen, in: *A. Bsteh* (ed.), Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 5), Mödling 1987, pp. 105–130, here: pp. 118–130.

³ Cf. particularly the votes of the Second Christian-Islamic Conference in Vienna (May 13–16, 1997), in: *A. Bsteh* (ed.), One World for All. Foundations of a Socio-Political and Cultural Pluralism from Christian and Muslim Perspectives, New Delhi 1999, pp. 363–365.

differences
to be rejoiced
and such that are
frightening

We of course know that besides differences which are to be welcomed or are at least bearable, there are also those that are unbearable, frightening, even fatal. Msgr. Khodr spoke about this in his statement: where humans behave like wolves, where they feel endangered

and threatened by the others. Yet, there is also a difference that creates life, in married life or in friendship and in many other cases. It is counter-balanced by a difference tending towards death, because the partners in this relationship exclude somehow mutually each other.

within the
difference a
common ground
is to be found

Here is our task – precisely in the sense of Professor Tahir Mahmood's intervention –, from a basis, which has been acknowledged to be supportive, to search for possibilities as to how we, very aware of our different concepts of God, of religions etc., can approach each other and how we can undertake something for the well-being of mankind.⁴

Thus the issue is to find a common ground within the difference.

a relation with the
other as a path
into the conflict?

S. MAHMOOD Just a brief remark on the term the 'other'. It can confront us as a dangerous entity, so that we look at it with fear and horror, experience it as threatening. For me this is a problem. As regards the

mutual relations between the religions, the media today even strengthen the impression that this relation with the other, with the stranger, leads and has to lead towards conflict. How can we overcome this impression, particularly where we are facing the other in a situation of being a minority?

love as the path
of God towards
us and of us
towards God

KHODR Although in what was said before, dialogue was mentioned as an existential way of life, the impression should be avoided that this is an anti-intellectual approach. The issue is rather, constantly to bring to mind that – as is said in the Gospel of John – "No

one has ever seen God" (Jn 1,18) and with the mystics to perceive love as the path of God towards us and as the path leading us towards God. I do not wish to know anything about a merely legalistic Christianity or a merely legalistic Islam. Where there is no room for love, my interest in religion dies away. Šūfī-poetry is replete with it, if we just remember *al-Hallādī* or

⁴ See above p. 67 f.

al-Djunayd, Sahl at-Tustarī or Mawlānā Rūmī – resembling what is expressed in the Christian texts of the Byzantine, Russian or Arab mystics. There in fact the issue is no longer to talk about living together, there is an experience of a living together, there a religion of love seeks to find expression.

Problems Facing Humanity in the Third Millennium

Nasira Iqbal

Our gathering this year marks a significant historical event. Humanity has entered the Third Millennium along with all its advances and challenges. The most remarkable advance of civilization is the astounding development of information technology and the internet. With the world transforming into a global village, a global knowledge and information society is emerging everywhere. At the same time this phenomenon has opened a Pandora's box of problems for the inhabitants of our planet. The world has both shrunk and expanded and its population threatens to become monotonously similar or stubbornly fragmented.

The idea of one world for all, implies, *inter alia*, that common problems shared by all countries, like crime, unemployment, or aids epidemics should be tackled collectively rather than on a local basis. Global warming, economic recession, starvation, and diminishing world resources to meet the increased population requirements, require global solutions, making it imperative for nations to join hands in efforts to resolve these problems. On the other hand, while the world is becoming more unified and interdependent, religious revivalism and resurgence of ethnic conflicts are becoming more widespread. Thus globalization has led to contradictory trends. This paradox may grow, or be resolved if addressed effectively within time.

One consequence of the advancement of information technology is that it has enhanced the awareness of global disparities between inhabitants of the North and South. The increased desire for overnight attainment of unlimited material comforts and ensuing frustrations caused by inability to attain them has diminished respect for law. Globally, a culture of intolerance has grown wherein respect for convictions, beliefs, and rights of others has diminished. Global awareness, instead of leading to multi-racial and ethnic integration, has led to a conflict of civilizations.

Insecurity amongst the impoverished inhabitants of Third World countries who live below the poverty line makes them reckless in their efforts to achieve what they rightly consider to be their birthright: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The people of the South have been bogged down with issues of religion, ethnic chauvinism, sectarianism, alongwith a mul-

titude of political and economic problems. Bureaucratic tyranny, militarism, and the abuse of public office, have alienated the masses from their own rulers and from the inhabitants of developed countries whom they perceive as unjustly enjoying what has been denied to them. The US and its allies, no longer confronted with the Communist threat, have created the monster of Islamic Fundamentalism as a substitute enemy of Western civilization. The inhabitants of the North and South, instead of being partners in development, view each other with deep hatred and suspicion.

Aside from this complex global situation, there is also a new internal development in every society. *Karen Armstrong* has rightly pointed out that modern society has become divided into "two nations"; secular and religious, living in the same country, who cannot speak one another's language or see things from the same point of view. What seems sacred and positive in one camp appears demonic and deranged in the other. Secularists and religious(ists) both feel profoundly threatened by one another, and when there is a clash of two wholly irreconcilable world views, what can the liberals on both sides do to build bridges and avert the possibility of future battles?

We are always ready to mock the secularity or fundamentalism of other countries but are not ready to be critical of ourselves, but for the progress and development of a just and humane society, each of us needs to change our approach and be more honest with ourselves so that we can contribute our part for the building of a global society free from religious bigotry and hatred. We also have to come to terms with the situation that today we cannot be religious in the same way as our ancestors. Rituals of faith helped them to accept limitations that were essential to agrarian civilization. We are now oriented to the future. However, hard we try to embrace conventional religion, we have a natural tendency to see truth as factual, historical and empirical. If faith is to be taken seriously it must be capable of working practically with the efficiency that modernity expects. An increasing number of people who have experienced the tragedies of war in the 20th century have rejected religion. On the other hand, confronted with the genocidal horrors of our century, reason has nothing to say.

Many have felt emancipated by the loss of faith, and liberated from the restrictions it had always imposed. Nevertheless, a large number of people still want to be religious and have tried to evolve new forms of faith. Fundamentalism is one of these modern religious experiments which has enjoyed a certain success in putting religion back on the international agenda. By insisting that the truths of Christianity are factual and scientifically demon-

strable, American Protestant fundamentalists have created a caricature of both religion and science. Those Jews and Muslims who have presented their faith in a reasoned systematic way to compete with other secular ideologies have also distorted their tradition, narrowing it down to a single point by a process of ruthless selection. As a result, all have neglected the more tolerant, inclusive, and compassionate teachings and have cultivatedologies of rage, resentment, and revenge. On occasion, this has even led to a small minority perverting religion by using it to sanction murder. Even those fundamentalists who are opposed to such acts of terror tend to be exclusive and condemnatory of those who do not share their views.

Fundamentalist theory reminds us that modern culture imposes extremely difficult demands on human beings. It has certainly empowered us, opened new worlds, broadened our horizons, and enabled many of us to live happier, healthier lives. Yet it has often dented our self esteem. While our rational world view has proclaimed that humans are the measure of all things and liberated us from an unseemly dependence upon a supernatural God, it has also revealed our frailty, vulnerability, and lack of dignity. Despite the cult of rationality, modern history has been punctuated by witch-hunts and World Wars which have been explosions of unreason. The liberal myth that humanity is progressing to an even more enlightened and tolerant state is as fantastic as many other millennial myths. Without the constraints of a 'higher' mythical truth, reason can on occasion become demonic and commit crimes that are as great as if not greater than any of the atrocities perpetrated by fundamentalists.¹

The atrocities perpetrated during World War II and during the Communist Revolutions are manifestations of perverted reason. On the other hand, the version of Islam propagated by the religious fundamentalists in Pakistan, for instance, is not compatible with the spirit and ethos of the faith. What did Islam bring to mankind? It was the message of liberation from want, hunger, injustice and social inequality. It enjoins upon us to remain open to the demands of the times, as they change, and to seek knowledge, near or afar. We, as a people endowed with intelligence, learning, civilization and culture, have allowed this great message to be distorted to the point of unrecognizability. The more strident voices from within the polity, narrow as their theology might be, have had the ear of the state, much to its own detriment and of the faith itself.

¹ *Karen Armstrong, The Battle for God, New York 2000, pp. 365-370.*

This is not endemic to Pakistan. No religion in the world teaches hatred, bigotry, and cruelty, every religion gives the lesson of love, peace, and patience. But rather than promoting the true soul of religion, narrow-minded attitudes are dominating most religious revivalist movements. Fanatic elements which were to be found on the fringes of every society are now increasingly occupying centre stage. They discriminate in the name of country, colour or creed, and they are gaining strength and power by fanning national, ethnic, and racial prejudices.

30 % of Pakistan's population of 130 million inhabitants lives below the absolute poverty level, while the country's scarce resources are diminishing due to lack of funds to develop them. The situation is similar in most Third World countries. While the richer nations are enjoying a high level of living, the majority inhabitants of poor nations are condemned to eke out their existence in dire poverty. One of the reasons for this vast difference is the high level of external debt accumulated by the developing countries which over the years has crossed two trillion dollars. The amount required to service this debt is almost 150 billion dollars per annum. While the major portion of Third World budgetary spending is earmarked for debt servicing, the richer nations are being further enriched by this interest and their increasing self sufficiency due to embargoes imposed on imports from countries whom they consider 'undesirable'.

The vast human and natural resources of the Third World remain unexploited due to lack of finances to mobilize economic development. Both developed and developing countries are losing due to non-development of these global resources. Chronic recession and low level economic activity has led to flight of capital and political instability in Third World countries which is further aggravated by drastic reduction of aid by the developed countries. The inhabitants of Third World countries have become thoroughly disillusioned with their richer neighbours. Resultantly young people are either turning to dubious means of improving their economic situation or of leaving their own countries for greener pastures and better prospects of employment in a 'peaceful' environment. However, the erstwhile pilgrims and colonizers of the new world do not welcome these additions to their population and make it so difficult for Third World citizens to enter through normal channels that very often they are compelled to enter as illegal immigrants and stow-aways. Often these migrants lose their lives in this risky process.²

² In August 2000, thirty Asians died in a refrigerated tomato carrier while trying to enter France and a young boy was found unconscious hanging onto a wheel of a jet-airliner.

Institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) which are supposed to extend help to developing countries are in the forefront in impoverishing them by compelling them to honour their debt servicing obligations to the developed nations. They direct Third World governments to impose high taxes, which prove devastating to economies already in the grip of recession. Thus sucking many Third World countries into a whirlpool of economic stagnation and political chaos. A report commissioned by the United Nations emphasizes that the time has come to establish guidelines for the human rights obligations of the primary agents behind the globalization process. The report maintains that the influence of the IMF and World Bank over many developing countries has had serious repercussions on basic human rights issues including the right to self-determination and full expression of civil and political rights, as well as the "ability to progressively realize economic, social and cultural rights, especially in the arenas of health, education and basic welfare". The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Health Organization (WHO) have also failed to address human rights issues in their attempts to patent biological knowledge and medications.

Although morally the borrowing nations are bound to pay back their debts, but in the present situation when the future of the indebted nations and their inhabitants is at stake, such recoveries are not only immoral but are also likely to prove disastrous for the entire world. One way to overcome this impasse is for the developed nations to write off the two trillion dollar debt of the Third World. If this is done economic activity will gain momentum throughout the world benefiting everyone.

One billion of the world's absolutely poor inhabitants are without basic requirements of life: water, health, education, and jobs, while four times the combined annual incomes of the poorest quarter of the world's people is spent on military hardware. If 1/10th of the resources that are globally devoted to building military capabilities are devoted to achieving basic development goals, we will be living in a more equitable, safer environment, with less disease and disability, higher levels of literacy and education, higher incomes and lower birth rates and fewer social and environmental problems. Fewer conflicts and refugees and less destructive wars. A people led change in the climate of ideas is the only hope that there will be changes for the better.

Unprecedented opportunities exist for all nations to improve their lot. The poor nations can end their poverty within a reasonable time provided

they are allowed to adopt sound policies and are able to implement them. The information revolution makes it possible for them to industrialize quickly. Even if the rich get richer in the initial period, the poor cannot be too far away from the wealth that can now be created in the agrarian nations of the world. With governments providing a distributing thrust without trying to control industry, agriculture, and the services, the poor can get a larger share of the national wealth than in the past.

In a world where competitiveness reigns, a co-ordinated, strategic approach to the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of the global information and knowledge society and economy is indispensable. The ultimate objective is to build a global society endowed with the ability and capacity to generate and capture new knowledge, and the grace to use it effectively to reduce ethnic conflicts, economic disparities, and religious bigotry.

At the domestic level, to put an end to the social discrimination rampant in most societies, affirmative steps should be taken towards religious homogeneity and harmony. Every religion should be accepted and respected without any favouritism or advantage towards one religion as this causes religious hatred and conflict in society. And that can only be made sure by ensuring the participation of religious minorities in all spheres of national life. Religious freedom should be respected not only in theory but practically as well. If these steps are not taken to build a just, humane, and peaceful society, unrest and insecurity among the minorities will grow even more. To pre-empt this situation, we need to admit and redress the wrongs, which are impeding the evolution of a peaceful humane society.

At our last meeting in May 1997, we addressed the issues of socio-political tensions arising on the global level due to diverse positions in religious, cultural, and social life, in economy, technology, and politics which gave rise to rivalries and conflicts. We concluded that this diversity also harbours a creative potential able to change the tendency towards competition and struggle into new forms of a noble contest for the good and the possibility of turning swords into plough-shares.³

After the deliberations of the conference it was resolved that we as Muslims and Christians should strive to overcome our failures through mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, and together search for ways to settle conflicts peacefully by removing their causes and limiting tensions, in order

³ A. Bsteh (ed.), *One World for All. Foundations of a Socio-Political and Cultural Pluralism from Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi 1999, p. 359.

to make a common contribution to the creation of a more humane present, and to prepare for coming generations a world in which Christians and Muslims are partners and may become friends with a similar invitation extended to all human beings. It was resolved to elaborate and pass a Universal Declaration of Human Duties, while emphasizing that recognition of Human Rights was not to be made dependent on the fulfilment of the duties.⁴

The focus of our present "Round Table" should be on further exploring practical solutions to develop a pluralist society that accommodates religious, racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity in the Third Millennium, with an emphasis on supporting leaderships that promote unity through respecting and managing diversity. The choice is between acquiescing to a world which has become an arena of conflicts, or opening our minds to a new and humane vision of a peaceful, progressive, and enlightened World Order. We must give a call to choose the latter path, not only as a means for survival, but also as a collective approach towards a new horizon of unlimited beautiful possibilities of a better world.

At the national level, treatment of Muslims minorities in Austria can be a model for other countries. 300,000 Muslims form the second largest religious community in Austria, having outnumbered the Protestants. 50,000 are Austrian citizens among whom 8,000 are Austrian converts. Austria is the only European country where Islam is officially recognized as a religious community since 1979. Under the 1912 "Islam-Law" the "Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft" in Vienna is the official body representing Muslims in Austria. These Muslims do not constitute a uniform community. They belong to ethnic groups such as Turkish, Bosnian, Arab, Iranian, and Albanian. In spite of the diversity of their home countries, Austrian Muslims have made efforts to strengthen unity in diversity, which is conceived as an enrichment. Cultural events and religious feasts are organized collectively across language barriers. As a recognized minority Muslim children are given religious education in public schools and about 150 Muslims are contractual teachers employed by the Austrian Ministry of Education, one-third of them being women. An Islamic Teachers Training Academy was opened in Vienna in 1999. The trainers are trained from Professors of Al-Azhar University. The aim of the academy is to improve the standard of Islamic teaching in public schools.

⁴ Op. cit. (fn. 3) p. 365.

Efforts have been made to enhance dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The initiative came from the Christians, since Muslims are in a defensive position, as the image of Islam is coined by a host of prejudices. Muslims are often blamed for a lack of will to integrate into Western Society. However, research has shown that Muslims, no matter where they come from, wish to be integrated in the Austrian society and make efforts in this direction. However, they do not want to be assimilated because Muslims lay great emphasis on their cultural identity. Muslim women started a new initiative to provide better education to their Muslim sisters and at the same time provide information on Islam to Austrian society. Muslim men are conducting similar activities. Media work and public relations have won them public recognition and support.⁵

This model of mutual open-mindedness demonstrates that it is possible to develop a pluralist society which respects diversity. This example can be emulated and practiced in other countries in order to generate a better understanding among the majority and religious minorities.

At the international level, those nations who have benefited from their geo-politically advantageous positions, should be ready and willing to share these benefits with those less privileged. The United Nations Organization is eminently placed to draw up a Universal Declaration of Human Duties or Obligations. These obligations would cover the realms of international trade, investment, and finance, and would also apply to the institutions that regulate these areas, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Intellectual Property Forum (WIPO).

The Universal Declaration of Duties can be made enforceable through the organs and agencies of the UN. However, it needs the will and support of all member nations to ensure its implementation. We need to work relentlessly towards achieving that end. Sustained commitment and effort can make it possible to realize the dream of a future world where mutual sharing and caring can bring about a lasting peace.

⁵ Lise Jamila Zahra Abid, *Muslims in Austria. A Multi-faceted Minority*. Research Paper, Vienna 2000.

Questions and Interventions

the problem
of the religions
concerning
tolerance

KHODR I have some difficulty with the concept of tolerance because, historically seen, no religion has ever been tolerant in any way. It is a secular concept. Even though Christian Orthodoxy has been more tolerant than other parts of Christianity, basically it has not been

tolerant either. Thus, for instance, in Russia the Orthodox Church, Islam, and Buddhism are in fact the main religions, others have to apply for their authorization in order to be acknowledged by the state.

As to the Catholic Church, as far as I know, religious freedom was not acknowledged before Vatican II (1962–1965). In the sense of a critical analysis one could assume that this is connected with the fact that nowadays the Catholic Church does not dominate any political scenery in the world. As long as she was in the position to exercise a dominating influence in certain countries, there was the famous Syllabus already mentioned yesterday [cf. above p. 22].

In some Islamic countries it is not possible to build a church, even when there are a million Christians working there as foreigners. In Egypt no church can be built without a special authorization of the President of the Republic; it is a year ago since the authorization of the *muḥāfiẓ*, the regional Prefect, is required. Otherwise the church can only be repaired. There it is also not possible at all to react in writing to criticisms of Christianity, which are for instance presented in a book. Neither in countries with a Christian imprint, nor in the so-called secularized countries, is there complete tolerance.

For once not taking into account *John F. Kennedy*, how great is the chance that a Catholic becomes President of the United States of America? The real problem is whether, socio-politically or psychologically, our religions are capable of granting to every human being complete freedom of religion – the complete freedom to become followers of a religion or to leave it, not hindering them by for instance just giving them less professional chances or discriminating against them in any other way.

Islam – the new
enemy of the
West?

Finally, as regards Mrs. Iqbal's opinion that, after communism disappeared in former Soviet Russia, Islam has been considered by the Americans as well as generally by people in the West to be the new enemy: in a certain

way this may be true. On the other hand the Americans as it were woo the Muslims in the Middle East, because they have access to oil wells – different

from the Christians who live there, in whom they are not interested at all. This applies to the majority of Islamic countries in the Arab region.

the difference between tolerance and religious freedom POTZ In principle, the difference has to be kept in mind between tolerance and religious freedom. In history, the tolerant state and tolerant religion have meant a decisive progress. Tolerance was indeed an important step on the path towards religious freedom, which after all is another level entirely. Rightly Christianity, and certainly to a much greater extent Islam, can point to a long tradition of tolerance. As far as religious freedom is concerned, however, neither has attained it.

however: tolerance important as an attitude of the individual Despite the fact that tolerance is an insufficient basis for legal regulations, tolerance as an attitude has to be required and promoted further. The modern state, which propagates religious freedom, has to promote tolerance. After all, the individual's attitude of tolerance is one of the most important fundamentals for religious freedom to become effective in society.

split understanding of religious freedom in Christianity and Islam The modern idea of religious freedom – which goes beyond tolerance – is by the way not a product that has its origin in the secular state, but, as to its historical genesis, is rooted in the radical reformational groups, inasfar as they did not want the state to identify with them. Thus, in the European tradition, religious freedom does not go back to initiatives in the domain of the Catholic Church and even less to the Orthodox Church. However, religious freedom became historically effective only in the period of secularization. Independent of the fact that religious tolerance is definitely and deeply rooted in the Christian and Islamic concept of man, Christians as well as Muslims of whatever denomination continue to have their difficulties with religious freedom, which is simply not to be conceived without for instance the freedom to change one's religious faith or to have no faith at all.

tolerance originally rooted in Islam IQBAL Without being sufficiently informed about other religious traditions and without therefore being able to include them in my statements, concerning the Islamic tradition, I just wanted to refer to the fact that from the beginning tolerance has been an intrinsic component of Islamic thinking. In Sūra 5,51 (48) it is said "If God had so willed, He would have made you a single People [...]". Yet, he created diversity and wants us in this way to

"strive as in a race in all virtues" (ibid). Beyond this, Qu'rān commentators point out in connection with verse 40 of Sūra 22 that churches, synagogues and temples would have been endangered, had God not created the Muslims to protect them.

exemplary character of the "Medina constitution" Of course time and again the doctrine is one thing and the question of its implementation another. However, the "Medina Constitution", which is, as far as I know, the first written constitution in the world, and in whose practical implementation the Holy Prophet, when he came to Medina, granted the same rights to the non-Muslim tribes as to the Muslims themselves. Yet, in the course of time, as I said already, intolerance has crept into the practice of Islam, and we have to try to restore the original concept of tolerance. This is probably also the case with the other religious traditions.

Thus I think that the idea of tolerance is not rooted in some radical reform groups, but is part of basic Islamic teaching. When today it is perceived as something in the sense of 'reform', then this is so because the issue is always to measure again and again the contemporary practice against the original doctrines, and, if necessary, to orient it anew. It may be that today secularization contributes to the revival of the idea of tolerance. Basically, however, this does not change what I said when referring to the roots of the idea in the original doctrine of Islam.

reason without religion as dangerous as exclusive religion OTT I got the impression that in Mrs. Iqbal's lecture the focus was on elaborating the idea that religion is necessary, because otherwise reason can become demonic, that religion would nevertheless have to be inclusive, because an exclusive religion can lead to suspiciousness,

hate and resentment against others. In this context something comes to mind, which a sociologist said at a conference in Korea: looking at the religions in our world, one will find that the overwhelming majority adhere to inclusive thinking and that in contrast there are only small groups that conduct themselves exclusively in their religious practice. This made me hopeful, yet I am not sure whether this assertion was well founded.

concerning the term 'fundamentalism' Finally, in the lecture the term 'fundamentalism' cropped up, which is known to have its roots in American Protestantism, where, faced with many people merely registered as Christians, a number of believers joined in confronting the former with the fact that, as a Christian convert, one would

really have to uphold the fundamentals of Christian faith. They presented five such "fundamentals", which altogether are subject to very narrowly defined criteria. This early term then extended to many groupings, which understand themselves as being exclusive and – be it in politics, be it in religion, or elsewhere – cling to certain formulae. Consequently, with such people no real dialogue is any longer possible.

IQBAL I indeed emphasized the fact that I am persuaded that religion is necessary for a life of human dignity and in the interest of a peaceful living together of mankind. It is however a religion that understands itself in an inclusive rather than in an exclusive sense.

the term 'fundamentalism' is often misused As to the term 'fundamentalist', I referred above all in this context to *Karen Armstrong's* understanding of the term [cf. above pp. 76 f.]. Yet I believe that this term is often misused and it would be a good thing not to make frequent use of it. I would prefer to term as 'reactionaries' or 'extremists' the narrow-minded Muslims who are often denoted as 'fundamentalists'.

Justice and Peace: the Decisive Questions for the Future of Humanity

Irmgard Marboe

"In the relationships among nations, peace proved to be the proximate, but justice is the ultimate objective."

(*Majid Khadduri*)

"And the product of uprightness will be peace."

(Is 32,17)

The problems faced by humanity on its way into the future are doubtlessly many, and it is not easy to take out one and to identify it as a central and decisive one. The conferences and publications of the Christian-Islamic dialogue in recent years already concentrated on the important questions for the future of human society in a very concrete way, in my view including the correct accentuations. International references have always been duly made, since the network and the conditioning of the problems are worldwide, so that taking them into consideration on a merely national or inner-cultural level would definitely be too limited.

For me the concepts of justice and peace in international and intercultural relations are central to the questions concerning the survival of humanity. During the International Christian-Islamic Dialogue Conference held in 1996 in Tehran, *Ingeborg Gabriel* already emphasized the unjust distribution of wealth on national and international levels and the various forms of political injustice committed or acquiesced in by states infringing the fundamental rights of individuals or groups belonging to ethnic, religious, or political minorities.¹ These two different forms of injustice should be eliminated or at least diminished.

Justice is a value that has priority and is one of the most important challenges for the world religions.² For all legal systems, as is the case also for

¹ *I. Gabriel*, *Gerechtigkeit aus christlicher Sicht*, in: *A. Bsteh – S. A. Mirdamadi* (eds.), *Gerechtigkeit in den internationalen und interreligiösen Beziehungen*, Mödling 1997, p. 51.

² *Op. cit.* (fn. 1) pp. 52 ff.; *S. M. Khamene'i*, *Begriff und Wurzeln der Gerechtigkeit in der Sicht islamischer Rechtswissenschaft*, in: *A. Bsteh – S. A. Mirdamadi* (eds.), *op. cit.* (fn. 1) pp. 40 ff.

the system of public international law and international relations, the preservation of justice is the most important challenge.³ The difficulty that this can rarely be fully established already begins with the term 'justice', which is hard to define without the help of moral, cultural, and religious categories. A mutual approach of the different conceptions could, however, be facilitated by a constructive dialogue and by international cooperation.

Therefore, on the way towards a really just world, peace in the sense of a non-violent co-existence of the human communities is a decisive presupposition. As long as violence, annihilation, and destruction dominate, there can be no dialogue, no cooperation and therefore also no justice. In the sense of *Majid Khadduri's* words quoted above, peace has to be the immediate, first target, whilst justice is the ultimate, final goal.⁴

It should be remembered that the United Nations were founded in 1945 in order "to establish conditions under which justice [...] can be maintained and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom"⁵. To this end the member states declare their intention "to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as neighbours" and "to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used".⁶

A decisive function for the maintenance and preservation of peace is above all also due to the law. Standing for many others, here only *Immanuel Kant* may be quoted, who in his essay "Zum ewigen Frieden" (On Everlasting Peace) claimed that in the inter-state relations power should be replaced by the law and at best helped to be implemented within the frame of an organized community.⁷ In the wake of this idea the League of Nations, later the UN, were founded.

In the face of numerous armed conflicts in our day, 55 years after the foundation of the UN as a "World Peace Organization", the question arises more and more often, as to whether the legal and institutional framework of this organization is in reality suitable for the prevention of disputes and the promotion of cooperation, or whether its failure to do so can be ex-

plained by deficiencies in its structure and substance. Is the present system of public international law really universally accepted or has it not yet passed beyond its probation in confronting other legal systems, particularly that of Islam?

1. The origins of today's "Public International Law of Peace"

After the disintegration of the Roman Empire in the European Middle Ages, active inter-state relations developed, which were essentially based on the principles of sovereignty and equality under the generally acknowledged supremacy of the Christian religion.⁸ Through the discovery of the overseas territories and the encounter with non-Christian cultures and systems of sovereignty they were, at the end of the 15th century, confronted with new challenges. On the one hand the view was held that the latter were of no value whatsoever and that their territories therefore were, as "res nullius", open to be conquered, as it were as a religious task under the authority of the Pope. (This concept is for instance testified by the Papal Bull *Inter Ceteris* of May 5, 1493, the basis of the *Treaty of Tordesillas*, which established the partition of the conquered territories between Spain and Portugal.) On the other hand the Spanish moral theologians *Francisco de Vitoria* (about 1483–1546) and *Francisco Suárez* (1548–1617) held the view that relations between states do not depend on religion, but on the basis of natural law common to all humans⁹. They also upheld the concept of "bellum justum" developed by *Augustine* (354–430) and *Thomas Aquinas* (about 1225–1274), which was now to be permitted as a defensive war and for the "defence of Rights"¹⁰.

Against the background of wars of religion and the discrediting of the "bellum iustum" implied, *Hugo Grotius* (1583–1645), who was denominated as "the father of public international law" and who himself was a Protestant, came to the fore and took up the ideas of the Spanish moral theologians. Public international law is rooted in the nature of man, in his inborn reason, is independent of religion and is concretized by the prac-

³ P. Fischer – H. F. Köck, Allgemeines Völkerrecht, Wien 2000, p. 34; W. Vitzthum, in: W. Vitzthum (ed.), Völkerrecht, Berlin a. o. 1997, p. 10.

⁴ M. Khadduri, The Islamic Conception of Justice, Baltimore 1984, p. 162.

⁵ Preamble of the United Nations Statute of June 26, 1945.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ S. Verosta, History of the Law of Nations: 1648 to 1815, in: Encyclopedia of Public International Law, Vol. 2, Amsterdam 1995, p. 763; H. F. Köck – P. Fischer, Das Recht der Internationalen Organisationen, Wien 1997, p. 81.

⁸ I. Seidl-Hohenveldern – T. Stein, Völkerrecht, Köln a. o. 2000, p. 22; P. Fischer – H. F. Köck, op. cit. (fn. 3) p. 45.

⁹ I. Seidl-Hohenveldern – T. Stein, op. cit. (fn. 8) pp. 24 ff.; P. Fischer – H. F. Köck, op. cit. (fn. 3) p. 48.

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, Summa theol. II/Iq. 40, quoted according to I. Seidl-Hohenveldern – T. Stein, op. cit. (fn. 8.) p. 24.

tice of the states, whereby the latter confront each other on the basis of equality and independence¹¹.

Yet, up to World War I the principles of this public international law were not applied to the relations with non-European communities. In the 1856 Peace Treaty of Paris only, the Ottoman Empire was admitted "to participate in the advantages of the public law of Europe and of the Concert of Europe"¹² and therewith was accepted as an equal subject of public international law. Conversely, however, for a long time the Sublime Porte had not really been interested in international relations on the basis of equality and reciprocity, since on their part they had defended the superiority of Islam.¹³

By founding the League of Nations after the atrocities of World War I, the attempt was made to create an international order of peace, which should prevent the outbreak of wars. The complete banning of war as a political means was only attained through the Briand-Kellogg-Pact (1928) and finally through the foundation of the UN after World War II, which in its regulations established an absolute prohibition of violence¹⁴. Even the right of self-defence¹⁵ was maintained under very restricted conditions only. Since then war has no more been a maybe undesirable, but legal state, which is nevertheless to be considered as formally equal and alternating with peace, but is a law-ignoring state violating a coercive right ("ius cogens"). Therewith the change of public international law to becoming an "order of peace" took place¹⁶.

However, how do the others, the non-European states, accept this legal system, which has developed on the basis of the occidental-Christian tradition?

2. The Islamic *siyar*

For some time jurisprudence has been preoccupied with the question in how far today the system of public international law can be harmonized with Islamic law¹⁷, above all because problems are raised by a number of

incompatibilities of both legal concepts of international relations.

According to the classic theory, the world is divided into *dār al-islām*, the area of peace, and *dār al-ḥarb*, the area of war.¹⁸ Legal relations, which exist against this background, were developed by Islamic jurisprudence in terms of *siyar*, whose founder is considered to be *Muḥammad aṣh-Shaybānī*, denominated as the "Hugo Grotius of the Muslims"¹⁹. In this legal system, the concept of the state and the nation is not known.²⁰ The whole Muslim community, denoted as *umma*, shall possibly again live in one undivided state system only²¹, whereby it is oriented towards the Muslim society at the time of Muḥammad and the first Caliphs²².

The *siyar* is considered to be an integral component of the Islamic legal system, the *sharīʿa*, and is understood as "outward law" of the Islamic community facing the non-Islamic world. The central concept is here the *djihād* as the duty of the believers to make "efforts" (the literal meaning) in order to convert the non-believers to Islam.²³ Hence, the *siyar* is in the first place the concretization of the *djihād* in the sense of a "ius ad bellum", but also martial law in the stricter sense, thus regulating conduct in war as a "ius in bello". Beside the missionary character, the *djihād* also has a political one, since spreading the faith as well as the Islamic community is the target to be attained.

Possible are only – temporary – agreements for a transitory armistice²⁴ or, with certain restrictions, establishing business connections²⁵. In principle, the state of affairs between the two "domains" is that of war²⁶. There

works of Islamic jurisprudence and therewith made them accessible to a non-Islamic public, but who, with important works of his own, also contributed to a better understanding of Islamic law. Cf. for instance M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, Baltimore 1955; *id.*, *International Law. Law in the Middle East*, Washington 1955; *id.*, *The Islamic Law of Nations*, Baltimore 1966; *id.*, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, Baltimore 1984; *id.*, *International Law, Islamic*, in: *Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 1236 ff.

¹⁸ S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, *Les Musulmans face aux droits de l'homme*, Bochum 1994, p. 372; D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 53.

¹⁹ H. Kruse, *Die Begründung der islamischen Völkerrechtslehre: Muhammad as-Saibani – der „Hugo Grotius der Muslime“*, in: *Saeculum* 5 (1934) pp. 221 ff.

²⁰ S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) p. 375; D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 56.

²¹ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 46.

²² H. Kruse, *Islamische Völkerrechtslehre*, Bochum 1979, pp. 4 f.

²³ H. Kruse, op. cit. (fn. 22) p. 44; M. Khadduri, *War and Peace*, op. cit. (fn. 17) p. 141.

²⁴ M. Khadduri, *Justice*, op. cit. (fn. 17) p. 168; H. Kruse, op. cit. (fn. 22) p. 31; D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 54 and pp. 73 f.; S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) p. 372.

²⁵ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) pp. 76 ff.; S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) p. 373.

²⁶ Belligerently sounding passages in the Qurʾān are the basis of this theory: "But when the

¹¹ H. Steinberger, *Sovereignty*, in: *Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, Vol. 4, Amsterdam 2000, p. 504.

¹² P. Fischer – F. H. Köck, op. cit. (fn. 3) p. 52; M. Khadduri, *International Law, Islamic*, in: *Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, Vol. 2, Amsterdam 1995, p. 1241; D. Pohl, *Islam und Friedensvölkerrechtsordnung*, Wien etc. 1988, p. 12.

¹³ S. Verosta, op. cit. (fn. 7) p. 757.

¹⁴ UN-Charter art. 2, par. 3 and 4.

¹⁵ UN-Charter art. 51.

¹⁶ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 3.

¹⁷ Here above all Majid Khadduri has to be mentioned, who translated into English numerous

is no peace until all nations are united in the *dār al-islām*.²⁷

Something similar applies to individuals who are in the *dār al-islām*. Thus, as long as they have not adopted Islam, they have very restricted rights only and, based on the *dhimma*-agreements, they have to pay a special tax, the *djizya*. This seems to be compatible neither with the regulations of public international law concerning foreigners, nor with human rights. However, human rights also – which are a central fundament of public international law and of the relations of states within the framework of the UN, of which some, according to a widespread view, have the character of “ius cogens” (thus positioned on the highest level of public international law) – are, according to Islamic declarations, subject to the restrictions of the *sharīʿa*.²⁸

A further development of this classical concept or an adaptation of the law to changed, modern times is a great problem, since according to the opinion of all Sunnī schools of law, since the 10th century “the door of free legislation”, the door of *idjtihād* has been closed.²⁹

What does this mean now in view of the fact that almost all Islamic states became members of the UN and therewith also accepted all the legal principles laid down in the Charter, as for instance amicable relations between nations, the peaceful settlement of conflicts³⁰, but also the Charter of Human Rights?

3. The search for a common way

Fortunately however, approaches can also be found that make compatibility possible in practice and for the future respectively. For turning away completely from the *sharīʿa* and introducing instead a merely secular law,

forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: [...]” (Sūra 9,5). Cf. in this context S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) p. 347.

²⁷ M. Khadduri, War and Peace, op. cit. (fn. 17) p. 141; S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) p. 376.

²⁸ Cf. for instance the General Islamic Human Rights Declaration of Paris, 1981, or the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam of the OIC Member States of 1990. See in this context H. Neuhold – W. Hummer – C. Schreuer (eds.), Österreichisches Handbuch des Völkerrechts, Wien 1997, p. 246 and p. 290.

²⁹ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) p. 25; A. A. An-Naʿim, Toward Islamic Reformation. Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law, New York 1990, p. 27.

³⁰ UN-Charter art. 1, par. 2 and art. 2, par. 3.

today³¹ as well as in the past³², seems neither realistic nor desirable for many.

Thus for instance a “reverse actualization” of the Islamic doctrine was proposed, by which the classical legal framework could be maintained, but would, by means of interpretations, be filled with new content.³³ To pay more attention to concrete actions was also pleaded, since the Qurʾān calls man to emulate one another in doing good³⁴. After all, in the Bible the merciful Samaritan, who, in the decisive moment acts rightfully, ranks above the “priests” and the “levites”, who omit doing so³⁵.

In principle, the compatibility between Islamic law and membership in the UN should be taken for granted, since “the acknowledged legal principles of civilized states”, thus also of the Islamic states, are to be applied by the International Court of Law as the source of public international law.³⁶ It is also remarkable that in 1974 the founding states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) did indeed rely on the principles and targets of the United Nations, which they acknowledge and affirm in the Preamble of the new Islamic organization³⁷ and thereby signal their readiness to build bridges.

Numerous approaches would still have to be mentioned and discussed. In fact, however, yet another problem arises concerning the deficient application of the principles of the “public international law of peace”, namely the present structure and functioning of the UN itself. In its present shape, the world organization is far from the ideal of a genuine democratic, universally orientated, and active world body for peace.

³¹ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) pp. 132 f.

³² M. Khadduri, From Religious to National Law, op. cit. (fn. 17) p. 50.

³³ D. Pohl, op. cit. (fn. 12) pp. 132 f.

³⁴ “[...] If God had so willed, He would have made you a single People [...] so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute;” (Qurʾān 5,51).

³⁵ S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn. 18) pp. 454 ff.

³⁶ Statute of the International Court of Justice, art. 38., to which M. Khadduri particularly refers. Cf. M. Khadduri, International Law, op. cit. (fn. 17) p. 372. In the “Texaco-Case”, arbitrator Dupay in fact proved several fundamental legal principles, like e. g. “pacta sunt servanda”, “restitutio in integrum”, but also a sovereign’s self-obligation, according to Islamic law to fulfill a contract concluded with an individual contracting party, and he drew upon it in making the legal conclusion. Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company and California Asiatic Oil Company vs. the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic, in: I.L.M. 1978, pp. 1 ff., RZ 51, 64 and 92.

³⁷ “... reaffirming their commitment to the United Nations Charter and fundamental Human Rights, the purposes and principles of which provide the basis for fruitful cooperation among all people”: Charter of the OIC, <http://www.oic-un.org/about/Charter.htm>.

4. Necessary reforms and new concepts within the framework of the UN

More precisely, it is the Security Council, its composition, working methods and competences that are criticized more and more severely. This main organ of the UN, which is responsible for nothing less than the maintenance of world peace and international security³⁸ and to this end also has the exclusive power to order the use of force according to the Charter's Chapter VII, is of course a product of the time of its creation. The veto right of the four victorious powers of the Second World War and China often led to a Security Council's blockage; different power interests had the same effect. The working group for the reform of the Security Council, which was established in 1993, until today has not been able to present any concrete results, with the exception that the positions of the different countries and groups of countries are now clarified and lie on the table. These are, however, as incompatible as apparently immovable. An effective solution does not seem to be achievable in the near future.

Is there a solution to this dilemma? Some founder members demand as an ultimative the quick democratization and reorganization of the UN-Security Council, otherwise they would have no other option but to leave the organization.³⁹ Yet, is this a reasonable solution? Would this not mean a shutting of doors that are not so easily reopened?

Beside the Security Council, the other central organ of the United Nations is the General Assembly. It can introduce measures "in order to promote international cooperation in the fields of economy, society, culture, education, and health"⁴⁰. In this context above all the cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference in political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, and technical affairs may be mentioned, on which annual reports are presented to the General Assembly of the UN.⁴¹ The closer cooperation of the sub-organizations as for instance UNESCO and ISESCO (The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has proved particularly good and fruitful. Thus numerous projects were financed and carried out together, above all dedicated to fighting illiteracy and to promote vocational

training. In the field of environment preservation as well, with UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) important initiatives were started and among others financially supported by the Islamic Development Bank and the Faysal Bank⁴².

The purpose of the United Nations is not primarily the introduction of enforcement measures according to Chapter VII of its Charter, but rather to avoid them. The possibility of measures of collective security only guarantee that the UN – which sees itself based on a legal system – remains without any mechanism for sanctions and thereby risks being totally ineffective. The prior aim of the UN, however, is the prevention of conflicts. An important condition for that is, however, that they possess adequate financial means for their work, which, at present, is by far not the case⁴³. Unfortunately, so far it has not yet been widely recognized that the costs of a war and the subsequent reconstruction, which in most cases can only be undertaken with broad international aid, exceed by far those needed for effective international projects.⁴⁴

As cooperation and integration in the fields of culture and the economy are probably the most effective means of conflict prevention, we are all asked to make our contribution. The year 2001, proclaimed by the UN as the year of "Dialogue among Civilizations"⁴⁵ could mean an important contribution in this direction and, with the help of modern means of communication, reach and involve large groups of the population. In this sense we may also feel encouraged, by means of the study group about to be established, in striving towards a more operative phase in the Christian-Islamic dialogue.

³⁸ UN-Charter, Art. 24.

³⁹ S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, op. cit. (fn.18) pp. 447 ff.

⁴⁰ UN-Charter, Art. 13.

⁴¹ Cf. the reports of 1998, 1999 and 2000 of the Secretary General to the General Assembly, UN-Doc. A/53/430, A/53/308 and A/55/368.

⁴² UN-Doc. A/53/430, p. 7.

⁴³ Whereby the financing of UNESCO-projects by the Islamic banks is already a promising sign of more mutual solidarity, which could certainly serve as an example for the further financing of UN-activities.

⁴⁴ Thus Irene Freudenschuss, Austria's Ambassador at the United Nations (Vienna) pointed out that worldwide the UNO in its biannual budget has less money at its disposal than the EU Emergency Aid spent for reconstruction work in the Kosovo. Der Standard, July 27, 1999, p. 31.

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly Resolution of November 16, 1998, A/Res/53/22.

Questions and Interventions

UN-gathering of religious and spiritual leaders

S. MAHMOOD It was valuable to hear about all the activities of the United Nations, trying to control events all over the world, which in part did much good, which, however, in many cases did not prove successful. In this context mention should also be made of the "Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders", which was called in New York from August 28 to 31, 2000 at the United Nations at the request of *Secretary-General Kofi Annan*, preceding the UN Millennium Peace Summit.¹ As is well known, the "New York Times Magazine" subsequently honoured *Kofi Annan* on its cover as Man of Faith. This first gathering of religious leaders within the framework of the UN was indeed an impressive event. Never before had the United Nations opened a session with a prayer. Yet, during the days of the religious summit at the beginning of each session prayers of the religions represented there were said.

Nevertheless, on this occasion it was obvious again that state identity has more weight than national identity. Thus, at the insistence of China, the *Dalai Lama* was refused admission to this gathering of religious leaders. This was again a case where religion was politicized, where religion was used or abused by state interest. Still, one can be grateful that the United Nations help to keep events worldwide under control.

world development suggests a higher potential of peace and conflict

BSTEH Considering the problems of various peoples living together in the past century in the perspective of what can already be observed today concerning the future development of our world, we in fact have to expect something which, based on immanent processes, will be structured anew irreversibly, and we do

not really know therefore what it will look like. It is a development which, as we know, is well under way on all levels.

In spite of the many uncertainties which are part of this dynamism, one can perceive already today that hand in hand with all the progress to be expected, there will also be a higher potential for conflict. The more we have to share one and the same living space with others, the more we are indeed facing the alternative, whether, together with the others, we gradu-

ally achieve a new culture of dialogue or start a belligerent competition against each other, which will only end when it has become obvious which of us is the stronger. Do we succeed in sharing joys and sufferings, of building a You-relationship on the path towards understanding each other and towards mutual exchange, or does the I remain for us the only relevant component? – this is the decisive question which confronts us on a small as well as on a large scale, the more the world becomes one. Which old and new forms of human self-realization will have to be developed so that this creative potential, which is inherent in diversity, will be realized and not the potential of conflict, which it will not be possible to remove until the end of history, neither from the hearts of the individual nor from the overall structure of the world? Much as the positive alternative should be in the foreground of our endeavours, it would be utopian and therefore dangerous, on the path into the future not to expect and face the reality of the potential of conflict.

three levels – on which one do we want to act?

GABRIEL For the further work of our group it seems to be important to differentiate between three levels, in order to see more clearly on which level we want to act. There is, first, the level of the individual, the level

of individual persuasion, of personal trust in values, of orientation to standards. The second level is that of the "Non-Governmental Organizations", of the NGOs, which is becoming more and more important today. It is most impressive how much is done with great dedication on this level. From a secular perspective, the religious communities also present themselves as NGOs. In any case, one can learn much from the way in which these groupings present humanitarian, ecological, and other concerns oriented towards common welfare. The third level finally is that of official co-operation within the community of states and peoples, the level of the United Nations, whose importance is also indispensable and where every good initiative, like the one mentioned by Dr. Saleha Mahmood, can bring forth a lot.

monitoring as a task of the Round Table?

POTZ This should be followed by the question whether the study group of this Round Table should, with regard to certain problems, do something like monitoring these problems from a Christian and Islamic perspective –

without thereby envisaging too much: starting with the identification of problems up to proposals concerning what could contribute to resolving them. Religions are as it were institutions neither dependent on nor controlled by the state or the market, NGOs par excellence. Therewith it could

¹ see: www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/declaration.html, and: www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/newsframe.html

become, amongst others, characteristic of our work, first to find out which non-profit organizations are religiously influenced by Muslims and Christians and then – together with what we ourselves have to contribute – also to do something like coordinating work.

MARBOE Professor Gabriel justly referred to the fact that in seeking a just peace, beside the level of cooperation between states – especially in the Organization of the United Nations –, the two levels of personal engagement and of the Non-Governmental Organizations also have to be kept in mind.

differences are often more emphasized than common interests For my part, I would like to add another observation. In my research on the respective literature, which I did at our Institute on the topic of my lecture, I discovered that most of the books at my disposal there pointed out the differences to Islamic conceptions rather than our common interests. Apart from the books so far published within the framework of this Vienna Christian-Islamic dialogue forum, the authors, whose publications deal with the topic Islam and international law, Islam and human rights, accordingly very often voiced the opinion that they had to admit an incompatibility of standpoints.

dār al-ḥarb and *dār al-islām* neither in the Qu'rān nor in the Ḥadīth T. MAHMOOD Subsequent to Dr. Marboe's lecture, I would like to clarify something. At issue is the classical juristic classification that was made between the countries which are described as *dār al-islām* and those described as *dār al-ḥarb*. In this classical juristic tradition, *dār al-islām* is known to be understood as an area where Islam is the religion that is official or dominant in the state. *dār al-ḥarb*, however, would literally be understood as a country which is hostile to Islam; yet, in the jurisprudential context it meant a country where Islam practically does not exist.

This classification of states is to be found neither in the Holy Qu'rān nor in the Ḥadīth, the sayings of the Prophet. It dates back to the time of Islam's early emergence and is therefore also to be understood in the perspective of its origin and the point where civilization stood at that time. Some time later and under the impression of the steady progression of civilization, Muslim jurists introduced a third category, that of *dār al-amān*: this means an area where Islam can exist peacefully. Modern Muslim jurists acknowledge this third category of countries and for instance classify most European countries, Austria in particular, within this category.

BSTEH Taking into consideration the situation mentioned by Dr. Marboe concerning the respective literature frequently available in our libraries, the fact that the books available there rather point to the differences than to our common interests, one would have to welcome it, if, by a cooperation between the jurists present here, these gaps could be filled at least partly. A first valuable step in this direction could already be seen in Professor Tahir Mahmood's offer to provide us with a complete series of the journal "Law and Religion" published by him.

universal positions are as necessary as keeping in mind the differences MIHÇIYAZGAN As to the question of difference and commonness, another critical remark. In the mainstream of today's discourse, the position of the universalists seems to me to be certainly the stronger compared with that of the relativists, i. e. compared with the endeavour to relativize the universalist concept and to emphasize the differences more strongly. In fact the universalist standpoint often goes hand in hand with a blindness concerning differences, whereby conversely it is known that insisting too much on differences can tip things over and result in increasing the potential of conflict instead of reducing it.

Where did the heritage of Enlightenment with its levelling, universalist positions lead, did it really help? When from the part of the relativists such questions are raised, this however does not mean calling into question the fundamental possibility of arriving at a universalist definition. There are factors suggesting that the actual way of attaining commonness leads via the recognition of differences. Of course as against this it can be argued that in this way one might run the risk of giving up a mutual understanding altogether or at least hindering it. Yet, is today not a certain element of delay necessary, which is realized by pointing out the differences, because in our academic, intellectual traditions we have been counting ever so quickly and too long on what is universal, particularly in the juristic-political domain?

secular world and religion, how do they relate to each other? GABRIEL In the context of the problems broached here, the relation between the secular world and religion, which has not yet been worked out sufficiently, seems to play an important role. In many publications it becomes obvious that here there is a prejudice in one or other direction.

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation. As a Preliminary Stage towards a Positive Peace and a Healthful Togetherness

Adel Theodor Khoury

Introduction

I am going to treat the topic¹ in three steps:

1. On the situation of the world today,
2. Reconciliation: community between people and peoples,
3. Ways and means: concepts and principles.

Some concluding remarks will follow.

1. On the situation today

1.1 Antagonism

We often experience an antagonism between groups, communities, and peoples. In political confrontation, this antagonism arises from a striving for sovereignty, injustice, and oppression of those who are vulnerable, persecution of those who are blamed for inconveniences in society and the economy. Antagonism shows up also in social living together and leads to delimitation, discrimination, and intolerance. In theological controversy, sometimes misunderstandings and all kinds of condemnations and rejections are to be found. Finally, in the economic field one can observe how antagonism arises through inconsiderate competition, displacement, market control.

¹ Cf. in this context also: W. L. Bühl (ed.), *Konflikt und Konfliktstrategie*, München 1972; A. Th. Khoury, *Christians and Muslims: Their common responsibility*, in: M. S. Abdullah et al. (eds.), *Religion in Culture, Law and Politics*, Mainz 1982, pp. 100–113; A. Th. Khoury, *Christen und Muslime gemeinsam unter dem Wort Gottes stehen*, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7), Mödling 1992, pp. 19–33, in particular pp. 28–32; A. Th. Khoury, *Für eine größere Gerechtigkeit in den Beziehungen zwischen Christen und Muslimen*, in: A. Bsteh – S. A. Mirdamadi (eds.), *Gerechtigkeit in den internationalen und interreligiösen Beziehungen in islamischer und christlicher Perspektive*, Mödling 1997, pp. 351–368.

1.2 Formation of an identity and mentality against each other

In the history of some communities, including some religious communities, it is obvious how the legitimate wish to define one's own identity in view of others, in the course of time, developed to become the formation of an identity against others. The strong internal coherence and the strong feeling of belonging together conditioned thereby the formation of a mentality grounded on an intention to delimit others. Often intolerance and oppression of others were linked with this.

1.3 The burden of the present

In view of the insecurities of politics and the processes in the world economy with regard to the problems and imponderables of the irreversible movement towards an all-embracing globalization, religious dialogue also enters into a very sensitive phase and itself senses this insecurity. The situation is aggravated by the fact that increasingly attempts are made in the West to conceive of Islam as an enemy and in the Islamic world to conceive of the West – which many Muslims without differentiation identify with the Christian world – as an enemy.

Beyond this, the increasing politicization of Islam in some countries of the Islamic world and the transformation of faith into an ideology that accompanies it contribute to the rise of a fundamentalism, which is prepared to abuse religion as an instrument for achieving its political targets and which is therefore increasingly seen as a danger to peace in the world. One might already talk of the danger of a world conflagration, through the collision of the fundamentalists and the militant extremists of every colour and every religion.

1.4 Obstacles in the worldwide environment

In many respects there are today, above all in the Islamic world, only a few countries where the cultural and social situation seems to promote a dialogue with the followers of other religions.

1.4.1 In the Islamic world

Most countries and societies in the Islamic world today still keep in mind for instance the idea of a uniform society, the basis of which is the Islamic faith, so that a certain triumphalism paralyses any readiness to hold a dialogue and undermines the vision of a pluralistic society, whose members, independent of their religious affiliation, have the same fundamental rights and duties.

In addition, the Islamic world may not have experienced a history of

freedom, eventually leading to an affirmation of human rights without serious reservations and to the shedding of any amalgamation of religion and state, which is dangerous for both sides.

Finally, only tentative first steps can be observed of those engaged in hermeneutics facing the traditionalists and fundamentalists, hence the impression that the militants are gaining more and more ground and thereby emphasizing the trend towards totalitarianism and the ideologization of religion.

1.4.2 In Christianity

The increasing perception of Muslims, who live in the countries of the West as enemies of the culture bearing a Christian imprint, makes for difficulties. Beyond this, the West – which the Muslims often identify with Christianity – did not modify its claim to be the hub of the world, the universally valid cultural axis, around which the world has to rotate. In this atmosphere efforts towards a successful community between the different religions is in danger of being seen as a concealed effort towards violence and as serving the countries of the West as an alibi in their drive for sovereignty.

2. Reconciliation and peace

2.1 On being together

There is need of a transition from the historically conditioned *being against each other* via a *being beside each other* made possible by tolerance towards a fruitful *being together*. This would mean overcoming antagonism and the development of an open identity, which, being self-evident, would be the basis of a positive tolerance. Efforts towards an honest and fruitful partnership would be part of this identity.

2.2 Creating peace

Steps included in this task:

- making *peace* oneself with the others: permitting no more violence and no more wars, to say nothing of waging them; and to develop and apply an effective strategy for resolving conflicts;
- making peace *with* the others, i. e. striving for a peaceful, wholesome living together, in fact a *community*. This difficult task demands firmness and an inventive mind, which is capable of planning developments and putting them into practice;
- *making peace with the others*, i. e. thinking and acting together with them.

2.3 Targets

The common targets could be described tentatively as follows:

- common efforts towards a just social order;
- common efforts towards creating a more humane and just world; this means an option for the poor and the vulnerable, in keeping with the claims of the Prophets, the Gospel, and the Qur'ān;
- acknowledgement and enforcement of general human rights for all; perhaps also common reflections concerning human duties yet to be defined precisely;
- claiming and trying to realize universal solidarity with everyone, all over the world.

3. Ways and means towards reconciliation and peace

3.1 Re-orientation

A re-orientation is necessary which accords with the moral values shared by the religions. At issue is a humane social order, based on the inviolable dignity of man, which, when put into practice, should bear the following fruits:

- brotherly justice,
- tolerant administration of rights and duties,
- granting priority to the rights of the vulnerable,
- readiness for reconciliation,
- a positive offer of reconciliation to other religious communities,
- cultivating peace instead of striving for a sovereignty ready equally to exert violence.

3.2 The wish for community

This means that one has to try to understand the others, that one avoids unjust assessments and prejudices, that one takes a stand for brotherly justice. Furthermore, in giving reasons for this attitude, one should take into account that in Christianity and largely also in other religions, the following principles are accepted:

- there is a fundamental equality of all human beings as creatures of God;
- as creatures of God, in this particularly all human beings belong together, all are designed as and dependent on practising worldwide communication and cooperation;
- all human beings form a large family; they are linked with each other in an all-embracing solidarity and in a universal brotherliness (as brothers and sisters).

Solidarity and living as brothers and sisters are not arbitrary, but binding concepts. They imply the responsibility of all for all. As principles of the social and political order, they are therefore the fundament of a worldwide brotherly justice. This is the reflection of the justice of God, whose measure is his mercifulness. "If God loved us so much, we too should love one another" (1 Jn 4,11).

3.3 Cooperation

The dialogue of the religions has to make practical cooperation possible and promote it. Here the attitude of mind is no more that of partners in dialogue, who are sitting opposite each other, speaking about their mutual relations, differences, and the concerns they share. The attitude of mind is that of partners in dialogue sitting one beside the other, together contemplating problems that concern us all. This cooperation is to be prepared and performed in four steps:

- each one has to ask him/herself the question as regards their contribution to resolving these problems and to request this contribution;
- each one has to ask his/her partner the question as regards his/her contribution and the contribution of his/her religion and state this contribution;
- both have to try to make their common contribution;
- and finally make their common contribution together.

3.4 Reconciliation by resolving conflicts

3.4.1 Reconciliation by resolving conflicts on the individual level

Here attention should be paid to the findings of modern conflict theory, conflict psychology, and conflict sociology. One can list a few points as helpful when conflicts are to be settled:

- no polarization, but depolarization: not building up the partner in conflict as the total enemy;
- limiting matters, trying not to escalate them;
- gaining time;
- being aware of the limits of one's own perception of the truth: exchanging information, removing misunderstandings;
- conceding goodwill to the partner;
- being flexible and ready to change;
- treading several paths;
- including third parties.²

² Cf. W. L. Bühl (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 1) pp. 48–55.

3.4.2 Resolving conflicts on the *community* level (groups and societies)

Here capable authorities would have to be established on the community, national and international levels.

4. Concluding remarks

Truth and tolerance, dialogue and cooperation should open up people and get them closer to each other. They should enable them to experience, in our one world, the solidarity of all with all, a universal life as brothers and sisters.

Related to our different cultural and religious systems, this means that we have to find the way leading from the opposition to each other of the systems, via their being side by side, towards their togetherness.

In our world which is, more and more obviously, becoming one, we all, more and more, have a common present and a common future – this is not the present and the future of some at the cost of the others, but the present and the future of all with all together.

Only in common can we master our common present. And only in common can we make our common future succeed. In other words: in the process of globalization, which is predominant today, we can no longer oppose each other and treat each other as enemies.

There can be no question of living one beside the other as strangers and conceiving of each other as competitors. We have to work together and be partners. And we should also manage to reconcile ourselves one with the other and make friends.

Questions and Interventions

living together
how can it
become reality?

KHIDOYATOV How could a living together of Muslims and Christians, particularly common activities on the national and international levels also be conceived in more detail, as was mentioned in Professor Khoury's lecture? I would be glad to hear some propositions how such a community could be built in practice.

finding examples
in history

KHOURY Day by day the steady growth of the world network becomes for us more and more a matter of course. It enables us to participate in the life of people all over the world, to feel close to them and to show solidarity. What can we do now – this was the question I wanted to address in my contribution –, to put this into practice, so that the living together of people will become free of conflict and that wherever conflict arises, it can be resolved peacefully. For fourteen centuries, the relations between the Islamic and the Christian world were not only tense, but full of controversies. Together with many others, above all with the Fathers of Vatican II also, I am now of the opinion that these centuries of conflict suffice for the urgent need to introduce an era of reconciliation and peace.

And in this respect one can also learn much from history, because in past centuries there has also been another side to the relations between Muslims and Christians: a history of friendship, a history of diverse exchanges and of peaceful living together. Different to the history of the relations burdened with conflict, this 'other', positive side of history is much too little known. There is now an initiative to write this history of reconciliation and of friendship between Christians and Muslims, where I myself am also co-operating: we begin by collecting statements and historical facts, which show the other side of history. This project is implemented by Christians and Muslims together, being convinced that we are no longer living each of us his separate history, but that we are more and more approaching a common future.

how to deal today
with injustice
done in the past?

GABRIEL In our discussions there is frequent mention that the history of conflict is still a burden on the living together of Christians and Muslims today. Injustice done by Christians to Muslims and by Muslims to Christians made a deep imprint on the collective memory of peoples and religious communities. It is an important question how we can deal with

this history of conflict so that it has no longer any negative effect on the present.

The answers given will vary, depending on whether this injustice was done a long time ago or just recently. In the case of injustice done in the far-off past, the following steps could be helpful. Firstly: to explore together the truth of the historical background and to describe it objectively. Secondly, to acknowledge publicly that wars of religion, crusades, and suppression of the other religion respectively contradict today's religious self-understanding of Christians and Muslims. A positive example in this respect is the fact that in the year 2000 *Pope John Paul II.* asked in public for forgiveness "for the violence [...] and for the distrustful and hostile attitudes sometimes taken towards the followers of other religions"¹ on the part of the Catholic Church. The effect of such apologies can be a purification of collective memory, can lessen the tensions caused by the potential for conflict accumulated in history, and contribute to the reconciliation between Christians and Muslims.

standing by the truth of history

KHOURY A first step could be to stand by the truth of history, which means admitting that for different reasons our history really carries some heavy burdens. Yet, one has to be aware of the danger thereby in emphasizing only that side of history and in this way deepening past conflicts even more by continuously speaking only about them, neglecting the positive components, which fortunately also exist.

common interests also a component of history

Therefore, without overlooking the differences, one should consider as an important contribution to solving conflict the elaboration of all the common interests as well that were in the past a component of history. The project mentioned in my preceding intervention is to be dedicated to exactly this target: motivating people to take up the tradition of the manifold, positive ways of cooperation between Christians and Muslims in the past and to continue it in forms that are adequate today. In this way one can make it clear at least to some people that the present relations do not necessarily have to be characterized by the former history of conflict, but can also mirror the manifold relations of friendship and mutual exchange in the past.

¹ Homily of the Holy Father on the "Day of Pardon", 12 March 2000, in: www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000312_pardon_en.htm

this Round Table as a sign of a new togetherness

BSTEH I consider the original impulse that motivated us all to conceive of the establishment of this Round Table to be our concern with a new solidarity between Christians and Muslims. Inherent in this is something qualitatively different and new compared with what has happened so far. The issue here is no longer simply that everyone is on his own, ready to do something in the interests of a good cause, but from the first to plan something *together* and to put it in the same way into practice. Based on our dialogue experiences of recent years, the time seemed to have come, at the beginning of this new millennium to make this kind of point: to address problems together and to indicate possible solutions, by everyone making their own contributions. The vision of a "Peace for Humanity" and "One World for All"² should stand its test in regard to certain problems that confront people in living together. This also motivated Professor Schabestari at our first Iranian-Austrian Conference in Tehran in 1996, to suggest establishing an international group of Muslims and Christians, which, politically independent, would address pressing problems in the living together of peoples today and thereby stand up particularly for the suppressed.³

with the common faith in God as its solid basis

Since the beginning of our dialogue meetings, faith in God, which Muslims and Christians share despite all their conceptual differences⁴, has been for me the solid basis of this cooperation. It is the faith in the living God, the God of heaven and earth, the God who created us and to whom we all return to render account of what we have or have not done in our lifetime and what we have suffered. Despite all the differences regarding the concrete forms of our concept of God in the Christian and in the Islamic traditions, of which we are aware and which were also repeatedly touched upon during our meetings, the fact has never been called into question that it is the one God in whom we all believe and in whom we all trust, who wants to guide us along his way. And it is also this faith in God that

² Such were the topics of our two International Dialogue Conferences in Vienna in the years 1993 and 1997.

³ M. M. Schabestari, Die Muslimen und Christen gemeinsamen Glaubensprinzipien und praktischen Pflichten als tragfähige Stützen ihres gerechten Zusammenlebens, in: A. Bsteh – S. A. Mirdamadi (eds.), Gerechtigkeit in den internationalen und interreligiösen Beziehungen in islamischer und christlicher Perspektive, Mödling 1997, p. 387.

⁴ Accordingly, the topic of our first Christian-Islamic encounter in the year 1977 in St. Gabriel was "The God of Christianity and Islam" (published in: A. Bsteh [Hrsg.], Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams [Beiträge zur Religions-theologie; 2], Mödling 1978, ²1992).

is to be the solid and unshakable basis of our joint efforts towards helping to shape the world in peace and justice and in the spirit of reconciliation.

not forgetting
history, but
turning towards
the present

T. MAHMOOD In his lecture Professor Khoury rightly emphasized that the centuries of history cannot be eradicated. Yet, what is past should not be decisive for the shaping of international relations and of relations between the religious communities today. We cannot forget history, but we should let it be the concern of historians and direct all our endeavours towards the tasks of the present.

discovering anew
the message
of peace in our
religions

Our group wants to commit themselves to establishing peace in the world, above all religious peace. Our endeavours are oriented towards this target, and together with many others who are seeking the same goal, in our Scriptures and in the history of our religions, we are going to seek elements which can help us to establish a social order of peace for humanity. Such an endeavour needs encouragement, for there is much that could discourage us in our efforts. The message of people who together commit themselves to establish a new order for people living together should be carried to all parts of the world. All that serves peace and is revealed by them in their own religions should be accepted gratefully by the whole world. These endeavours to rediscover the message of peace in our religions and to pass it on represent a great service needed by the world for its progress on its way into a peaceful future.

not making our
endeavours
depend on the
media

S. MAHMOOD Although I am convinced that the media can also contribute much to bringing people together, I still see the reverse of the coin as well: the media often contribute much that causes us to drift apart, handing down misinformation instead of giving information about the real facts. The media are in fact just a medium, and in the hands of vested interest groups they can be used fairly and correctly or they can be abused. Hence, in our efforts towards bringing people together, we should not depend on the media.

education – the
best approach
towards problems
of the past
and the present

Secondly, I liked the way Dr. Gabriel put together the two burdens that we have to carry: inequality as the burden of the present – which I mentioned yesterday in the sense of poverty and deprivation – and conflict as the burden of the past. Perhaps the governments and the people who are interested in maintaining the pres-

ent dominant inequality can be moved to change their minds by means of legal regulations. And as regards the question as to how we can cope with the phenomenon of conflict as the burden of the past, we have to be aware of the fact that our memory of what is past remains rooted in the present and repeatedly confronts us with this problem. The best way to address this seems to me, as I described in my lecture yesterday, to lie in turning people towards education. Ultimately, general knowledge and education can be the best response to *both* burdens, because they can correct the clichés, which continuously convey a wrong or often exaggerated idea of certain historical events. We all have, each of us in the interest of his own cause, very consciously made use of these clichés in order to discredit the argument of the other. It is certainly very urgent to correct these wrong clichés dating from the rich fund of controversies that were habitually practised between our religious communities. How valuable this can be was shown recently in the work of the reconciliation commission in South Africa. Thus education and general knowledge can finally pave the way towards living in this world in dignity, they can at the same time reduce inequality among peoples and contribute towards their living together in peace.

adopting toler-
ance and friend-
ship in edu-
cational syllabi

IQBAL One can only agree with what has been said before and not tire of underlining the importance of a sound education. The issue here is to motivate the different nations to adopt in their educational syllabi elements which concern the situation of everyone and are likely to resolve the differences between them and to clarify what links all followers of religions with each other. Here the focus will above all be on the elements of tolerance and friendship and on the promotion of goodwill.

common talks
about school-
books and syllabi

POTZ Practising tolerance begins at school. Thus, during talks with Turkey about schoolbooks and syllabi, it was decided in Austria to check mutually the pertinent syllabi and schoolbooks and to remove the prejudices of old. In this context the special concern was the wars against the Turks and the sieges, which particularly in class are in danger of being turned into a myth. Of course one should not forget history, yet it is much more important to look at the many positive things that also happened in the course thereof. After all, during the greater part of our common history there was peace.

in Byzantium
also centuries of
a peaceful living
together

city, under Byzantine rule there were centuries of a fruitful living together of people from both religious communities. Therefore, as Professor Tahir Mahmood already emphasized, in view of the past it would be important not to see it only as a history of conflict, but in the domain of education to present it also as the history of manifold encounters.

the merits of
A. Falaturi's work

BSTEH In this context the name should be particularly mentioned of our common friend *Abdoldjavad Falaturi*, who participated in our first international conference in the Vienna Hofburg in the year 1993, "Peace for Humanity". Knowing that education can also be oriented towards confrontation, he performed a great service in directing the education of young people towards a new common future by setting out with people of the same mind to free schoolbooks in Germany from everything that contradicted the spirit of truthfulness and integrity and the spirit of tolerance. This mutual authorization of schoolbooks was to become a decisive and positive step on the way towards a new orientation in education, in order to open up young people towards the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect for what is sacred to the followers of different religious communities. What the teacher then does with it in class is again a question of its own, but the foundation was once and for all laid for educating young people in integrity and respectfulness towards the other.

ideal of tolerance
often hard to be
put into practice

MIHÇIYAZGAN From what I have seen in my research work as a participating observer on educational practice, this lags far behind and is no more than a certain lip-service. Moreover, on many questions, we do not know at all what education for tolerance is supposed to look like. I call to mind for instance the question of sports – more precisely swimming instruction in Germany, in which Turkish girls were also to participate. There were many legal steps by means of which attempts were made to ensure that they also would be allowed to participate and that it would furthermore also be possible for them to take part in the journey of their classmates. These matters continued to be discussed in public and until today no answer has been found that would satisfy all parties. On the other hand

it can be observed that – for many perhaps not quite unexpectedly – in the German system of education contradictory tendencies developed at the same time, the more one approached an intercultural and inter-religious education. Thus, these theories, which show how important it is to practise tolerance and to educate people towards tolerance, can have the reverse effect on the level of practice and result in contradictory developments.

two concrete
problematic cases

POTZ Two concrete ways of proceeding in this delicate question of swimming instruction for girls may be briefly mentioned here: In a primary school in Vienna this question was very carefully addressed in a broad information campaign for the families of the children by speaking about what actually happens during this instruction and how seriously the supervision by the teachers is taken, whereupon all the fathers agreed to the swimming instruction for their children.

In another case at issue was a Swiss decision concerning a girl who, being 15 years old, could already make her own decision about her religion and who herself wanted to participate in the swimming instruction. The mother would have agreed, the father however wanted to forbid it. Here several problems overlap: what about the necessary agreement between the parents concerning educational measures? And above all: what about the right of religious self-determination of the girl aged 15 years?

BSTEH These concrete examples show that the target Professor Khoury is concerned with, to build up a new solidarity between the religious communities and their followers, cannot be attained if one ignores the very complex and problematic situations in practical life. Seen in this way it is a good thing that, in the sense of what was at issue in the lecture, we are now being confronted with respective practices. Since beside her scientific work within the framework of her "Institute for Muslim Minority Affairs" Professor Saleha Mahmood is also firmly engaged in the domain of education and training, I would like to ask her for her personal assessment of possibilities to prepare young people of today for developing an attitude of tolerance and solidarity for tomorrow.

education is
a process
of learning

S. MAHMOOD When we speak about education and training, we do not simply speak about the problems of syllabi in schools and about the question as to how we can get different nationalities to attend the same classes or to learn the same things. My interest in education goes beyond

that. It addresses teaching in the sense of a learning process, no matter whether the issue is ideas, concepts or methodologies. My concern is with the question how to impart knowledge that is accurate, balanced and fair, and which can allow individuals to deal with their real life situations.

the target is that people learn to make their own decisions

An educated person acts with determination. Whether one sweeps the streets or does something more sophisticated, as an educated person one anticipates better what one does and is thus capable of doing it better and more consciously, with more energy and more efficiency.

This is the reason why in principle I have great faith in education and training. On the other hand it is clear to me that training, just like communication, is no more than a medium – and it all depends on how one makes use of it. One can listen to others earnestly in order to understand them and to understand their ideas; but one can also misinterpret these ideas and even falsify them. Hence, education *per se* is not necessarily 'good' or 'bad'. It becomes good and positive only through the way one makes use of it and to what end. In everything we do it is decisive that we convey to young people the *right* values, the *right* education, etc. What is at stake is to educate them so that they can ultimately take their lives into their own hands, that they learn to make their own decisions and not simply leave it to others to decide what is good for them and for the people.

formerly 'in the name of God', now 'in the name of the state'

In this context I have begun to pay special attention to the role and the task of the state. In fact, it has been said that the state is not always focused on the true welfare of its people. In historical terms, 'state' is a relatively new phenomenon and in danger of being guided

by self-interest. The state is above the law, as it generally applies to the individual. It legislates the law, and decides what is right and good for people and acts accordingly. As far as the state is concerned, human life is to be preserved, but at times it pays in human life to save more lives as in the case of war and national conflict. In former times one could kill in the name of religion, now one can do it in the name of the state. We have now removed religion from the public space, but we have exchanged it for a new replacement in our lives, and this is the state. In my view the state could become the greatest oppressor in the modern world, a reality that suppresses human life, the dignity and the freedom of man. The oppression and injustice that was formerly done in the name of God and religion could now be done in the name of the state.

to open up the minds of young people also for other cultures

For this reason I am deeply concerned about these basic questions in the world of today. To what extent should we continue to offer our unchallenged reverence and obedience to the state as an entity? To what extent is the state really a true protector of human

rights, of human justice, and human dignity?

In my efforts to educate young people, I felt that educating them really opens up their minds. If we provide them with the proper equipment for reasoning, if through the natural sciences, sociology, and other sciences, we provide them with the necessary methodology and the respective access to the realities of their own life, then they will become more tolerant, they will begin to perceive other values and cultures. It is particularly this aspect which I consider to be the proper function of sociologists, to make young people sensitive to the fact that not only they themselves have a culture and true values, but that everyone who is a human being has a culture and values intrinsic to this culture. Yet, all this is possible only if we really succeed in opening their eyes to other peoples and to other cultures. We must help them to accept the contributions from other cultures with their own eyes and their own ears. This needs a lot of faith in mankind and of course presupposes great sensitivity and openness.

fostering a dialogue between religious and secular traditions

Who is to be the guardian in this endeavour? Will the religious leaders be able to take over the forefront of this effort, as we are presupposing it here and which, as has been mentioned before, was recently acknowledged by the United Nations? Accordingly, a council

of spiritual leaders would be formed to advise governments, so that in their decisions, for instance concerning genetic research, they will arrive at ethically and morally responsible decisions. When we raise the question as to who will be responsible for the decisions taken in these fields, it seems necessary to foster a dialogue between religious and spiritual traditions and secular traditions, in order to make some progress in our endeavor to confront these vital challenges that we face today on our way into the third millennium.

fundamental problems should be at issue here

SCHABESTARI At this point, just a brief remark on methodology: we should be aware that at issue here are *general* problems that confront us in the Islamic and in the Christian world; we are thereby concerned that they should be rightly conceived and with the attempts at resolving them. Some-

thing different are the topical problems which for instance minorities are facing in Europe, such as the problem mentioned of swimming instruction for girls from Muslim families; in order to resolve them, one has to proceed from certain theoretical presuppositions and search for practical possibilities to apply them. Thus in Iran the problem mentioned here is resolved by providing in the swimming pools separate hours of admission for female and male visitors. Whether now the theoretical presuppositions for this solution are acceptable or not is not what I would like to discuss here, I just want to point out how this problem, which is topical in Iran and other Islamic countries, is here and now practically resolved – and how, understandably, new problems arise, when these people go to Europe for instance. I would think that problems of this kind should not be dealt with here because of the specific orientation of our study group.

right of self-determination versus right of intervention of a third party POTZ My concern was not to discuss an individual problem such as swimming instruction for girls – which, as far as I know, has already been resolved in Austria in a way similar to the Iranian practice. I was actually concerned with the question as to how a young person's right of self-determination is to be handled when

this right collides with a father's right of protest against it. I wanted to point out this basic conflict in the context of what was said here about the education of young people. It is certainly inconceivable that in an education for self-determination an alien-determination for religious reasons in the longer term should be recognized.

self-determination and religious obedience MIHÇIYAZGAN In this much discussed question, I am, in the very same sense, concerned with the fundamental right of self-determination in the context of religious decrees, which in my view will be an essential part of the global order of the future. Is it the right of freedom, of being allowed to be oneself as one wants to be in the sense of a subject defining him/herself reasonably? And how is the question of religious obedience related to this: of an attitude towards a reality with which the subject is faced and to which he knows he is obligated?

how to assess the gender relations? On the other hand, I am very generally concerned with seeing people never as a spiritual phenomenon only, but also in their bodily reality. This means, in all relevant deliberations about the society of the future, the gender relationship would have to be included: the question whether it is important that we

are different, that there is a system of bi-sexuality and what importance has to be attributed to it.

concrete problems can point out basic questions BSTEH Our common deliberations at this Round Table are to be dedicated to the problems which humanity faces on its way into the future. As I see it, it is a good thing that thereby some actual implications are also raised, which are linked to these general problems, since difficulties often lie in the details. Doubtless, it is not our primary task to discuss such actual problems *in extenso* and to resolve them, it is however a good thing that they remind us not to forget how difficult the path is that lies before us, if we really want to attain a healthy living together of people of different cultural and religious traditions. For there the issue is, beside the religious differences, to take into account also all the other differences between people, whether they are cultural, psychological, sociological, historical, or conditioned in any other way.

tolerance has to become part of formation T. MAHMOOD At this point I would like to return to the question of education for tolerance for young people. This certainly cannot be done by constantly affirming solemnly: our religion is tolerant, our religion is tolerant – and if you do not agree, we will break your bones. This has to be done through the syllabi in schools, through what children are taught there. This is an instance from my country. Not long ago one started in schools to describe the arrival of the British colonial power in India as the “Christian invasion of India”. This had consequences. One just has to remember what has happened to the small Christian minority in India in recent years. In a similar way the advent in India of the central Asian kings and emperors had been described as the “Muslim invasion of India”, although in fact it had nothing to do with the centre of Islamic power in the Arab world, but came from Central Asia. This led to a hate-campaign against the Muslims, which lasted for years. Now the advent of the British is being described as a “Christian invasion”. This shows how important it is to introduce basic concepts such as tolerance directly into the syllabi of our schools, so that children are really brought up and educated in that spirit.

tolerance endangered by misuse on the part of politicians KHIDOYATOV Another observation on the question of tolerance and intolerance. Muslims and Christians themselves do not necessarily tend towards intolerance, towards fighting each other. They live together in a spirit of tolerance, as for instance, in many parts

of India, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims respect each other and share the field of public life. Intolerant conduct and mutual animosity is sometimes introduced among them by the politicians, as for instance in the case of the Kashmir problem. I was in India when *Mother Teresa* died. Although she was a Catholic nun, all India was in deep grief at her death. It was a true national mourning. All the Indians, one billion people, at that time listened to what was said about *Mother Teresa* – it was a wonderful expression of the deep respect for another religion. The Prime Minister and the whole government attended her funeral in Calcutta, three days of national mourning were declared. In my view this was the true expression of respect for religion itself. However, in this respect the politicians can do the greatest harm, when they mix their political interests with religion in order to use it as an instrument for their own purposes. Unfortunately this happens all over the world.

authority of the state legitimate, that of religion illegitimate?

S. MAHMOOD First I would like to take up the question of self-determination, which was introduced in connection with the young girl, whose father intervened in her decision. Is this really a restriction of her freedom, because she obeys a power beyond human reason, whilst the right granted to her by the state to make her own decisions in this or that respect at the age of 16 or 17 is within human reason? This obviously presupposes that the authority of the state is right and legitimate, in contrast to that of religion, which is considered to be wrong and illegitimate. To what extent is the issue here really a question of legitimacy? We simply presuppose that the state is a legitimate authority over and above all other authority.

question of gender not relevant in Christianity?

On the other hand I was surprised that from the Christian point of view gender should not be relevant. At this point I remember a NGO forum at the United Nations in New York, where a public discussion was held.

Three women, who gave the impression that they represented their respective religious communities – Christianity, Islam, and Judaism –, condemned religion as the greatest demon in their lives. The most popular speaker at this forum was *Frances Kissling*⁶, a Catholic nun; the title of her speech was “Lost in the Pelvic Zone. The Catholic Church’s Obsession with the Woman’s Body”. Their whole argument was that the religions are ob-

sessed with the idea of controlling women and sex – upon which all three representatives fully agreed. They were all condemning religion as being *the* problem in the lives of women. However this may be, it seems to show that religions indeed have a position on the gender issue, except of course the feminists, who maintain that there are not two but five genders. Whatever one’s personal thoughts may be on this issue, it seems to be clear that for Christianity and Islam this is apparently a relevant issue: they are both ‘obsessed’ by this question of gender. Now, if I am right in understanding what was said here before, it was, that in Christianity gender does not play a role?

gender question like political question – a question of power

GABRIEL The shaping of gender relations in a certain society is not exclusively, but also a question of power. In this sense the gender question coincides with the political question. In the Bible it is said in one passage that, as a consequence of the Fall, man will dominate woman (cf. Gn 3,16). Here the reality of a wicked world is described, of which patriarchy is part, hence the claim of the man, in principle to dominate the woman. This is not specifically Christian, but is to be found in all religions, but in secular society as well. It is a general anthropological problem. In the Bible however, gender equality ranks first. When God made man, “male and female he created them” (Gn 1,27). Both have the same dignity and together they represent man. As said before, the issue is a general problem of misuse of power, which is to be found throughout history and also in the history of all religions.

„unity in dialogue”

KHOURY Again as to the question of an exclusive or inclusive character of religions, which Mr. Ott mentioned [cf. above pp. 85 f.]. I think that in this respect we should see a further alternative in the form of the dialogue of the religions. Whilst the exclusive understanding excludes the others, the inclusive understanding always risks subordinating them to oneself. An understanding by dialogue is open to what one finds good in the others, it proceeds from the fact that on our way towards God we are all treading an infinitely wide path towards knowledge of the truth. Hence, the form of a dialogue of the religions seems to me to be more suitable.

OTT I can agree with that. In my intervention I mentioned the lecture of a Korean sociologist, who used these terms. Yet, I am also of the opinion that inclusivism is already a theological theory or a theological thesis. Faced with an exclusive understanding of religion, I am above all concerned with

⁶ cf. www.catholicsforchoice/media/francis.htm

keeping in mind a non-exclusive religiousness, no matter how it may be more closely understood.

BSTE⁷ "Unity in dialogue" could in fact be a key term for our path into the future. Whilst 'exclusivism' with its tendency to exclude the other, is a catchword for what ultimately has to be overcome, 'inclusivism' offered itself in practice as a positive counter-term. Understood in a personal way, the term 'inclusivism' would even allow for the respective free space for the other: when I take the other to my heart, this would, in my understanding, indeed be the best guarantee that the other is *not* taken over by me, but, on the contrary, that he is given the free space to be who he is and who he wants to be – be it in friendship, in the family, in whatever relationship. Yet, during the relatively short history of this term, a misconception, if not an unhealthy understanding of what it actually denotes has crept in: the danger of saying that a true Muslim is in fact an anonymous Christian, but also conversely that a true Christian actually is an anonymous Muslim. Here all of us increasingly feel ill at ease.

The term "unity in dialogue" used in the encounter with the believers of other religious communities would, on the other hand, open up a rewarding horizon that is open towards the mystery of God. Together with Professor Ott and Professor Khoury we have, for many years, tried to foster this liberating alternative to a merely exclusive or inclusive understanding. This may perhaps really be the way leading into a good future: building up this unity in dialogue in mutual respect and in togetherness seeking our way towards the ineffable God.

⁷ On this term see W. Kasper, *Das Christentum im Gespräch mit den Religionen*, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie)*; 5), Mödling 1987, pp. 105–130, here particularly pp. 118–130.

On the Necessity to Re-define what is Human

Ursula Mihçiyazgan

For me personally, mankind's most important problem on its way into the future is *the definition of what is human*. This has to be dealt with in a new way, due to developments on two different levels.

1. Processes of transformation in eroding borderlines

On the one hand – due to the increasing global network – the cultural, religious plurality in the interpretations of what is human can be experienced in a new way, which gives rise to the problem as to whether and how this plurality has to be safeguarded, what form will have to be given to unity and plurality.¹

On the other hand – due to the rapid development of biotechnology – the distinction between man and machine, life and death, animate or inanimate, is called into question, whereby the problem arises, as to whether and how the inviolable dignity of man is to be safeguarded. When embryos and 'the brain dead' are considered as being material, when genetic research claims to decode the mystery of life, to be able and indeed obliged to prevent diseases by means of gene manipulations and to calculate and evaluate the duration of life, when, as regards the body, through gene patents proprietary rights are established, the 'old' borderline has been transgressed for some time past: the human body's inviolability is being undermined from within.

Despite all diachronicity and opposing trends, both developments result in a transformation of every society. For the first time, through the network, a space for global communication has come into being, where information – also about biotechnological 'progress' – is exchanged. However, not everyone by far can make use of it. The injustice of the growing gap between rich and poor becomes more and more obvious.

¹ A topic that was extensively dealt with at the 2nd Vienna Dialogue Conference, published in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *One World for All. Foundations of a Socio-Political and Cultural Pluralism from Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, New Delhi 1999.

These processes affect every society, 'Western' and 'non-Western', '(later)modern' as well as 'not (yet) modern', if such differentiations make sense or if it still makes any sense at all to speak of 'societies'. 'States' certainly still exist, but all societies have long ago been 'thrown open', and every attempt at closing oneself off and excluding oneself from these developments seems doomed to fail. Whereas the outlines of a more and more uniform 'world culture' can already be recognized, at the same time the resistance is growing to these tendencies towards homogeneity.

When the parameters of the social structures as well as of the positions taken up by individuals are called fundamentally into question, there is the danger that the rich achieve the power to define the newly developing parameters and that injustices become entrenched.

2. Setting up safeguards – yet how?

In order to safeguard the dignity of the individual, mutual justice and peace for all², the demand for the establishment of inter- or supranational institutions is justified. However, the norms forming the basis of these institutions should be clarified, because these will always have to contain statements regarding what makes a human being a human being, how what is human is defined – and what norms for humanity shall be valid, how humanity is defined.

For the sake of justice and peace, a consensus in dialogue on this subject is necessary.

Yet, is this at all possible? Postmodern theorists are sceptical about concepts in dialogue. They have doubts about the liberating effects of human reason and the possibility, as acting individuals to reach an understanding and to be able to influence the norms that determine life. They therefore try in various ways to conceive of the subject as being free and at the same time as being subjugated, i. e. not based on the possibilities (to be capable of reasoning and of acting), but on the limitations.

Their criticism carries much weight and should be taken into account in efforts made to master the problems of humanity:

² Cf. Vienna Declaration 1993, Point I.2 – published in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*, New Delhi 1998, p. 278.

2.1 Opening up the horizon of mutual understanding by dialogue

Firstly: It is important to take the power of discourse into account and to ensure that in mutual understanding by dialogue the horizon of what is regarded as negotiable is not too narrow.³ Thus it can be observed in the international Human Rights discourse that priority is constantly given to a specific interpretation of being human. It is hard to formulate human rights in such a way that the opposing drafts (presented later)⁴ whose common denominator is the criticism of the individualistic orientation of human rights⁵ have the same weight as the *Universal Declaration* of 1948. The efforts (also) to take into account the 'social nature' of man by complementing the 'Declaration of Human Rights' by a 'Declaration of Human Duties' is bound to fail, because after protecting the individual against interference by others – in the first place by the state – this unconditional protection cannot be made dependent on conditions (e. g. on fulfilling one's duties towards others). Hence, another definition of being human has to be sought, in which individuality and collectivity are equally taken into account.

Secondly: The issue is to define a human being not only by capacities and possibilities (as regards autonomy), but much more clearly by the necessities and limitations of the individual (as regards heteronomy).

2.2 Normative orientations to be developed on the basis of the religions

During the last conference, some participants required that anthropocentric humanism would have to be superceded: in reality, human beings could not find any norm, except in the religions.

There are some philosophers who also require the same, however in the opposite direction: neither the religions nor humanism have succeeded in taming 'what is wild' in man, this would now have to be achieved by means of a programme of genetic breeding. Resistance is still mounting against such proposals, in practice however, it has for a long time been obvious that efforts towards selection have been made, sperm and ova markets have for a long time proved the will to breed of those who can afford the attempt to determine their own offspring's gender, skin colour, and

³ Cf. *Nasira Iqbal's* demanding an effective methodology, in: N. Iqbal, *Juridical Structures and Political Guarantees of a Pluralism on the National and International Level. A Discussion Paper*, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 1) p. 166.

⁴ Meant are: African Charter (1981), Cairo Declaration (1990), Bangkok Declaration (1993).

⁵ Cf. *Sayed M. Khamene'i's* criticism of individualism: *id.*, *The Claims of Religious Truth and Socio-Political Pluralism*, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 1) p. 120.

'intelligence'. For consideration is the limitation of these efforts to optimize and to perfect, not only because – if they 'succeeded' – it would result in an increased exclusion of the 'non-optimized', above all because at this point selfdefinition translates into the presumption to control others, namely future human beings. Today therefore the norms of humanness have to be linked more clearly than ever before to the temporal dimension and in formulating them it is not only one generation that has to be taken into account.

And what is to be the basis for developing these norms? As scarcely as they are to be found in reality, just as scarcely are they to be found in cultures. For cultures are freely moving systems where meanings are continuously changing. Religions also change, they however have a hard core of inviolable positions, which come into effect independently of the (non-)belief of the individual subject. Perhaps this is why the religions are to be considered the scaffolding or the 'soul' of the cultures.⁶ In any case, it is necessary (though difficult), to form a 'set' where all religions merge and on this basis to design norms of humaneness that surmount all religions.

2.3 Proceeding from the fact that man is bound

In relation to our efforts this means searching for ways of defining the meaning of being human, which are rooted in Christianity and in Islam, and thereby to consider religion not only as a possibility for the subject to give an explanation for its selfinterpretation, but as a regulating system, which defines the relation of the subject to others: religion is binding, it binds the subject to a higher power and to others. Above all it reminds us that we are all creatures of our creator.

However, being reminded of this fact is no longer binding for 'non-believers' and for those who have declared that their faith/their religion is a private matter.

How then can the subject's state of being bound be formulated?

In the perspective of the two religions (in the Christian formulation: on the basis of what is excluded, in the Islamic formulation: on the basis of the limitations), a claim must be made to extend the modern concept of the subject. Alongside the capacity for selfdefinition, the relationship with others must be accentuated, and this horizontally as well as vertically.

⁶ Cf. H. Schneider, Legal Structures and Political Guarantees of a Pluralism on National and International Levels, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 1) pp. 191–258, here: p. 192.

If "I think, therefore I exist" is the fundament from which the modern subject draws its capacity to act and its self-awareness, because it is its capacity to reason that enables it to think and to make decisions, then one has to criticize the self-relatedness of the subject contained in this definition, the disregard of the enabling ground for the subject to become a subject. In need of being corrected is not only the disregard of the transcendental dimension, but also the disregard of history, of the dimension of the human life-span, of the fact that the subject was born and will die.

There is no I without a You⁷, nor would it exist without those from whom the I (as well as the You) has come.

Therefore one has to proceed from the fact that man was born. First and foremost, everything else, being human means being born.

In my opinion it is not sufficient to make the acknowledgment of the You a moral obligation, because this is either fulfilled by the I or not. Founding an education towards peace on the respect of others is too short-sighted as well, because a moral obligation is too weak to express the way in which the I is in need of the others.

2.4 The emphasis on being born in freedom and in bonds

Proceeding from the fact that man was born, brings up the question as to whether a definition of what is human is possible without referring to the gender of the human beings, without raising the problem of the equality or difference as between man and woman: so far all human beings were born of a woman. From this to derive specific gender rights ('mother rights') – or even to define women's rights via the capacity to give birth – would exclude some women from such rights and result in a differentiation of rights, which is precisely what is to be avoided in a universal declaration. In addition the claim for women's rights is based on the assumption of 'natural' capacities and duties, specific to women, which are different from those of the standard male human being (*l'homme*).

If the two-gender-system automatically results in discriminating against women, because in every binary coding one term has priority, if this system is rooted in both religions, even though it is given different emphasis, then this discrimination can neither be compensated by claiming equal ranking nor by asserting differences. It is all the more important to take

⁷ M. Talbi, Cultural Identity and the Problem of a Global Culture, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), op. cit. (fn.1) p. 283.

care that the definitions of what is human and what is humane are not systematically formulated in a way that discriminates against women.

Here too, considerations have to be based on the limits: being born not only constitutes conditions of freedom, but also of relationships. Bonds are negatively connoted, as long as the subject's relations and bonds are assessed as opposing freedom, as long as the subject's development is defined above all as detaching and severing itself, as freeing itself from dependencies. Just as from caring for someone no claim of possession can be deduced, no dependencies should be constructed on the basis of needs. Freedom and bonds are not contradictions, which the subject would have to balance against each other, they condition each other. It is necessary to think – and to live – in terms of bonded freedom as well as freed bondage. Both are rooted in both religions. And at this point the religions should be given the chance to unfold their ethical power.

Questions and Interventions

can being human
be defined as
being born?

OTT When the American computer "Deep Blue" defeated world chess champion *Garri Kasparov*, which at that time was a great sensation, the computer was obviously in a certain respect more intelligent than its human counterpart or at least his equal. I am convinced that to *Kasparov* his defeat was a painful experience, and I am equally sure that the computer "Deep Blue" did not enjoy its victory. This shows the difference between being human and being a robot: it is the capacity of man, not only to combine and to operate in a quasi-rational way, but beyond this to feel pain or joy, and also hope or fear, delight, disappointment, and many other states of mind that are truly *human*. So far this has been sufficient for me as a *criterion* for the *proprium* of what is human, which was indeed above all the issue in the very concentrated lecture of Dr. Mihçiyazgan. What does the fact that man is *born* now add to being human?

intercultural and
bioethical levels
should be linked

MIHÇIYAZGAN First a preliminary remark: in my lecture I was concerned with linking two discourses – with the interreligious, intercultural discourse in the globalized world with the many dialogistic concepts and attempts at communication on the one hand, and with the so-called bioethical discourse that is utterly distant from the former on the other. Both discourses should not take place independently of each other, but linked with each other, as for instance in the question of cerebral death or of pre-natal diagnosis, which is for instance in India very topical, because (disfavouring girls) it entails a selection among unborn children. These and similar questions are of fundamental importance for all societies and should therefore not be taken up and discussed by the specialists immediately concerned, but also in the context of their cultural and religious implications. This linking of the two levels of the discourse was in fact my main concern.

'being born' in
the sense of the
UN Human
Rights Declaration

Another question, which Professor Ott raised, is the question concerning the conscious, the materiality or immateriality of the conscious. The question whether the computer too can feel joy or not is after all no longer so easy to answer, since neurobiologists and related specialists simultaneously explain to us that our brain also works like a computer, that we for instance feel joy only because the brain receives the corresponding signals from the body.

The fact that in my deliberations on the question of what is human and its being threatened in the present development of humanity my focus on man's being born has something to do with the fundamental definition of human nature as expressed in the United Nations Human Rights Declaration. Here, in view of gene-technology, embryo-research, or the possibility of cloning, the fact that humans are born is alone important. However this soon raises the question of women's rights and the self-definition of women.

making definite limits understandable also to non-religious people?

KHOURY In Dr. Mişçiyazgan's exposition the issue was, amongst others, to take up the fact that certain limits, the overstepping of which would not be allowed in the perspective of our religions and which would have to be presented in an understandable language also to people who think differently. In this context above all secular people and even non-believers were mentioned, who would agree to accept these limits as well. My question would now be what kind of limits are these. If it is to be possible to make them understandable to people as well who have no religious faith, are there then in fact limits that are acceptable to all?

is not here the issue above all arguments?

Following from this: would the issue here really be no more than the proper language, the search for adequate formulations, or is it not much more the logical basis, and thus arguments, as to why these limitations are apt

to legitimize the inviolable dignity of man and to guarantee it in the midst of all those threats, which today strongly cast doubt on such arguments?

,vertical' as connecting the preceding and the oncoming world?

Finally, in Dr. Mişçiyazgan's lecture a vertical and a horizontal dimension was mentioned. If a secular vertical dimension is to be understood as a linking with the preceding and the oncoming world, for me the question arises as to whether this could not be misleading linguistically if one says that the religious element could be included in these categories. In the sense of our understanding of religion, the vertical dimension after all means a linking with the transcendent world, more closely with God, but not with the preceding and the oncoming world.

definition of man sought that is acceptable also for non-religious people

MIŞÇIYAZGAN One can in fact call this a 'confidence trick', for in fact the dimension of transcendence is something very different from the historical, temporal dimension. Yet, the difficulty remains, if one maintains the target of searching for a definition of what is human, where we, seeing it in our religious perspective, have

to give up nothing, but which for others is nevertheless acceptable. In this search I am now getting to the point of insisting on man's being born. For: faith in God the Creator entails for man the fundamental definition of being created by God and for me this implies the question as to how this can be translated into a world of secular thinking.

do religions not have for the world a message of their very own?

KHOURY Do religions always have to find adequate answers to the questions of the secular world? In decisive questions, do they not have a message that is indeed not in keeping with what fits in with the secular world's categories of thinking? Does the message of

religions not open up to man a radically different, new dimension, which is more appropriate for protecting him? Is the issue really that we have constantly to take cognizance of the questions with which the world that understands itself as secular is preoccupied at a particular time and then try to give an answer taken from the treasures of our religions? Sometimes the offensiveness of the message is in fact the message itself, in order to motivate the world to consider whether its problems give rise to the right questions.

a bridge of understanding to other religions and to the secular world?

MIŞÇIYAZGAN Nevertheless, for me the central challenge remains, how we confront the secular world, where legal regulations, which concern the forms given in society to the fact of our being human, are formulated in secular terms. Thus, in the Charter of Human Rights, we have a document that is formulated entirely

in secular terms, despite the aspects of its Christian origin, and which, disregarding all interpretations, different as they may be, claims universal validity. If now this universal validity of human rights is called into question, if not in theoretical discourse, then ultimately in practice, by acts that are not in keeping with its terms, we have to face up to this. How can we, outside our own two religions, do justice to other religions also, and: how can we on the other hand formulate definitions of man in such a way that they are not from the outset rejected by people who think in a secular way, because these definitions are grounded on transcendence and in no way acceptable to the state, because they are conceived by religion and therefore independently of the state?

The issue is of course that we as believers stand by our conviction that our religion in addition to any secular content gives us something very different, and that this is important for all peoples. My problem starts where one

tries to transfer this religious content to the level where legal norms are established. Historically we have already overcome such transfers or after all criticized them in many respects. It is therefore so important for me to lay down the religiously relevant content in binding documents, without others feeling themselves pinned down to a transcendent dimension.

Christian origin of human rights – for others problematic

S. MAHMOOD The fact that every covenant concerning human rights basically originates in Christian traditions has of course made them questionable in the eyes of different cultures, including the Islamic world. This applies to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as to the Human Rights Covenants of the United Nations.

there are always human duties that correspond to human rights

If I understood Dr. Mihçiyazgan correctly, she proceeds from the fact that on the one hand it is necessary to formulate human rights and to agree on their binding nature, that obligations cannot be established in the same way however, because the rights of man must not be made dependent on the fulfillment of obligations. Certain standards, which one finds generally accepted worldwide, are seen as a possible way to promulgate certain human rights, however the possibility to pass a generally binding declaration of human duties is considered doubtful. Yet, in my view it is not possible to claim rights without obligations. A declaration of human duties would indeed be a necessary complement to the Declaration of Human Rights, since the rights of a person always imply obligations for others. In a vacuum there can be no accumulation of rights. I see both, rights and duties, as being inseparably tied to one another. This should also be taken into consideration by the United Nations agencies and its various charters, which at present concentrate entirely on human rights and overlook the concept of human duties. How should one for instance be able to speak of the rights of children, without at the same time speaking also of their obligations towards themselves, towards society, towards their own family? Thus it is high time to take these facts into account and to begin developing a declaration of human obligations comparable to the Declaration of Human Rights.

being human even without being born of a woman?

Finally: when it is said that every human being was born of a woman, we should not forget that in our world there are men and women who, as regards the question of children, completely free themselves from dependence on the opposite sex, although they know

that in this respect they will become dependent on very new technology. How do we confront such a prospect for the future?

being human implies rights and duties all in one

MIHÇIYAZGAN The fact that rights can never be thought of without duties made me start with a definition of human nature and not with human rights. Claims and obligations towards others and towards our Creator are indeed likewise linked with being human. In this close linking between being created and having-relations-with-others I tried to resolve this before-afterwards of 'first' rights 'and then' duties. Perhaps one should even conceive of this relation in a reverse order, because otherwise we no longer succeed in assessing rights and duties simultaneously; otherwise duties always lag behind rights, whereas, from the very beginning, rights demand thinking in terms of claims. However this may be, I was concerned with these close links between rights and duties on the one hand and with linking them to the relation between freedom and binding on the other. If, as it were, I rank binding higher and not only credit freedom highly, I can conceive of duties differently and not as limits to my freedom.

extra-uterine pregnancy – at the price of humanity

The question raised before by Dr. Saleha Mahmood is for me precisely one of the reasons why I am so intensively concerned with these topics: extra-uterine pregnancy as an option for men, as liberation for women – at the price of humanity. In terms of religion, a contradiction in the sight of the One who created us. As a Christian woman, I want to protest against it from a religious perspective, I would however like to include everyone in this determinant claim, those who do not think religiously as well.

S. MAHMOOD On this question we Muslims completely agree with you.

preserving what is human – what is our overall concern?

BSTEH Now, at the end of the discussion, I would like to underline how much the topic, which Dr. Mihçiyazgan chose for her lecture, impressed me. These problems exist already today and they are going to affect us even more. When the struggle to safeguard what is human comes up for discussion, does this not address the problem that is basic to all the problems with which humanity sees itself confronted on its way into the future?

Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Goga Abrarovic Khidoyatov

I.

Professor Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State of the USA and now professor at Harvard University, Nobel Prize Winner for 1973, who has a huge moral and political authority around the world, in his book "Diplomacy", published in 1994, asserts: "The order that is now emerging will have to be built by statesmen who represent vastly different cultures".¹ Taking into account his historical experience in international relations and his contribution to the development of peaceful processes and to solving the most acute world problems, there is no reason to doubt his concept that he proves conclusively in his book.

Statesmen manage political systems and international relations. But statesmen representing different cultures and civilizations have different points of view on world problems. "Dialogue among Civilizations" proclaimed by the UN in 2001 will establish new criteria in international relations and new fundamental values of which they avoided even any mention earlier. Representatives of different cultures and civilizations will participate actively in working up such criteria and approaches.

In this connection modern politics should be closely linked to the so-called "peoples diplomacy", where various public organizations and institutions, religious groups, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc. are engaged. It is they who can play the main part in the "Dialogue among Civilizations" and promote the formation of a new world order.

II.

The UN declaration on "Dialogue among Civilizations" should be estimated to be the beginning of a great historical spiritual renewal of mankind and the lifting of its mentality. That means that all the main political forces in the world have agreed to ensure the triumph of the moral values and

¹ H. A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, London 1994, p. 27.

virtues common to humanity. Hatred and mistrust are to be eliminated in the world but with the special difficulty that neither science, nor theology, nor the psychoanalysis of *S. Freud*, nor the philosophers of all the ages had established their nature. And all the same they can be eliminated. Not with violence, not with persecution or annihilation but with spiritual renewal and intercommunication. The dialogue among civilizations is to lead to the beginning of trust among cultures and civilizations, to mutual respect and mutual understanding. This will lay the foundation of a new world order with new moral imperatives.

III.

Any declaration is to have a specific content that can ensure its effective fulfillment and make it a decisive means in the struggle for a new world order. It must have the strength that moves masses of people, determines their consciousness, presents them with specific aims and tasks.

The fulfillment of the declaration "Dialogue among Civilizations" is to lay down in this connection the following future tasks:

a) *To undertake mass computerization worldwide.* It is difficult to teach higher mathematics, but it is possible to master the computer when one is ten years old with the help of a two-week course. The computer will help children even in developing countries to reach rapidly the level of children from developed countries, to develop their mentality, to provide them with work. At the same time, the opening of credit lines for buying computers will help producing countries to raise their production, to work to improve them.

b) *To raise to a common educational level the people in developing countries.* In Pakistan only 30 % of population are literate, in Afghanistan 20 %, in India 60 %. How can there be a dialogue among civilizations when, on the one hand, developed nations have 100 % literacy, on the other hand, developing ones 20–30 %. Reference to a lack of money is not convincing. In Pakistan today billions of dollars are spent on nuclear arms, rockets, rendering assistance to the Taliban. In some developing countries there is a policy of deliberate drag in the development of school education, since an educated person demands the respect of his/her rights, support of the constitution and its institutions.

c) *Bilingualization of school education.* It is necessary for citizens to know one foreign language besides their native one. In China at present of 1,2 billion population only 1–2 million know some foreign language.

Practically in the whole of China it is impossible to find books in foreign languages. It limits the possibility for the development of the Chinese people, for no one people can develop outside the common world cultural-civilization proceedings. In India there is to be observed a sharp decline in the knowledge of English. This means that the country with almost one billion population also separates itself from the rest of the world. As a result, two countries, that have half of the world population and created ancient civilizations will be unable to participate actively and fruitfully in the dialogue between civilizations, since a dialogue through an interpreter is equivalent to a dialogue of the deaf in the dark. And translation cannot always do justice to the original.

d) *To introduce in all the schools of the world a subject "History of Civilizations".* It should be concise and should not conflict with common school programmes, but provide a systematic and logical introduction to the cultural-educational and teaching process of common human values, such as democracy, human rights, humanism, morality, racial tolerance which should be incorporated in it. This obligation could be fulfilled by the UNESCO.

e) *The church should play a decisive part in the moral upbringing of mankind.* Eventually, all the world civilizations are directly indebted for their emergence and development to the church. In 1998 India bid farewell to *Mother Teresa*. She was Albanian by birth, Catholic by faith and humanist by her beliefs. A three-day national mourning was proclaimed in India, the entire government of the country came to Calcutta to bid farewell to *Mother Teresa*. Since *Nehru's* funeral India had not seen such a powerful unity of the nation in its grief. She did a wonderful work in promoting God's outcast children and her activity gave root to fruitful offshoots. Her modest tomb in one of the Catholic temples became a place of worship for Indians, just as the tombs of *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Djawaharlal Nehru* and *Rabindra Nath Tagore*.

f) *Mother Teresa* had shown what tremendous possibilities and what spirit is embodied in the church, and mankind must profit from these. Compassion and justice are the pivotal foundations of the principles of the Old and New Testaments. They are the same in the Qur'an as well. The lack of these moral values in the second half of the 20th century brought forward these confessions of faith as world pillars for the spiritual unity of mankind that can be transformed into a common spiritual commandment in world relations.

g) *Jerusalem must become an independent free city, sovereign in domestic and foreign affairs.* Let it not become the bone of contention among groups in the Near East that are at enmity, but the place of their reconciliation. The experience of the Lebanon can become a good example for the practical fulfillment of friendship and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. The UN, within the framework of "Dialogue among Civilizations" should hold a special session of the General Assembly to solve this issue once and for all and work out its status.

h) *It is necessary to develop more widely world tourism.* This development of tourism should take place under the slogan "Dialogue among Civilizations" and be conducted on the basis of a single programme on certain routes.

IV.

Any declaration should be closely connected with the specific realities of the present and respond to the challenges that they present to the human society. It must be founded on the main socio-political, social, and economic processes directed towards the future.

At present the major process determining the development of the world community is the globalization of world economy. Globalization is a highly progressive process facilitating a common growth in the welfare of mankind, bringing together various nations and continents and prompting an unheard-of acceleration in the scientific-technological revolution. Its closely related component is the Internet system that can provide time and space for a dialogue of civilizations. Without Internet the idea of such a dialogue would practically be left in the domain of good wishes and impractical illusions. The growth of the possibilities of Internet mean the growth of possibilities for the dialogue among civilizations.

At the same time, globalization has its negative sides and destructive consequences also. It deepens the polarization of the human community. At one pole unheard-of fortunes are concentrated that are not always made legally. At the other pauperization is increasing that does not always correspond to the wealth produced. The domination by super giants of capital financing in world economic relations leads to abuses that represent the most dangerous challenges to modern civilization. They generate social animosity and envy on a world scale that find their expression in separatism, the spread of world terrorism, religious extremism, aggressive na-

tionalism and chauvinism, organized crime, the increase in drug traffic, and many other criminal phenomena. Moral values, human virtues, ethical principles in these conditions are no more than empty dreams.

This is why measures for eliminating the negative consequences of globalization must be taken. Mankind should act to bring help to Africa in this connection. Africa is the birthplace of man, in its history it created an original civilization. Black athletes from the continent impress the world with their achievements. But now it is dying. Poverty, diseases, despoliation by giant companies, complete disturbance of ecology are killing it. It is as if the world forgot about Africa.

Human society must help Africa and restore it to health. I propose to put into effect in Africa my own concept of a 'Marshall Plan', that brought Europe back to health and restored its economy destroyed by the war. The USA, Western Europe, Japan, and perhaps Russia can become its sponsors. The chairman of the committee for the execution of such a plan could be the former president of the South African Republic *Nelson Mandela*, an honest and decisive statesman embodying the principles of the 20th century.

The restored Africa will become a continent of the restored original civilization. And in the future it will contribute considerably to the dialogue between civilizations and give it the significance of a historic process on a world scale.

The dialogue between civilizations cannot of course solve all the problems of the present time. Its task is in introducing spirituality into world politics, in working up moral-ethical criteria for solving interstate problems, in bringing peoples together and helping them to eradicate hatred and enmity.

Questions and Interventions

shari'a and
the legal order
in general

KHODR What form should the relations have between *shari'a*, civil law, and the state?

KHIDOYATOV In the secular state, the codices of civil and criminal law are the basis for humans living together.

For that part of the country where the Muslims live – in the *mahalla* – it is the *shari'a*: according to it questions of civil and of criminal law are decided for the local population. One can of course also appeal to state law.

As to the *shari'a*, it is understood very differently in different countries – different for instance in Chechnia, in Kazakhstan or in Uzbekistan. In the domain of jurisprudence and in the practical application of the law, there are in every country relevant scholars. In the context of Central Asia's islamization, the problem of the *shari'a* was very topical.

togetherness
based on equal
rights becomes
more and more
important

BSTEK When we think of the future, we have to expect that society in all the countries of the world will increasingly be composed of differing parts of the population, as for instance in Austria the number of Muslims in the population is steadily growing. Thus, when we think of the future, the question will become more

and more important, as to how in the different countries, for Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or followers of other religions, the possibility will be guaranteed to live according to their religious persuasions as citizens enjoying equal rights without discrimination of any kind. In the world of tomorrow there will perhaps be minorities only, seen in a world-wide dimension, we will all thus form minorities and have to learn to live as minorities. How will this be possible whilst maintaining human dignity, which social, legal, and political presuppositions will be necessary for it? How do you see this in the perspective of your country?

transition
from totalitarian
towards
democratic
forms of thinking

KHIDOYATOV We all know of the great problem concerning the interaction between the different religious denominations, the practical shaping of their mutual relations. Do we not have to start from the fact that this is just a special role that is played in the general transition from totalitarian regimes to the new democratic

society? In my view, in this change a specific role will be due to religion. And to a high degree it will be a matter of interaction here. In this respect I am for instance thinking of the fact that in our country

today via television the Muslims are acquainted in a very novel way with Christian celebrations and vice versa. The daily television programmes contain something about the prayers of the Muslims, but also about how the Christians praise God, and I see therein an important expression of mutual tolerance and an interesting exchange between them. People try to live together in calm and peaceful conditions. In this part of the world there have never been fanatic developments in the relations of religions with one another. When I for instance call to mind Tashkent or Samarkand, there were in Central Asia numerous Christian Churches, since, from ancient times, many Nestorians and Catholics lived there. Thus I am of the opinion that with us people have character traits that do not tend towards negative developments in relations between the followers of different religions. And peaceful relations between the different believers may be seen as the best guarantee for the change in society.

Central Asia –
starting point of
important
teaching traditions

Moreover, over the centuries the influence of Islam in Uzbekistan, as well as all over Central Asia, has been very great. Thus there were in Uzbekistan three places that were considered the centres of the Islamic doctrine: Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent – places of

great renown in the whole Islamic world, where one went from all over the world in order to be educated in the schools there. Decisive for Islam of Central Asia has always been a definitely peaceful attitude, as was in keeping with the great teaching traditions of the Hanafis and the Mu'tazilis. It is well known that particularly here in Central Asia great progress was made in the sciences, as in general knowledge altogether. *al-Bukhārī* (died 870), who became famous all over the Islamic world through his *Ḥadīth*-collection, in one of the Prophet's sayings hands down a statement that is remarkable in this context: "Emperors and empires may vanish like smoke, wisdom and science alone will be eternal." In Pakistan for instance, I found in every household these *Ḥadīths*, which *al-Bukhārī* had collected. The interpretation of the Qur'ān contained in it was of great importance for the education of people. One of their principles is tolerance towards other religious professions.

thinking
concretely of
which common
projects?

KHOURY Subsequent to this plea for a dialogue between civilizations, which is to become effective in practice, the first question that arises for me is: of which common projects could one here think of *in concreto*? Furthermore, Professor Khidoyatov proposed a pro-

ject, a Marshall-Plan for Africa, within whose framework Christian and Islamic institutions would also cooperate. My problem now is how this is to be realized, since it is already difficult, if not impossible, to reach effective cooperation between charitable institutions for which Protestant or Catholic Christians are responsible in realizing certain aid projects.

How could problems, which in this context too constantly arise between Christians and Muslims, be mastered, so that in fact aid projects could be effected, which are common and supported by both.

goodwill and the
courage to make
small steps

KHIDOYATOV Just one thing is needed: goodwill. Goodwill can overcome all difficulties. In this way it has also been possible to speak with each other here at this "Round Table". Similarly, some time ago we had a great

conference in Tashkent, in which many people participated. Perhaps at the moment we cannot yet say precisely how far we have progressed on our way in search of a new togetherness, because we cannot look into the heart of the many who, in the broad mass of believers in our religious communities, have a great longing to get closer to each other. Every step on this path, which is aimed at getting to understand each other better, can help in the endeavour to create a new situation in our world, a new atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance.

In as far as it depends on the politicians, this dialogue will constantly be in danger of being cast in the mould of what is presently happening in the Near East. Among Christians and Muslims, however, the great majority wants something else: they want to shake hands. In order to progress in this way, I propose to introduce in our schools the subject 'History of Civilizations and Cultures'. One sees the magnificent cathedrals such as that in Cologne, or Islamic cities such as Lahore or the wonderful Taj Mahal in India, one can as it were touch with one's hands the great cultures that the religions have brought forth. The ultimate target of these efforts towards the dialogue of cultures is like a horizon that keeps drawing away from us the more steps we take towards it. Incessantly we have to engage ourselves for it, in different ways we have to fight for this ideal. We have to go on and on. It depends on us ourselves.

,interaction' and
,dialogue'

S. MAHMOOD On the one hand I would like to refer to the differentiation made between interaction and dialogue, which, if I understood him correctly, Professor Khidoyatov made at one point in his deliberations. It seemed as if interaction was placed in a position ranking above dialogue. One may then ask if

interaction and dialogue were really two different things? For in sociology we understand the term 'interaction' in a neutral sense: there can be interactions that have different and even opposing effects, and the most different targets. What kind of interaction was meant, where the issue was to deepen mutual understanding of religious values?

On the other hand I am concerned with regard to the question as to how long in Central Asia, Islam slept through the decades of the Soviet rule, for there were after all people in the population who, in their interactions, were more aware of their Islamic heritage and others, who were less aware of it.

KHIDOYATOV 'Interaction' means engagement in the interests of a task, of a certain project, in order to realize it in a common effort. Thus in a common undertaking, the interaction of many would be necessary in order to resolve at least in part the problem of education in the countries of Asia and Africa by supplying schools with computers. Here the issue is not so much talking with one another, but acting together. Thus at the conference in Tashkent already mentioned we only spoke about various projects and undertakings all over the world, for instance about art preservation, e. g. of shrines and temples, or about irrigation projects. Speaking thus about 'interaction' would have to be understood in the light of cooperation of Christian and Islamic countries in realizing such projects.

Politics of Open Space as a Challenge to States and Religions

Richard Potz

I.

The globalization of central areas of life gives increasing room for the experience of the common destiny of all human beings. This creates a situation that is an enormous challenge to the great religions. They find themselves increasingly confronted with compelling facts that require global decisions. Yet, this world, for which decisions have to be made, is neither Christian nor Islamic, neither believing nor unbelieving, but it is as it is, namely – amongst others – Islamic as well as Christian, believing as well as unbelieving. Thus, everything we are facing globally is inevitably diverse.

Religious communities, which have to deal with the state and thereby with locally limited political structures, are therefore confronted with a fundamental problem. The state and its institutions may not have evolved to their end, but they are losing their importance on the political level, while, on the other hand, supranational and global institutions come to the fore. Difficulties arise above all where religions dominate state-political structures because the globalization of politics confronts them with the danger of losing their constitutionally standardized privileges. However, difficulties also exist, when religions have so far been suppressed through state measures. They now have to learn to find their way out of the underground and persecution and to take up their public tasks in freedom. For religions, which have already learned to fulfil their essentially political task separately from state institutions, the situation is – although not as dramatic – still difficult enough.

Sooner or later, state sovereignty will only be legitimized on the one hand via the ability to permit within its polity adequate participation in the global sharing of responsibility and on the other to facilitate within the polity actions of a shared responsibility.

II.

Concerning areas where globalization has progressed relatively far, and where accordingly the need to react is great for political structures as well as for religious institutions:

1. International economic globalization increasingly ignores state borders. The unbridled economic expansionism of international concerns makes use of fears and prejudices caused by regional political factors and unfortunately also by religion, in order to check the globalization of protective correctives. This is true for legislation in Western countries in the wake of the interests of a supply-oriented world economy as well as for the leading political groups in Third World countries, which, referring to state sovereignty, readily shun the corresponding global political concepts. Whilst one does deals with multinational concerns and so becomes dependent on them, any criticism of insufficient readiness to adopt global counter-strategies, as for instance guaranteeing basic rights and the rights of freedom, are rejected as interference in the internal affairs of the country concerned. Thus there is no humanitarian globalization to counterbalance economic globalization.

2. In view of the global problems of preserving a human environment, which are not restricted to national borders, all the appropriate measures have to be planned and carried out.

Since, in the perspective of the Abrahamic religions, the protection of God's creation is at issue, their credibility will be basically involved, if they permit the creation to be destroyed without their doing something to prevent it. So, for instance, the Climate Convention and the Convention on Biodiversity are still not given sufficient consideration by the great religious communities. It would be desirable for some of the attention, which the representatives of all the great religious communities traditionally pay e. g. to the question of sexual morals, were paid to the preservation of the creation.

3. Finally and above all: significant new minorities and completely diverse new communities have come into being as a result of global migrations. It would be naive to believe that any of the world's religions will be excluded from these developments in the long run. In this way for instance, European states, from which people emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s, long ago became states to which people come as immigrants; just think of Italy, Spain, and Greece. What we must consider is that this is connected with rising prosperity. Scarcely anyone has ever emigrated into a poor country – except for reasons of persecution.

The question therefore of a political and legal organization of new multinational and multi-confessional societies will sooner or later arise for all the religions of the world. This question surely cannot be left to the discretion of an arbitrary nation-state legislation and executive, no more than the destiny of already existing minorities.

III.

In a world where global economic enterprises operate, where threats to the environment have a worldwide effect, and where, even on the smallest scale, unity is replaced by diversity, two consequences are unavoidable:

The first significant consequence is: on whatever level, there is a fundamental relationship between the political responsibility and the rights of the individual. This responsibility can only be fully implemented if responsible participation has legal coverage, which is, in present-day conditions, only possible when basic rights and the rights of freedom are guaranteed. A political discourse is therefore required, to which the religious communities have also to be invited, and participation in which the latter must not refuse.

The second consequence is: in future there will be ever fewer nationally and/or confessionally standardized religions. Just as the concept of a Christian Occident and a Christian Europe respectively are already part of history, this is what will happen to the classical concept of the Islamic state as well. Attempts to establish standardized religious or non-religious ideological concepts by using the instruments of power deriving from state sovereignty will fail more and more often.

In my opinion, the true core of *Samuel P. Huntington's* thesis on the impending "Clash of Civilizations" is the fact that, of the various levels of identity, religious commitment has the strongest tendency to differentiate more harshly and exclusively between human beings. A forced inter-penetration, as between religion and politics, not only leads inevitably to the abuse of religion, but would be a last fatal temptation to enact *Huntington's* horror scenario.

In my opinion, therefore, it is one of the most important tasks of a Christian-Islamic dialogue to prevent the great cultures from isolating themselves from each other by an ideological abuse of religion. In this sense, the countries of the European Union have to undertake to provide for their Muslim citizens those basic legal conditions that will enable them to make their home in Europe.

Questions and Interventions

Bosnia, the EU
and the problems
of the Muslims in
Europe

IQBAL In his lecture Professor Potz drew attention to the fact that within the framework of the European Union the problems of the Muslims will have to be redressed. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the problems will continue. Did the European Court address any of these

problems or did a Muslim raise this issue there?

POTZ The problem of Bosnia arose when the former Yugoslavia fell apart. The war in Bosnia was a war of secession, which, like all controversies of this kind, simply could not be mastered in the fields of international law and politics. In this context, the European Union learned then and there by many sacrifices that their responsibility for a Europe beyond their borders is great and that they could not totally meet this responsibility. However, developments there led to the European Union's starting to search for instruments that help in tackling such problems more quickly.

Bosnia certainly was a shock for Europe. One did not expect that the history of religiously determined controversies also could in our time return once again in such a frightening way, going far beyond the longterm conflicts between the Protestant and Catholic population groups in Northern Ireland. Yet, one must not forget that the Bosnia conflict as well as the Kosovo conflict (where from having waited too long and patiently in the case of Bosnia, the appropriate lesson had already been learned) was finally ended by the Western states in the interests of the Muslim population. That much reconstruction work and peace education will have to be done there is obvious.

MARBOE This year Bosnia was also a topic at the "Österreichischer Völkerrechtstag" (Annual Meeting of Austrian International Lawyers). On this occasion Professor Manfred Nowak, international member of the human rights section of the Human Rights Commission of Bosnia, in his exposition on the situation in Bosnia regarding its constitution, explained the difficulties as to the situation of this country's constitution, which is based on a model of representation. This means that the different groups, Croats and Bosniaks, are represented as such in Parliament and in the other organs of the state. The result, as regards the different subject matters due to be discussed, is that things always depend as well on the respective religion to which the parliamentarian or any other functionary belongs. The separation of the different religious groups is thereby marked out and even almost emphasized.

In the constitution of the country, great weight is attached to human rights,

to maintain which a number of specific institutions was set up, which have to watch over the maintenance of the constitution – with which the question of human rights is inseparably connected – and in this function they are also directly linked to the European human rights organs.

globalization
for or against
the diversity of
cultures?

S. MAHMOOD Rightly the process of globalization was part of the topic of Professor Potz's lecture. We know about the different protests repeatedly directed against globalization, amongst others, at the conferences of the World Bank and the IMF. Although in the exposition of

Professor Potz it was said that globalization also entails differences, at the same time it was mentioned that it imposes on the peoples of the world a new form of imperialism, a new 'civilization', apt to destroy this very diversity of cultures and civilizations. We all know terms such as 'Americanization', 'McDonaldization'. We hear about attacks directed against McDonald's-establishments in China and in India. In this respect my question would be: is the diversity of cultures promoted through the process of globalization or is mankind in its progress burdened with a new kind of 'imperialism'?

globalization
and the task of
the religions

GABRIEL When a 'humanitarian globalization' is under discussion, the question should also be posed, what would be the role religions could play there. Should they in this respect not as it were form a lobby, in order

to unite in their efforts to give effective expression to the apprehensions they share? What Professor Potz in my view rightly mentioned in his lecture is a question that the religious communities, particularly also the Catholic Church, should ask themselves, whether – as has recently been the case in Cairo or in Bei-jing – they do not invest their authority too much in matters whose importance is rather minor compared with the questions that are being discussed here?

separatist tenden-
cies within world-
wide networks?

KHIDOYATOV I would like to ask Professor Potz to explain in greater detail the antagonism that obviously exists between the process of globalization as a development towards a worldwide network on the one

hand and very new separatist movements on the other.

global corrective
necessary against
a new form of
imperialism

POTZ I agree with Dr. Saleha Mahmood's view that with globalization a new form of imperialism has arisen. How should one react to it? One possibility, which I think makes most sense, is to globalize protest also. If, in this context, one wants to look for an analogy that

may seem to be rather tough and is taken from the history of Europe, one could here call to mind the great social tensions and controversies, which had to be overcome in the European states in the 19th century. Thus there was at that time big industry, which was organized within the authority of the state. And there was no respective labour law confronting it. Although there was, in Austria as well, freedom of industrialization, there was on the other hand the ban on the organization of unions. Something similar seems to be taking place today on the global level. The freedom of globalizing the economy is postulated, at the same time however the attempt is made to prevent the necessary opposition from being organized in the same way. Since the facts favour the view that the process of globalization has begun, at least in some fields, to be irreversible, one has to make every possible effort to create a counter-balance on the global level as well. For the religions, however, globalization means also that they have to abandon the illusion of a monoreligious society, even on the regional level only.

the religions have to confront the central questions of globalization

I share with Professor Gabriel the fear that the religions, in their interest and engagement, might get too involved with problems that seem comparatively marginal. In my experience, in the discussion concerning questions of modern bio- and gene-technology, they are often quite content as soon as they are reassured on the part of industry that embryos will not be used in their research, that thus nothing will be done against unborn life. My intention here is not to play down the problems mentioned, it is only to make clear that many pressing questions are not taken into consideration.

tendencies towards regionalization are understandable

As regards Professor Khidoyatov's intervention, referring to the seemingly contradictory phenomenon of a tendency towards regionalization, which goes hand in hand with globalization, I do not think that this is a contradiction, but an understandable reaction to the states' losing their importance. Thus, on the level of Europe, one can already observe that in the wake of European unification in almost every European state the impression, perhaps not quite unfounded, gained ground that now everything is decided not only in the capital of the respective country – remote from the individual regions – but in Brussels, which is even more distant from the people. Therefore, everywhere these tendencies arise to regionalize as much as possible and to take the decisions on the local level. Why should this tendency towards regionalization not be seen also as a

very important and necessary counterbalance and corrective to globalization? Obviously the state is breaking up in two directions: on the one hand downwards towards the regions and on the other upwards towards the international umbrella structures.

social change without giving rise to conflicts?

KHOURY In the lecture a change in our societies towards multicultural and multireligious societies was mentioned – how long is this development to take and what can be done during that time so that these social changes may occur, whilst giving rise to as few frictions and conflicts as possible?

supporting human dignity and justice

POTZ When one proceeds from the fact that this development has already become irreversible, there is only one reasonable strategy: to see to it that it takes place justly and with consideration for human dignity. Besides, in view of the changes taking place ever more quickly, such prognoses are becoming increasingly difficult. In any case, the development will continue and affect every society.

regional interests can obliterate global obligations

IQBAL When state limits dissolve more and more and the focus is on individual regions, it may be expected that people's interests also will increasingly turn towards what is happening in these regions, and one will be less and less interested in and willing to share responsibilities for what happens elsewhere in the world. Thus, we here also prefer to speak about the dialogue between religions rather than pay attention to the great questions in the family of man, to what is happening for instance in Africa: that people there live in bitter poverty, suffering from war and disease. In the region where I live we have three million refugees from Afghanistan. Although humanitarian aid developments have been promised for those people who have become homeless, so many other 'regional interests' came to the fore that these refugees are no longer provided with auxiliary equipment, food, etc.

global responsibility for problems that are not to be solved regionally

POTZ As already mentioned, the dissolution of national borders leading towards a progressive regionalization and towards continentalization and globalization are the two sides of the same medal. The pressing questions of the present may break out regionally, they have, however, a dimension beyond the regions, which is ultimately a global one. The three million refugees in Pakistan are cer-

tainly not only a national or a regional problem, they are a problem for the whole world. For this reason I think that globalization also needs a globally structured corrective. In other words, preventive measures have to be taken on the world level, in order to cope also with the problems that cannot be resolved on a regional level only. One of them doubtlessly is the fate of the three million refugees in Pakistan mentioned here.

A Summary

giving account
for past delibera-
tions and future
perspectives

BSTEH The issue following will be the focal points mentioned during these days in connection with the question, as to what problems are going to confront humanity today and what we can do to resolve them.

Not that we simply repeat what was said, nor seek to achieve the most complete overview possible. What is important is rather to emphasize once more one or other focal point or to draw a conclusion, which seems particularly important to us at the end of our deliberations. It is to be a kind of account given together, striking an internal balance, before we present the result of our deliberations to the public. On the other hand the attempt at striking such a balance should help us to find the first topic that is to occupy us in our further work.

suggesting a
permanent
council of
Christian and
Islamic authorities

S. MAHMOOD Firstly, I would like to see a permanent council of spiritual-religious Islamic and Christian authorities established. This council should meet from time to time and with regularity at a designated location. It should deal with questions that are important firstly for Christians and Muslims living together, but also quite generally for the living together of all human beings in our world. In another context of course, there should also be a council where the representatives of *all* religious communities cooperate. However, our Round Table intends in the first place to address Christians and Muslims and to reflect about possibilities for their cooperation. This standing Islamic-Christian council should deal with certain questions of topical interest – questions, in answering which it could of course also be very valuable to consult other experts – so that the result of its deliberations could finally also be presented, amongst others, to the authorities of their respective religious communities.

common
declarations
concerning
critical issues

Secondly, the work of this standing council should concentrate on preparing common declarations dealing with those critical issues which these past few days have been discussed here and which are of vital interest for humanity: questions concerning human rights, religious freedom and tolerance, problems concerning justice and humanity, social ills, etc. The measures that we see as suitable in resolving these problems from the perspective of our own religions should be embodied in these

common resolutions. Thus, from time to time declarations could be released by this group of religious and spiritual leaders and thinkers, which would be in the form of recommendations, which could then also be taken up by governments, and by relevant interest groups, or individuals.

'history of civilization' in schools – Jerusalem an independent city
KHIDOYATOV As regards the points that I mentioned in my lecture [see above pp. 134–136], as I see it, priority should be given to including firstly in the syllabi a subject 'History of Civilizations and Cultures' and secondly, on the political level, to declaring Jerusalem a free and independent city, because otherwise there will be no peace in the Near East. This was also the proposal of the Pope.

searching for a just social and global order
KHOURY In the context of defining more closely what is human, the search for a just social and global order could be the focus of our future work. The first step on the way would be to promote and cultivate the dialogue and the efforts towards resolving conflicts and reconciliation.

reason out our values anew
SCHABESTARI As I see it, a very important problem today is the fact that we cannot adequately reason out the central values, with which we want to live and that we are therefore not sufficiently convinced of them. Some theologians and thinkers on the Muslim and the Christian side should occupy themselves with this situation and find out whether, in the light of what *all* religions are concerned with, we could not find a new approach towards our values and reason them out anew in a way befitting our times.

religion is important for the establishment of the social order
T. MAHMOOD In the context of what we have discussed here, we should emphasize particularly two aspects. One is to assert that, in the light of the experiences made in the past century, we are convinced that religion as a human instinct cannot be suppressed.

The fall of communism taught us in particular that religion is one of the most important factors in the life of mankind and that for this reason religion should play the role due to it in regulating social affairs.

right of religious freedom also to be guaranteed by the religions themselves
Secondly, we should emphasize the right of religious freedom and that it is necessary to confront problems connected with it. Thus the relations between the different religious communities have to be regulated accordingly in the different fields of human endeavour. From the perspective of the law great efforts have been

made within the framework of national legislation of the different countries, however, in many respects the target has not been reached. Hence it follows that the religions themselves also have to occupy with this task. Therefore, in our own different religions we ourselves have to set out those guidelines that are appropriate for shaping relations among the followers of the different religious communities and not rely only on legal sanctions therein.

economic inequality leads to intolerance
IQBAL I am of the view, as has been emphasized here already several times, that worldwide economic inequality above all among people is increasing – perhaps as a consequence of globalization. The powerless are thereby exploited by the powerful. And this increasingly leads to a culture of intolerance, which has to be addressed. One of the ways of addressing it is the restoration of religions and their values, which today are fading.

establishing a web-site
In the interest of continuing our dialogue, I would also propose to establish a web-site: in this way we could daily, weekly, or as often as we feel like it and have the time, put our own contributions into this web-site.

elaborating a Charter of Duties
We have to work also towards a Charter of Duties, as we proposed earlier.¹ We have to recognize duties irrespective of whether human rights are affected by them or depend on them. Dr. Saleha Mahmood already suggested that there are mutual human rights and obligations. So far, as we all know, only human rights have been addressed. We should take up our earlier proposal again and follow it up.

injustices – dialogue and experience
MIHÇIYAZGAN I have put together two series of catchwords: social – political – legal injustices (not only inequalities); on the other hand: dialogue – encounter – experience – experience of faith. I would like to leave them here as they are.

none of the great topics was missing
OTT None of the topics taken up during these days seemed to me to rank second, still less to be superfluous; some of them of course were dependent upon each other. I think also that none of the great, pressing

¹ In this context see the Votes of the Second International Christian-Islamic Conference in Vienna (1997), published in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *One World for All. Foundations of a Socio-Political and Cultural Pluralism from Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, New Delhi 1999, pp. 363–365.

world problems has been completely missing. The great agendas "Justice – Peace – Preservation of the Creation"² have always been present. Some topics, such as 'inter-religious dialogue' and 'experience of values' were treated more on a theological or theoretical level, they are, however, important, particularly because of this. One would have to deal separately with these general topics so that they do not get lost – they are as it were the supports holding up the structure of the individual questions.

A particular topicality was due to the subjects 'violence' and 'education'. Important is also the topic 'religious freedom' and the question as to what religion itself can contribute here and thereby to all the questions concerned with 'peace', by educating the conscious and developing a readiness to act. 'Dialogue' and 'reconciliation' again present themselves as a path towards a world *therapy*.

religion – a source of violence

KHODR My real concern is the absolutely sincere and objective study of religion as a potential or source of violence. As some people say, violence is only a phenomenon that is sociologically and politically conditioned. However, should for instance the conflict in the Near East have to be traced back only to efforts to exploit the Near East? Or does this not also have something to do with the theological understanding of one's own identity and with that of the others? What are the effects of the conviction of being saved oneself and of seeing the others as being condemned? Views such as 'all Muslims go to hell' – 'all Roman Catholics go to hell', what effects do such views have in society, in the living together of people? Can I really live with the profound conviction that this or that person goes to hell and at the same time be his friend, eat and drink with him? I am deeply convinced that religion smacks of being a source of violence. What are, in Islam and in Christianity, the true fundamentals of peace and what is the connection between purity of heart and the engagement for peace?

reconciliation and commitment to justice

GABRIEL The burden of the *past* – for me this topic is closely linked with the catchword reconciliation. I see the burden of the *present* linked with the topic justice, and this in a threefold way:

... on the individual level

There is on the one hand the individual dimension. The issue here is to be just as a human being, conscientiously, doing justice to the others. A further concern

is how people could be enabled to follow the ideal of justice, to gain ethical competence.

... on the level of civic society

Another dimension is that of civic society: the issue is that the religious communities work towards a just order of living together, thus becoming for people a sign of hope. Today they have to prove that a peaceful living together and a cooperation of the followers of different religious communities is possible. To be welcomed here is Mrs. Iqbal's proposal to give first-hand public information about the aims and the concrete work of this Round Table.

... and on the interstate level

Finally, I would wish that the question of social human rights would be more strongly emphasized on the international level, and that thereby particularly topics such as poverty, the lack of education and health would be addressed by us in order to promote a humanitarian globalization.

publicizing the work of the Round Table in the Internet

POTZ First an idea concerning the institutional component, and I am glad that here I can refer to something that was already mentioned by Mrs. Mahmood, Mrs. Iqbal, and Mrs. Gabriel: setting up a common homepage. I would think that such an initiative would be particularly important: we could afford it, and it would make clear that and how we think, search, and argue here in common.

where does the religions' potential of violence derive from?

A second idea, on the occasion of striking this little balance of our conference, also takes up a topic already broached several times: at issue here are not the acts of violence perpetrated between Christians and Muslims or whoever it may be, but as it were the potential of violence inherent in all religions. Hence, what are the reasons for what we experienced lately in the Bosnia conflict? When people who worked in different missions in Bosnia agreed in reporting that many things seemed to have been settled up to the moment when a further Catholic parish priest, a Serbian-Orthodox pope or a Muslim Imām again became active. When they appeared, things often became even more difficult or started from scratch, then this should – tentatively formulated – make us reflect about our work.

what are we facing as our task in the future?

BSTEH From the deliberations held during these days and the discussions at this final meeting, which has just ended, practical conclusions are to be drawn in order to substantiate what we are facing as our task in

² In the year 1988 the topic of the Ecumenical Encounter in Basel.

the future. Now the actual question is to be addressed to ourselves: in the context of all these problems, which were broached in our deliberations, what do we ourselves intend to do? After all, we accepted this horizon of worldwide problems not in order to release ourselves at the end from doing our duty and to say that now it is again up to the others to tackle these problems. Aware of their diversity, we are now perhaps more concerned with adopting as our own the content of one or the other and working out how one could together contribute to its resolution.

In this context the factual issue is of course also, whether we want to constitute ourselves as a permanent study group, what the institutional form of such a group should be like, and what schedule should be envisaged for our future work. The conclusions we draw in this respect should then be presented to the public in a final communiqué within the framework of a press conference.

In raising the question as to whether we will be capable of carrying out such a common initiative, two personalities spontaneously come to my mind, who during these days constantly were present in our mind's eye: *Mahatma Gandhi* and *Mother Teresa*. They served a cause which they realized was necessary. They did not ask whether they were really up to it, but, trusting in God, they did what was necessary.

Communiqué

At the dawn of a new era a group of Muslim and Christian scholars coming from different parts of the world met in Vienna from October 19–23, 2000, to discuss the possibilities for a closer cooperation in face of the urgent questions humanity is facing on our way into the future. This “Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table” emerged as a continuation of the “Vienna Dialogue Process” initiated in 1993. It is an initiative which seeks to find new ways of cooperating and living together among the different cultures and religious communities.

The participants of the “Round Table”, from their Christian and Islamic perspectives, agreed on the following:

I. Points of Concern

1. Injustice and inequality in the distribution of resources and the access to full and equal opportunity in civil society at the national and international levels.
2. Religious misperceptions and prejudice leading to rising discrimination and intolerance.
3. Crisis of general human values and the necessity to rediscover them out of the rich religious heritage of mankind to meet the new challenges of our times.
4. Increasing hostility, conflict, and violence between various groups and communities in the name of religion.
5. Failure of domestic and international institutions and organizations to effectively enforce the laws to secure religious liberty and equality to all individuals, groups, and communities.

II. Plan of Action

1. To engage in inter-religious dialogue as an indispensable tool of promoting cooperation, joint action, and reconciliation.
2. To promote universal education reinforced by moral and ethical values of our respective religions by emphasizing human dignity and mutual respect for each other's faith with due recognition of the richness and diversity of religions and cultures.
3. To promote religious reconciliation and study ways and means of conflict resolution.

4. To encourage the media to play a more positive role in promoting understanding through fairness and moderation in coverage.
5. To establish a 15-member working group to be known as "Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table" and a 5-member Steering Committee in order to address the concerns and to pursue the action plan stated above.

In the morning of October 23 the above stated Communiqué was drafted by a redactional committee of the Round Table. In the final meeting of the Conference, which took place the same afternoon, this draft was presented to the plenary, discussed, and, including the modi suggested by the plenary, promulgated unanimously.

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All data referring to the time of the Round Table (2000)

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INDICES

In the index below CAPITAL LETTERS set off the names of the *participants to the Round Table*. To these names the pages in the book are added in *italics* if contributions to the Round Table were made (paper and contributions to the discussions), in standard print if the name, as well as all others included in the index, is given for another reason.

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With the discussions rendered by Andreas Bsteh

„The radiating power of the first conference was enhanced by beautifully edited
books in German, English, Arabic and Urdu.“
Jan Slomp, in: *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18 (1998)