

Conference Agenda

CARNEGIE COUNCIL ON ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
and
UEHIRO FOUNDATION ON ETHICS AND EDUCATION
co-sponsors

Merrill House
New York, New York

October 24-25, 2002

- 9:00 AM – 9:30 AM: Continental Breakfast
- 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM: Introductions
Dr. Joel Rosenthal, President, Carnegie Council
Mr. Tetsuji Uehiro, Vice Chairman, Uehiro Foundation
- 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: A Japanese Buddhist Movement and Its Pacifism
Professor Susumu Shimazono, Tokyo University
Dr. Carl Becker, Kyoto University
- 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM: Lunch
- 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM: Jewish Perspectives on Pacifism
Rabbi Philip Bentley, Jewish Peace Fellowship
Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center
- 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM: Free
- 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM: Merrill House Discussion: Peter L. Berger, co-
editor (with Samuel Huntington),
- 7:00 PM: Dinner
- 8:00 AM – 8:30 AM: Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM: Christianity, Pacifism and Just War
Professor George Lopez, University of Notre Dame
Dr. David Rodin, Oxford University
- 10:30 AM – 11:00 AM: Coffee
- 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM: Islamic Perspectives on Pacifism
Dr. Muhammed Abu-Nimer, American University
Dr. Azza Karam, World Conference on Religion and Peace
Dr. Sohail Hashmi, Mt. Holyoke College
- 1:00 PM – 1:15 PM: Concluding Remarks
Mr. Noboru Maruyama, Secretary General, Uehiro Foundation
Dr. Joel Rosenthal, President, Carnegie Council

Participant List

Education

The School of International Service
American University

Department of Integrated Human
Sciences
Kyoto University

Department of English
Fairleigh Dickinson University

Center for International Conflict
Resolution
Columbia University

Director
Jewish Public Forum at CLAL

International Relations Program
Mount Holyoke College

Director, Women's Program
World Conference on Religions for Peace

Carnegie Council on Ethics
and International Affairs

Joan Kroc Institute
University of Notre Dame

Secretary General
Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and

War forces citizens and their leaders to make difficult choices. George W. Bush and his advisors chose to use military force in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Initial reactions to the use of force in Afghanistan were largely supportive, although some voices urged caution.

The choice to take the “war on terrorism” to Iraq was more controversial. Protests in the United States and around the world suggested that the administration’s policies may not have had the support of a “silent majority.” The use of force outside of the UN context, the bellicose rhetoric that surrounded the war, and the demonization of the Iraqi leadership appeared excessive to many in the United States and abroad.

Along with debates about the use of force, another set of debates arose surrounding the proper role of religion in international affairs. Religious ideas and rhetoric formed the basis of these debates, ranging from contested interpretations of just war and jihad to the moral imperatives of pacifism and nonviolence.

These two issues—the use of force and the role of religion in international affairs—prompted the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs to organize a workshop

on Religious Traditions of Peace in Times of War. Rather than focus on religious justifications for war, the Council, with the support of the Uehiro Foundation for Ethics and Education, decided to focus on how religious traditions have contributed to cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Participants were asked to consider how different religious traditions have given adherents the ability to respond to situations of conflict with nonviolence.

The participants not only looked to ancient texts and practices, they reflected upon the contributions that various religious leaders have made to the current debate over the sources of seemingly endless global conflict. Rather than despair over a “clash of civilizations,” participants sought to uncover overlapping principles of peaceful activism that might help transform situations of violence into ones of coexistence.

This report provides a glimpse into two days of searching dialogue and debate about religion, war, and peace. Its conclusions are tentative, but important; for they suggest that even as violence surrounds us, we can see in religious traditions of peace some stirring signs of hope.

—Joel H. Rosenthal
President

The past fifteen years have been a time of global cultural and political upheaval. The rise of political Islam, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and the rapid pace of globalization have led many political observers to see a world in continuous conflict for years to



come. Some have argued that the revival in religious belief and activism is further exacerbating this confusion. Whereas in the 20th century politics and culture were governed primarily by secular ideologies and beliefs, religious fundamentalism may well be the driving force of the 21st century.

Religions structure our moral frameworks in both personal and public life. While religions are not the only source of moral norms and principles, they do provide standards against which human behavior can be judged. Especially in times of great turmoil and confusion, religious traditions can anchor believers in moral clarity—offering meaning and purpose in the midst of chaos. It is not surprising, then, that many individuals have turned to religion at a time when the international system appears unmoored and ill equipped to deal with this turmoil. And while many commentators have seen the turn to religion as a source of further conflict, might it also be possible that the world's religions

can be a source of creative responses to conflict? Could religious traditions lead us away from a “clash of civilizations” and toward more peaceful alternatives?

Within every religious tradition, the concept of peace plays a central role. The concept is often grounded in deeply held metaphysical beliefs about the human being, the divine, and the relationship between the two. On October 24 and 25, 2002, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs and the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education cosponsored a workshop to explore that relationship, and to uncover the resources within different religious traditions for formulating peaceful responses to an increasingly violent world. Participants spoke of traditions of peace as found in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Throughout the conference, a number of participants raised questions about the definitions of some of the key terms under consideration—notably, “pacifism,” “religion,” and “violence.” While these terms cannot be defined with precision, participants did come to some tentative conclusions about how best to understand them.

The word “pacifism” derives from the Latin *pax*, for peace, and *facere*, to make, which suggests that the term could also be

Pacifism is an active, creative position, designed to develop solutions in the face of conflict.

understood as “peacemaking.”¹ This belies the common conception that pacifism is a passive policy, one that counsels inaction in the face of conflict or war. In fact, participants in the workshop agreed, pacifism is an active, creative position, one designed to develop

forces. During the Reformation and into the modern period these debates continued, with the “historic peace churches” taking up the debate about the relationship between church and state. By tracing this evolution of Christian notions of church and state and how they lead to conceptions of war and peace, Lopez demonstrated how a praxis-oriented understanding of a religious tradition can lead to new insights.

A third important concept revolves around the terms “violence” and “war.” Professor Carl Becker, who presented on



Buddhist conceptions of peace in the Japanese context, suggested that violence should be seen in a much larger context than simply war. One need only look out the window to see vast disparities in wealth, lack of housing and healthcare, and general insecurity to demonstrate that something approaching a state of violence exists in New York City, he claimed. Pacifism can be viewed as a specific response to a war or as an ongoing practice that seeks to provide just and nonviolent options for communities struggling to distribute scarce resources. Violence encompasses not just specific actions but also long-term structural issues.

These three terms—pacifism, religion, and violence—formed the core of the workshop. While this report lists the main

points of discussion, it should be stressed that not all participants felt comfortable with the definitions offered for these terms. Some participants asked for greater clarity, but it was agreed that only through an ongoing dialogue about their meanings could new insights arise.

As Rabbi Arnold Resnicoff, former Chief Chaplain to the U.S. Military’s European Command, pointed out during the workshop, almost every religious tradition is grounded upon an ideal of peace. The Garden of Eden, Islamic notions of paradise, Hindu conceptions of nirvana—these concepts provide an ideal toward which believers can orient themselves.

But such mythical accounts of paradise are only a beginning. Religions, in both their scriptures and their praxis, have developed ideas about how to respond to situations of war and violence. The workshop sought to place into historical and political context the development of pacifist ideals in each of the world’s four great religions: Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The first session of the conference focused on Buddhism and pacifism in the Japanese context. Professor Carl Becker of Kyoto University asked, “How could Japan maintain one of the highest population densities in the world while at the same time keeping internal and external conflict to a minimum?” Becker’s answer was to provide an overview of Japanese history since the Tokugawa shoguns united Japan in 1603, focusing on how economic and social policies combined with Buddhist religious and cultural norms to prevent competition for scarce resources. The political authorities who gov-

world.” But this focus on the individual’s personal attitude is not the end point; rather, members are encouraged to translate personal change into advocacy for world peace and harmony.

Professor Shimazono explored how one of Rissho Kosei-Kai’s founders, Niwano Nikkyo, developed this focus on the individual into the larger context of peace advocacy. Like many in post-WWII Japan, Niwano thought carefully about the role of the military and war. He concluded that while Japan did have the right to a self-defense force, it needed to pursue a policy of “non-armament” that gave concrete meaning to the ideal of nonviolence. This would enable Japan and other nations to pursue a policy of eradicating poverty.

Niwano also played an active role in the creation of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), an international organization comprising different religious representatives that promotes peaceful resolutions of conflicts.³ As one of six founding members, Niwano believed that an interfaith organization would be able to advocate for peace by linking to the activities of the United Nations and other global advocacy groups.

In addition, Niwano believed that not only should Rissho Kosei-Kai advocate for peace, but that Japan as a nation should be a force for peace in global organizations. This reflects the “civilizational” approach to peace that Niwano and others advocate. As explained by Shimazono, it arises from the nationalist focus on Nicherin Buddhism, which some have considered a Japanese nationalist understanding of Buddhist teachings. Unlike other forms of nationalism,

which seek to protect a nation from outside threats, this version promotes a view of Japan and other Asian civilizations as sources of peace that the international community should emulate.

Rissho Kosei-Kai, in other words, provides an example of a religious movement grounded in individual personal reform that

New forms of activism, seeking a *tikkun olan*, or “repair of the world,” may look to Jewish traditions when creating new means of resistance to unjust power and violence.

moves progressively outward from the nation to the international community. This conception of pacifism as an active and creative force in bringing peace to the world gave

the workshop participants an important perspective on how Buddhism can contribute to a globally active peace movement.

The Biblical sources of Judaism include historical examples of divinely inspired warfare and admonitions to use violence to defend the community. Moreover, the experiences of the Holocaust and the history of modern day Israel have made pacifism a minority viewpoint in Jewish intellectual thought.

Despite these textual and practical views to the contrary, there does exist a pacifist strain of thought and action in Judaism. Rabbi Philip Bentley, former president of the Jewish Peace Fellowship, mentioned a number of Biblical and Rabbinic sources that demonstrate the importance of peace within the Jewish tradition. In his paper, Bentley developed these resources further, exploring how the Jewish tradition could respond in times of war. He suggested that the attacks of September 11, 2001, could be interpreted in the tradition as a *hurban*, or catastrophe, a phrase used to refer to the destruction of the

presentations demonstrated that it is also possible to derive alternative forms of political action from the Jewish tradition. Combining textual and praxis-based understandings of this rich religious tradition upholds a form of pacifism that contributes to *tikkun olam*.

In the American context, pacifism has traditionally been associated with Christian denominations, particularly with Quakers, Anabaptists, and Mennonites—the traditional “peace churches.” Beginning with their debates about whether or not to participate in the Revolutionary War, these denominations have struggled with how to live in a society that takes up arms to defend itself or

to advance an American security agenda. Their public struggles over how to respond to the use of military force have helped to shape the American public debate on war and peace.

Interestingly, many Christian churches have recently begun embracing a pacifist position on matters of war and peace. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops published a seminal document in 1984, which, while giving deterrence conditional acceptance, moved the American Catholic Church into a much more critical position in relation to U.S. military power.⁵ Recent statements by the Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist churches in response to the war on Iraq indicate that these churches have also moved significantly closer to a pacifist position on matters of war and peace.

These developments reflect the ongoing tension between the two Christian traditions of just war and pacifism. David Rodin, director of research at the Oxford Centre for Applied Philosophy, began the discussion of

Christian approaches to war and peace with a critical analysis of the just war tradition. Rodin led the workshop through a review of just war principles, concluding that the tradition provides a “tragic” response to situations of conflict and violence. Rather than embrace a deontological position of certainty in the law or a purely consequentialist position of concern with the ends of action, the just war tradition seeks to find a middle ground between the two. It provides a series of principles that can be used to assess the use of violence by a state, while also recognizing that those principles must be applied in situations where individuals and communities act without moral principles and in pursuit of

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immoral ends. Rodin’s criticism of the just war tradition focused on the fact that while it seeks to find a space between a focus on principles and a focus on ends, some of the tradition’s solutions—such as the “doctrine of double effect”⁶—move it away from trying to limit war and violence and toward justifying the use of force.

Rodin also reminded the workshop that the just war tradition, while no longer purely Christian, did arise from early Christian attempts to reconcile the teachings of Jesus with the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. As individual Christians were asked to serve in the imperial army, they turned to their religious leaders for sanction. Although pacifism remained a strain in Christian thought, the just war tradition developed out of the early Christian attempt to justify military service.

George Lopez, who was an active participant in recent debates on just war, began his presentation with a reminder of the trajec-

of Islam for an American audience. At the workshop, three such individuals provided the group with a range of perspectives on Islamic notions of peace. Sohail Hashmi of Mt. Holyoke University led off the final session by reminding the audience that if “pacifism means the renunciation of all violence,



especially for political purposes, then a pacifist ethic is difficult to sustain within the Islamic tradition.” Despite this, Hashmi went on to provide an interpretive strategy for uncovering Qur’anic notions of peace.

As an overall strategy, the hermeneutic approach of abrogation should be abandoned when interpreting the Qur’an, he said. This would allow scholars to highlight the praxis of Mohammed during the Meccan period—when he lived in a community not under siege and had the ability to construct peaceful strategies of relations with other communities and within his own community. The standard interpretation of this period is that Mohammed was forced by necessity to be nonviolent, as a member of a minority subject to harassment by the majority population. Hashmi suggested that instead, the prophet’s praxis can be read as an alternative method of responding to a situation of warfare, one consciously chosen to demonstrate the power of nonviolence.

In effect, Hashmi argued for a combination of textual and praxis approaches to understanding Islamic notions of peace. While focusing on the text of the Qur’an and its various interpretations, he also argued the case for devoting greater attention to the life of the prophet. There exists room for this approach in classical Islam, which treats the *hadith*, or stories about the life of the prophet, with authority. By exploring both the texts and the practice of Muslims, especially the first Muslim, new understandings of peace and war can arise, Hashmi said.

The next two presentations moved the discussion more toward praxis, with the speakers examining contemporary responses by Muslims to situations of war. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a professor of conflict resolution at the American University School of International Service, has been engaged in peace activities for over a decade. A native of the West Bank, Abu-Nimer directs workshops for Muslims (and others) on methods of non-violent conflict resolution. Building on the presentation of Hashmi, Abu-Nimer asked the conference why, if teachings on peace and nonviolence exist within a tradition (as they do in Islam), believers seem so resistant to these forms of political action. How can we explain the gap between the text and the praxis?

Abu-Nimer listed a set of conditions facing the Muslim world today that prevent individuals from absorbing the nonviolent teachings of their religious tradition. Internally, many Islamic societies are plagued by rigid bureaucracies that stifle individual initiative and foster corrupt political systems, and by a patriarchal structure that undermines universal political participation. Making matters worse, traditional religious hierarchies do not encourage new forms of interpretation and religious activism. At the same time, a

Activism in the United States in relation to the war on terrorism and the war against Iraq has been led by religious leaders. Grounding activism and protest in religious language and tradition makes it acceptable to many, lending the peace movement significant strength. Peace movements also provide ways to connect with believers from different countries who share the same or similar traditions. This transnational element of religion gives it even more power to resist violence and develop alternative strategies.

In concluding the workshop, Noboru Maruyama, director of the Uehiro Foundation, linked the personal praxis of his own religious experience—which combines Buddhism, Christianity, Shintoism, and Zen

meditation—and his childhood in post-WWII Japan with the collective quest for peace. Recalling the workshop’s opening presentations on Buddhism, Maruyama concluded by saying:

When it comes to religions, I have always paid respect to individual religious experience as means for the practice of good in our world . . . I think what is central for understanding one’s religion is the religious experience, not a complex theological tradition. . . . Let’s put our dogmatism aside and endeavor to make our traditions of religions more enriched, not only at the national level but at the personal level as well.

¹ Duane L. Cady, “Pacifism” in Donald A. Wells, ed., *An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 374-78.

² Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan’s New Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 2-3.

³ For more information about the WCRP, see <http://www.wcrp.org>.

⁴ See David Firestone, “Many Are Called to March, but Few Are Chosen for Arrest” in the *New York Times* (20 January 2003).

⁵ See *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983).

⁶ The doctrine of double effect is a philosophical argument that suggests that an action may be morally justifiable even if it leads to an unintended and negative consequences—as long as the intention of the actor is morally justifiable. In terms of just war, the concept is used to justify the killing of civilians when attempting to attack a military target.

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