



Religious Freedom Project

BERKLEY CENTER

for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Sharing the Message: Proselytism and Development in Pluralistic Societies

MARCH 4, 2015



In partnership with the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University



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About the Religious Freedom Project

The Religious Freedom Project (RFP) at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs is the nation's only university-based program devoted exclusively to the analysis of religious freedom, a basic human right restricted in many parts of the world.

Under the leadership of Director Thomas Farr and Associate Director Timothy Shah, the RFP engages a team of international scholars to examine and debate the meaning and value of religious liberty; its importance for democracy; and its role in social and economic development, international diplomacy, and the struggle against violent religious extremism.

The RFP began in 2011 with the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation. In 2014 that support continued, while the project also began a three-year partnership with Baylor University and its Institute for Studies of Religion under Director Byron Johnson.

For more information about the RFP's research, teaching, publications, conferences, and workshops, visit our website at <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/rfp>.

About the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the center's work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.



INTRODUCTION

On March 4, 2015 at Georgetown University, the Religious Freedom Project—in partnership with Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion—convened a day-long conference on the effects of proselytism and development in pluralistic societies.

The conference was punctuated by a fascinating keynote conversation between Pastor Rick Warren, founder of Saddleback Church in California, and Ruth Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service.

The relationship between religious proselytism and development is, to say the least, controversial and important. Discussants addressed a series of urgent concerns involving the role of religion in the alleviation of poverty around the world. International covenants recognize that religious freedom includes rights to personal religious conversion and public religious witness. But critics claim that proselytism can violate the rights of affected communities to maintain their traditions and can sow division in fragile societies. There is wide agreement that development aid should never be conditioned on religious conversion. Disagreement centers on whether, when, and how a vigorous religious marketplace, including the freedom to proselytize, fosters social dynamism and development or, on the contrary, social division that undercuts development goals.

Drawing from their many years of experience in humanitarian work and philanthropy, Ruth Messinger and Rick Warren and debated the proper role of religious witness in relief and

development work, the balance of power between aid workers and indigenous peoples, and the advantages and disadvantages of government-imposed regulations.

Three panels of experts engaged the issue as well. The first, “Historical Perspectives on Proselytism, Humanitarianism, and Development,” produced a lively conversation about the definition of proselytism and the complex legacies of aid organizations. The second, “Proselytism, Poverty, and Development,” focused on the unusual capacity exhibited by faith-based development organizations in alleviating poverty in third-world countries. The final panel, “Proselytism, Social Stability, and Political Development,” addressed the political and social consequences of proselytism, the effectiveness of government and self-imposed regulations, and proselytism’s relationship to the Christian call to evangelization.

We invite you to read this report carefully. In it you will find lively and sometimes heated discussions, occasional humor and, most importantly, enlightenment. We hope it will help you better understand the urgent need for religious and development organizations in reducing poverty around the world, and the complexities that religion and religious motivations bring to the task.



Program

Welcome

Thomas Farr, *Director, Religious Freedom Project*

Historical Perspectives on Proselytism, Humanitarianism, and Development

Moderator: Thomas Farr, *Religious Freedom Project*

Panelists: Michael Barnett, *George Washington University*
 Rebecca Samuel Shah, *Religious Freedom Project*
 Robert Woodberry, *National University of Singapore*

Proselytism, Poverty, and Development Practice in Today's World

Moderator: Byron Johnson, *Baylor University*

Panelists: Rebecca Samuel Shah, *Religious Freedom Project*
 Asoka Bandarage, *Interfaith Moral Action on Climate*
 Kent Hill, *World Vision United States*
 Katherine Marshall, *World Faiths Development Dialogue*

Keynote Conversation

Moderators: Timothy Samuel Shah, *Religious Freedom Project*
 Katherine Marshall, *World Faiths Development Dialogue*

Panelists: Ruth Messinger, *American Jewish World Service*
 Rick Warren, *Saddleback Church*

Proselytism, Social Stability, and Political Development in Today's World

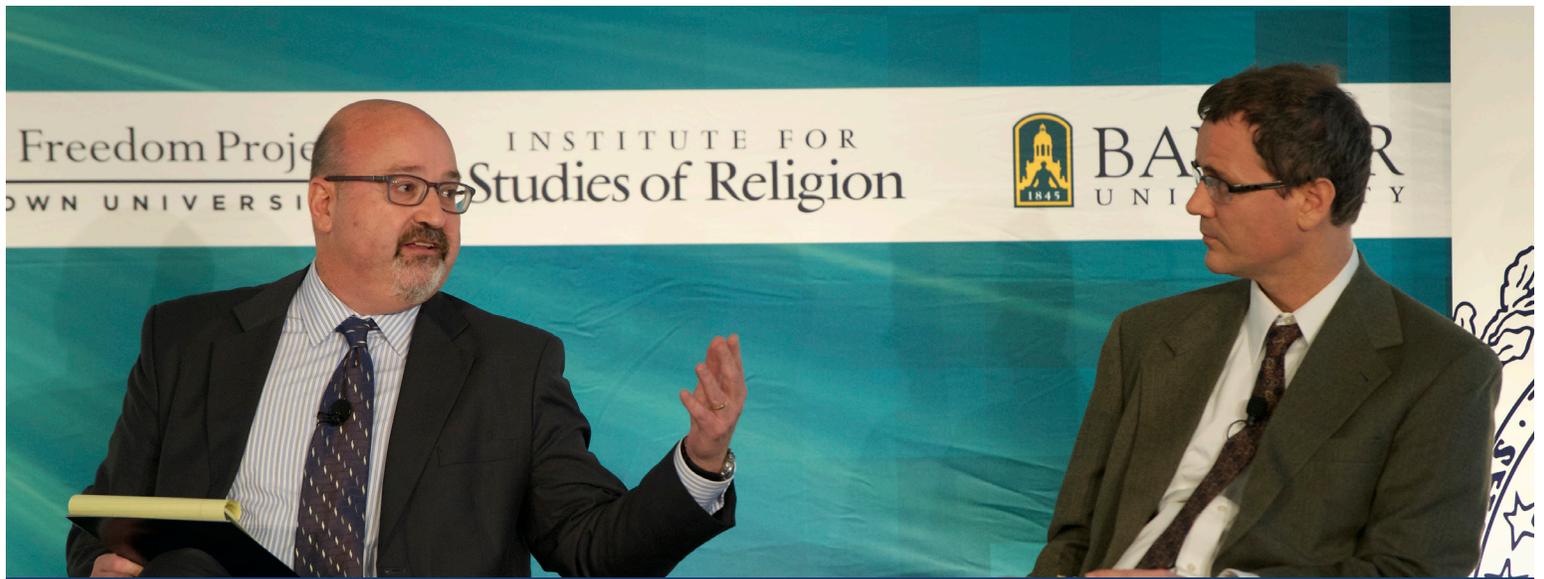
Moderator: Allen Hertzke, *University of Oklahoma*

Panelists: Brian Grim, *Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*
 Ani Sarkissian, *Michigan State University*
 Hans Ucko, *Religions for Peace International (retired)*

Also in this publication:

Cornerstone Debates the Effects of Proselytism and Development

Blog Contributors: Asoka Bandarage, "Proselytism or a Global Ethic?"
 Brian Grim, "Freedom to Proselytize Associated with Lower Religious Hostilities"
 Katherine Marshall, "Nagging Tensions Around Development and Proselytizing"
 Ani Sarkissian, "Ranking Rights: Does Protecting the Right to Proselytize Violate Religious Freedom?"
 Rebecca Samuel Shah, "How Religious Freedom Helps the Poor"
 Hans Ucko, "You Cannot Redeem Proselytism"
 Robert Woodberry, "How Missionaries Have Quietly Transformed the World"



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PROSELYTISM, HUMANITARIANISM, AND DEVELOPMENT

THOMAS FARR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. A warm welcome to all of you! It's not exactly a beautiful day, but it could be worse. [Laughter] Thank you for joining us for this important and timely discussion of religious freedom, proselytism, and development. We'll begin shortly with our first two panels, the first of which I will moderate, followed by an exciting lunchtime keynote conversation with Ruth Messinger and Pastor Rick Warren, who is already here with us this morning—many of you have greeted him—and then a concluding panel after lunch. We're delighted you're here with us this early in the morning.

Before we begin, I'd like to just say a few words about the Religious Freedom Project, the host of this conference, which I have the honor of directing. The RFP, as we call it, is located at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. The Templeton Foundation has been our partner since we began in 2011. Last year we welcomed to our project a new strategic partner: Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion. This means, among other things, that two great faith-based institutions of higher learning—namely, Georgetown, the oldest Catholic university in the United States, and Baylor University, the largest Protestant research institution in the world—are working together on issues of religious freedom. I am very, very proud of that.

The Religious Freedom Project is the world's only university-based center for the study of religious freedom. Our goal is to research and disseminate knowledge about religious freedom. What is it? What does it mean? Why is it important for every human being whether they're religious or not and for every society? We believe religious freedom is important for international justice, peace, and stability. We define it in a capacious sense. We think it's the right of every person to believe or not—and if one believes, to worship and act on the basis of religious belief in the public life of his or her society, both as an individual and as a member of a religious community.

That being the case, religious freedom as we understand it is not merely a private right to worship. It is that. But it also entails the right to engage in civil society, in business, and in politics on the basis of one's religious beliefs, and to do so in full equality with others who have no religious beliefs. We believe religious liberty is not merely a claim of privilege by religious people. Rather, it's a pillar of stable democracy, of economic development, and societal flourishing. Unfortunately, notwithstanding its importance, for which I think there's a great deal of empirical evidence, religious freedom is clearly in crisis around the world. According to a series of reports, one of which was just released last week by the Pew Research Center, 77 percent of the world's population lives in countries where

religious freedom is severely restricted. That's three out of four people in the world.

Outside the West, as you know, those restrictions are often characterized by violent persecution of religious minorities. Inside the West, while violent persecution is not the norm—and, please God, never will be—the Pew report shows some troubling things: that government restrictions of and social hostilities toward religion have been rising in recent years. Europe is witnessing a profoundly troubling phenomenon: a rise in anti-Semitism. The United States is showing growing social hostilities toward religion and religious people.

Our goal here at the Religious Freedom Project is to raise the profile of this issue both here and abroad. We want to change the conversation among people who can do something about this global crisis, but who we believe aren't paying sufficient attention, that is, government officials, the media, the academy, and the business world. We do our work through a team of international scholars, some of whom are here today and will be speaking later on; through books and articles; through workshops and consultations with governments, both private and public; through public addresses, congressional testimony, and media appearances; through conferences such as this one, here and abroad; and through a vigorous online presence, including our blog, *Cornerstone*.

In all of these activities we seek to engage not only the religious groups, but secular society in general, in particular the skeptics of religion. In a very real sense, ours is an attempt to conduct a conversation about religious freedom with everyone, especially those who don't share our premises about the importance of religion and religious freedom. In that respect, let me briefly mention our blog. If you don't know about it, I want you to know about it. It's called *Cornerstone: A Conversation on Religious Freedom and its Social Implications*. All voices on these issues are displayed in *Cornerstone*. It's astounding to me that, so far as we know, there is no other blog in the world that focuses exclusively on international religious freedom. So we invite you to look it up. Read *Cornerstone*. Let us know what you think of it. And if you'd like to write for it, drop us a line. We'd love to have you involved.

Now let's get to our conference. I'll invite our first panel up in just a moment, but let me first frame the general conference. Today we're going to zero in on a particularly important and particularly controversial aspect of religious freedom. There are many ways to say this, but let me put it this way. To what

extent does religious freedom include a moral or a legal right to proselytize—that is, to share one's beliefs with others in hopes of persuading them to accept those beliefs? And, to the extent that there is a legal or moral right to proselytize, how does that right impact development and humanitarian work in countries around the world?

For many people, including most Christians and many Muslims, religion represents an objective and universal truth—one that comprehends the temporal good and the eternal destiny of every person. For those who believe that they have access to that reality and to that truth, the desire to offer it to others, I would argue, is both natural and rational. After all, if the claims of Islam are true, shouldn't we all be Muslims? If the claims of Christianity are true, shouldn't we all seek to be Christians? This, as it were, is a philosophical rationale for proselytism.

On the other hand—and there's a big other hand—how does this religious imperative and any moral or legal right that is attached to it affect issues of development and humanitarian assistance in those countries where proselytism takes place? Sometimes, as we all know, proselytism has been socially disruptive and even rapacious, undermining the structures of families and communities. Is there a way to balance a right and an obligation, as seen by Christians and Muslims and others, to provide peaceful witness to their own beliefs, with another right to development, to defend minority religious communities against proselytism? How do you talk about this? How do you balance these issues? Trained as an American diplomat, I balance every issue with “on the one hand” and “on the other hand.” [Laughter] Sometimes, however, it's not that simple, and I suspect we're going to find that out today.

These are important issues for our country and for the world, so let's get started. I'm going to ask our first panel to come up, and I will frame that panel and introduce them to you. So lady and gentlemen, please come on up to the stage.

This panel, as you can see from your program, is entitled “Historical Perspectives on Proselytism, Humanitarianism, and Development.” Before I introduce this wonderful group of people, let me provide a little bit of context for this panel. We want to set the stage for this day-long discussion on proselytism, development, and humanitarian issues. And we want to begin by discussing what proselytism is. We have some of the world's greatest experts on this sitting here to my left, putting it into its historical context and exploring some of its effects on development and humanitarianism. Proselytism is

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as old as religion itself, which means it’s as old as humanity. Proselytizers have existed throughout history, across the world’s religions, and across the world’s regions. It doesn’t mean that every religion is a proselytizing religion. But as I said before, if you believe you have access to some universal truth, it’s rational to want other people to know about it.

So here are some of the questions we want to engage in this panel. Among all the elements of religious freedom—given that this is one of the most controversial—for many “proselytism” is a bad word. Does it warrant this bad press? Moreover, today it’s often assumed to be mainly Christian and mainly negative in its impact on societies. How true are both of those assumptions? To what extent has Christian proselytism and other proselytism had a negative impact on development and on humanitarian action? What has that impact been? Has there been in the past, and is there today, any upside to proselytism, for example, in terms of economic or political development? What about humanitarian work by religious and secular actors? If we consider humanitarian work a form of development—which we do—how does proselytism fit in to that? Is there such a thing as non-religious or secular proselytism? And if so, to what extent should we be taking that into account as we discuss this issue?

All right, let’s get started. You have the bios of the speakers. I’m going to introduce them very briefly and skip most of the institutional affiliations. But I do want to let you know something about the marvelous expertise represented on this panel.

Robert Woodberry, down at the very end of the panel, is an associate scholar with the Religious Freedom Project. Among other things, Professor Woodberry is a sociologist specializing in the impact of religion on political development and economic change. For well over a decade he has analyzed the long-term

social, political, and economic impact of Protestant missionary activity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This research resulted in a groundbreaking and seminal article entitled “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy,” published in the flagship journal of political science, *The American Political Science Review*, in May 2012. It won the American Political Science Association’s 2013 Luebbert Article Award, given for the best article in the field of comparative politics published in the previous two years. Bob, we’re delighted to have you here.

Michael Barnett of George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs is currently spending a year at the Transatlantic Academy. I had the honor to speak to his group a few months ago. This group and Michael are working on a project on religion in the liberal international order. Professor Barnett has written extensively on international relations theory, global governance, humanitarian action, and the Middle East, which is very much at the center of any discussion of religious liberty. He’s the author of numerous books relevant to our topic today, including *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. He’ll be helping us understand the effects of proselytism on humanitarianism.

And last but by no means least, we have my dear friend and colleague Rebecca Samuel Shah, also an associate scholar with the Religious Freedom Project at the Berkley Center. Rebecca heads a research initiative on religion, entrepreneurship, and economic development in the modern world, entitled “Holy Avarice: Religion and the Re-enchantment of Modern Capitalism.” It’s in your programs, but I wanted to repeat it. This is one of the best titles. I don’t know who thought of this, Becky.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: The Puritans in the seventeenth century. [*Laughter*]



Robert Woodberry

THOMAS FARR: The Puritans. Her initiative is funded by the Religion and Innovation in Human Affairs program of the Historical Society in Boston. Rebecca also leads a research project on the effects of tithing and thrift on the enterprising poor in Bangalore, India, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, which is represented here today. In 2011, she conducted groundbreaking research on the role of Pentecostalism among *dalit* women in India.

So welcome to you all. Let's get started. Bob Woodberry, let's begin with you. You've done extensive work on the history of proselytism, especially in Protestant Christianity but also in other religious and secular traditions. Kick us off by giving us your understanding of what proselytism is, how widespread it's been across history up until today, and what role it plays in development.

ROBERT WOODBERRY: I think proselytism is amazingly widespread. I think it's easier to think of it as trying to convince people to change how they think, or how they act, or what their identity is, which I think is something that everyone does. As professors and academics, we do it when we teach in the university and try to change how people think. Similarly, religious proselytism is trying to change how people think or behave or identify themselves in a religious sphere, which everyone does. I can show historically that all religious traditions have done it and there's been important religious change over time.

What varies is not whether people try to change how people think or behave or what their identities are. What varies is how proselytism is done and the extent to which organizations are built up for spreading their religion on a larger scale, without

having either a conquering army or business elites that spread it. So I think it's easier to think of it in terms of four levels: you have forced conversion, you have incentivized conversion, you have forced exposure, and you have incentivized exposure. There are different levels of being problematic, but I can show you that all the major world religious traditions have used all of those techniques to change people's religious beliefs or practices.

First, there is incentivized exposure. For example, if you use Google you're getting a free service. In exchange for that free service, they put ads on the screen. Similarly, religious groups can provide a free service, and in exchange for that they expose you to their message. Then you have forced exposure, like in state education. You're required to go to school. In that school, there are textbooks. Those textbooks have content. You are exposed to certain ideas. You are exposed to certain value systems within that education. And then you get into areas that are more problematic with incentivized conversion, where you're saying that if you make this religious change, you will get this direct benefit. That becomes more problematic, at least from my standpoint. And then you have forced conversion, which I think is the most problematic one.

THOMAS FARR: So forced conversion is bad. I think we all agree on that. And on the other end of the spectrum is incentivized exposure?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Yeah. Like if you use Google, they'll put ads on your computer. It doesn't mean you have to buy that product. It just means you're exposed to that product because you use this free service.

THOMAS FARR: Got it. And then could you outline the other two models just one more time?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Forced exposure is where you're required to do something, and then in fulfilling that requirement, you're exposed to a thing, which is a little bit more problematic. But we do it every time we force someone to read something for our classes, and it's evident in state education.

THOMAS FARR: Yeah, I practice that. [*Laughter*]

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Professors, like us, are doing forced exposure. People listen to our lectures. People read the things that we make them read, and we give them an exam on it. So we're forcing them to be exposed to that type of thing.

THOMAS FARR: Yes. My student's behavior doesn't change though. *[Laughter]*

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Right, because it's not forced change, which is more problematic.

And then there's incentivized conversion, which I think is problematic. There is some type of quid pro quo; if you make this change, then you will receive this benefit or you will not receive this punishment. But that is also quite common in history among a lot of different religious traditions, and I can show it historically. Forced conversion is also quite common.

THOMAS FARR: All right. Can you say a little bit about the historical effects of these various models on development?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: You can show empirically that the effect of having free competition between religious groups has a lot of effects on society, most of which I think are positive. Certainly, free competition with Protestant and Catholic missionaries—particularly Protestant missionaries—shaped things like increasing the level of education, spurring people to use printing technology, expanding voluntary associations, increasing economic development, lengthening life expectancy, reducing infant mortality, expanding political democracy, et cetera. There's a positive relationship between Protestant missions and all of those outcomes, which is very strong. Part of this impact is direct and part is through how competition changed the behavior of other religious groups. The benefits happened when groups had to compete, rather than when either one group imposed a new religion or existing religious elites successfully blocked religious change.

THOMAS FARR: Now, within Christianity you made a distinction, and I know you do this in the article I mentioned—which I use in my classes, by the way. Thank you for writing that article. I think it's very provocative, and it really rivets the students on something that they hadn't thought of in these terms. For most of them it's sort of built in that proselytism is bad. It's colonialism. It has negative effects. It takes advantage of people. Can you respond to why this perception is there? Is there some truth to it?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Certainly. I think there are multiple reasons. Academics tend to be sort of secular, so many don't like religion, certainly not conversionary religion. There's a reaction in terms of nationalism. You have anti-colonial movements, which were often linked to anti-missionary movements. So you have a reaction to what happened during European colonization—without sufficiently distinguishing what missionaries and colonizers did.

THOMAS FARR: Right. For example, in nineteenth-century China, the presence of mainly Protestant missionaries—

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Actually, there were both Protestant and Catholic missionaries.

THOMAS FARR: And they triggered a real response by the Chinese government.

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Right. Existing elites tend to not want competition and have violently suppressed it both in Europe and in other areas. If you look in England, for example, Quakers, Baptists, and other groups were violently

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suppressed, because you had a dominant Anglican religion that the government and religious elites wanted people to stay a part of. Elites make the argument that proselytism will lead to instability and violence, and then they use a lot of violence to try to suppress it.

But, we got a lot of the rights that we consider to be valuable through religious minorities fighting for their right to exist, proselytize, and practice their beliefs without state control. For example, the independence of the jury in Common Law societies was partially decided through a case about proselytism. You had William Penn and William Mead, two Quakers who were doing street evangelism. A law was passed which ruled that trying to evangelize people was disturbing the peace. So they were arrested and put on trial for disturbing the peace. The jury found them not guilty, because they said that they hadn't been doing anything that was violent or anything that was disturbing the peace. They were just trying to convert people.

The judge initially refused the jurors food, water, or a chamber pot until they changed their verdict, but when they refused he put the jury in prison and fined them for not finding according to the law. An appeal was submitted to the Court of Common Pleas and then the decision was made that judges could not punish or threaten jurors for a finding that was not according to what the judge wanted. This decision became the foundation for the right of the independence of juries.

I can give you tons of examples of how this competition between new conversionary religious groups and elites trying to restrict conversion in Europe and North America has led to rights that we think are really valuable. A lot of the things we're embarrassed about in the past in Europe and North America are when either governments or religious leaders persecuted minorities and did not allow religious liberty—for example executing Quaker missionaries in Massachusetts. Now, in non-Western contexts, we tend to view similar behavior in a totally different way. But I don't see historically why it's any different.

THOMAS FARR: Okay. We'll come back to this. Let's get Professor Barnett in here. Michael, as I said before, humanitarianism, as we are approaching this, is a part of development. It's a critical issue where religious people, in particular religious groups, are concerned. But there's obviously a lot of non-religious humanitarian work being done out there. And you've done some of the most extensive work that's ever been done on the history of humanitarianism and humanitarian action in this regard. So in your view, how common has it

been for individuals and groups to include a proselytizing or conversionary motive in their humanitarian activities?

MICHAEL BARNETT: Historically, it's actually dissipated over the centuries. The way I've thought about humanitarianism, which is the attempt to relieve the suffering of distant strangers, is something that in many ways is as old as human history. Compassion is not something that's recent or modern. It's something that, as we know, has always existed. But contemporary humanitarianism, in which there has been sustained organized attempts to relieve suffering, is really more of a modern invention beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

THOMAS FARR: Is this associated with the rise of Western democracies?

MICHAEL BARNETT: It's not so much about democracy. It really is about a combination of religious change and globalization. You had expanding markets that led people to be more aware—as we saw in Britain with the early abolitionists—that the sugar that they used to put in their tea was coming from slavery in the Caribbean islands. Today, expanding markets are making my students more aware of the kind of apparel they buy, and whether in fact it comes from unfair workshop conditions.

So there is a broad kind of reformist mentality that begins to emerge that we can actually improve humanity. It's not something that we have to be fatalistic about. We can actually make life better. So all of that begins to come together in the early nineteenth century.

But the part that I want to really emphasize is that much of it was spearheaded by religious movements. I don't know if I would go so far as to say that without religion there would be no humanitarianism. But you can't write the history of humanitarianism without necessarily taking into account the tremendous role that various kinds of faith-based organizations played. That includes not only the beginnings of the abolitionist movement, but also various kinds of justice movements throughout the nineteenth century.

This begins to change though in the twentieth century, when you actually see a decline, not so much in the number of religious organizations, because I think we still have lots and lots of faith-based organizations, which is the term of ours that we tend to use in humanitarian action versus secular



organizations. In fact, they've grown in number over the last twenty years. But we have seen a decline in terms of what they do, in terms of proselytism. That has actually been restricted—sometimes even self-restricted, self-imposed restrictions—over the last century.

And there are several reasons why, which I think are important as we think about the implications of proselytism in terms of promoting global justice. The first is, broadly, secularization. Humanitarianism is part of the world, and we're seeing a broader secularization of the world. As a consequence, then, one of the impacts is not only an attempt to sort of restrict the religion to the private—and that includes various public activities like social reform movements—but also the growing role of the state.

One of the defining characteristics of humanitarianism over the twentieth century is it used to be private voluntary organizations or the churches who would put together most of the resources for colonial relief. Now it's almost all going through very large non-governmental organizations, or more likely the state. And the state has actually oftentimes placed very severe restrictions on the kinds of proselytizing activities that aid organizations can use.

THOMAS FARR: Much of the funding for these large NGOs comes through the state, I believe.

MICHAEL BARNETT: Yes, through the state. And this is true even for some of the largest faith-based organizations, like Catholic Relief Services. The figures vary, but it's upwards of 70 percent at times. And then there are organizations that decide that they want to actually reduce the leverage of the state over their activities, like World Vision International. I know there's someone here who can speak to the percentages. But my

understanding is that they always try to cap it at 30 percent, so that they're not too unduly influenced by the state. So these things vary across faith-based organizations.

The second reason why proselytism has declined is because the ethic of humanitarianism is to save lives in distress, which means that your number one goal is to get access. The best way to get access when you present your proposal—and this is actually learned through trial and error—is to be impartial, independent, and neutral. The moment you're seen as having an alternative agenda or motive, people will become suspicious of you and it's more difficult to get access. You will find yourself not simply unable to get access, but when you get there you may find yourself becoming an enemy combatant, where the aid worker now becomes not a deliverer of relief but rather becomes an object of injury.

And so for a variety of principled and very functional reasons, what you've seen is that faith-based *and* secular organizations have all largely converged on the idea that humanitarianism really should be impartial, independent, and neutral. Now, one of the interesting things that's going on is that we continue to see, of course, lots of humanitarian organizations that don't abide by these kinds of principles. That includes not simply Christian organizations, but also Muslim organizations. As we've seen a growth of Islamic humanitarianism in various parts of the Islamic and non-Islamic world, it's very clear that, as Bob was saying, there's incentivizing going on. So part of the conversation that's taking place in humanitarianism, even among faith-based organizations, is coming to an agreement about what the rules of the road are: what you can and cannot do.

The last element that helps to explain why there's been a decline of proselytism is really an ethic of what humanitarianism means. Humanitarianism, as I've suggested, is about relieving

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Michael Barnett

the suffering of distant strangers. But in many ways it’s tapping into what everyone believes is the best side of themselves. It is about compassion, and it’s supposed to be compassion without strings. Part of the fear, though, is that in a situation of tremendous adversity—as we find in conflict and natural disasters where people are really at their most vulnerable and weak—the idea that you would come and say, “Well, I would love to give you the shelter you need for your family or clean water or food or medicine, but it’s going to come with a message,” is ambulance chasing at its worst. I don’t mean to suggest that that message is only about religion, but it could also be about human rights and other kinds of secular movements. This strikes many people as vile. It seems like you are basically capitalizing on people when they’re most vulnerable and weakest, and as a consequence they really have no choice but to say, “I accept the terms.”

So it’s no longer a kind of generic way of incentivizing. This is the part that many people in the humanitarian field worry about. It’s about power. There’s a relationship, and it’s not a dialogue of free exchange of ideas. Aid workers operate in a context of gross asymmetries of power, so that means that those who are engaged in humanitarian action have to be very careful about the kinds of messages they feel like they need to deliver at that moment.

There are a lot of ways in which we distinguish between humanitarianism and development, and one of them may be that in the context of development assistance—and I’ll simply throw this out as a speculation or point of conversation—proselytism in some form may be okay. Although I think, again, that’s a matter

of debate. I think it’s clear that within the humanitarian world there is an agreement among a lot of faith-based and secular organizations that any kind of proselytism, whether it’s religious or non-religious, should be put off the table.

THOMAS FARR: Okay. I want to hear from Bob on that in a minute, and I want to get to Becky. But before I go to Becky, do you have any sense that the issue of the motives of faith-based religious groups is in any sense at risk in this broad trend that you’re seeing? I think most people in faith-based groups could agree that conditionality—this is my word—is absolutely unethical and unreligious. There can’t be this religious requirement to receiving aid. I think that many of these people are in fact doing something out of conviction, and they believe that this is what they’re supposed to be doing religiously.

Is that motivation at all at risk given the growth of government involvement, the growth of government funding, and the restrictions that go with it? There are a lot of people, I would think, that just wouldn’t be out there if they didn’t think they were doing something as a response to a religious motivation. Do you see that problem out there?

MICHAEL BARNETT: I think it’s complicated. The reason why is that I actually have a difficult time understanding why people are motivated to help others in need. I don’t want to suggest I find it odd, but rather their motives are complicated. I’ve got students that really are truly compassionate and want to save the world. I’ve also got students that want to pad their resumes and make themselves look better as they hit the job market. I’ve talked to religious organizations in which people

say they want to get a bit closer to heaven, and this is the way in which they take the ride. I've heard other people say that it's just about a private connection and a private conviction that's spiritual and personal, and that it really has no other secondary gain. So I think the motives themselves for anybody who's engaged in humanitarian action are so mixed that it's difficult to find the single motive.

I'd like to add, though, that this is not simply a contemporary issue. This is actually a deeply historical issue. And maybe Bob can correct me if I've said something a little bit askew here because I'm now dipping into history. But in the late nineteenth century this was the debate among missionaries: Should you engage in proselytism, or should it simply be about providing public health clinics and education and so forth in order to improve the situations of individuals, to improve their material conditions without necessarily having to save their souls?

There was a set of very interesting meetings that took place among world missionary leaders that tried to sort through this issue. And essentially, they decided—for a combination of principles and pragmatics—that it would probably be best if they simply reduced the amount of time they spent trying to deal with people's souls and spent more time just trying to deal with their intellectual abilities, their reason, and their physical health. That would be better. I see those debates going on today. Whether in fact the restriction on proselytism affects the motives or the willingness to partake in humanitarian action, I think is varied. But most of the organizations that I've studied have come to terms with the fact that their faith and what motivates them is not necessarily going to lead them to proselytism.

THOMAS FARR: Well, this is a perfect segue to India. I wasn't going to start with Mother Teresa, Becky, but let me just note that she's been in the news. Of course she died around 1996, but she's been in the news recently on this very issue of whether or not she was a proselytizer. She was actually asked that one time. "What are you doing?" And she said—I'm paraphrasing here—"I'm doing God's work of loving the people He created. I leave the question of conversion to others." But she probably had the impact, Becky, of converting more people to Christianity and to Roman Catholicism than anyone else in her time, with the possible exception of Pope Saint John Paul II. So she was in a sense a proselytizer, if that means somebody whose work invites people to ask, "Why are you doing this?" And the answer might lead them to convert. So with that as a background, let me just pose a question to you, and you can come around to Mother Teresa as you like.

India is obviously one of the countries that has seen some of the fiercest controversy on religious proselytism and religious conversion. It's very interesting because it involves Christians, Hindus, and Muslims. You've done as much work as anyone—and more than most—on this issue in India, both in history and the present day. So talk to us a little bit about what's driving some of the tensions and the conflicts. Tell us what's going on with this issue in India.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Certainly. If anyone is in any doubt about the importance of this issue, then they should just look to the news in India, certainly in the last two or three months, but even in the last week. They'll see how this issue of proselytism and development has come to a head, as it were.

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Michael Barnett

There are two main reasons I'll address. There may be others, but I can think of two reasons why there is such a tension and a conflict surrounding proselytism in India and conversion in particular.

One is that the conversions in India that have drawn attention in the news have historically, as well as recently, taken place among the poorest of the poor in India. The poor are the ones that are converting quite heavily, and not just in the tribal areas. Historically, there have been problems with the Dangs in Gujarat. These are tribal people; in India we call them *adivasis*. They are original people who've been converting to Christianity. And that conversion continues. There are conversions in Orissa and conversions in Madhya Pradesh. Historically, there have been conversions among *dalits* and outcasts, and these are the people I work with in particular. There's a fear, it seems to me, that these conversions are somehow induced, that the people are being, to use Bob's term, either forced or incentivized to convert, and that missionaries are preying on the vulnerability of the poor.

The second reason for there being such a conflict and tension surrounding conversions is because of the fear of the Hindu nationalist parties. That would be the right-wing Hindu nationalist organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), who feel that in some ways Islam and Christianity—these proselytizing religions—are taking away Hindus from their faith. They're preying on Hindus. In fact, the same chap, Mohan Bhagwat, made a comment about Mother Teresa a couple of weeks ago.

THOMAS FARR: Would you tell us about what he said?

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: What he said was interesting because it ties in with this whole idea that conversion and proselytism actually encourage competition. And as an economist, I like competition. What in fact he was doing—he's the general secretary of the RSS—was attending the opening of an orphanage for the poor, and it was interestingly named *Shishu Bhavan*, which is the name that a lot of Missionaries of Charity have for their orphanages. He was at the inauguration.

THOMAS FARR: Missionaries of Charity is Mother Teresa's organization.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Yes. And he was at the inauguration, and he said that this service will not be like the service provided by Mother Teresa. It will be service for service's sake. And I'm paraphrasing something he said—it was in Indian English so I can't really remember. He said that the services rendered intended to make them all Christian. That was what he said. Of course, to be fair, the Indian press and many Indian scholars and politicians from all faiths have risen up and criticized Mr. Bhagwat's statements. But that's what he said.

THOMAS FARR: And he was suggesting this conditionality—

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: He was. He was saying that in fact what happens is that missionaries, through their work, through Mother Teresa, through Christian organizations and mission

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Rebecca Samuel Shah



Thomas Farr and Rebecca Samuel Shah

schools and so forth, were in fact using these organizations as a means to prey on people from other faith traditions.

Mohan Bhagwat said this last week. A few months ago he said that India needs to be a Hindu Rashtra polity. In fact, the RSS have a program that by 2020 they want to make India a Hindu country. And it is for that reason they see Christians and Muslims, with their proselytizing and conversionary religions, as preying on Hindus.

This is a historical panel, Tom. And there was an excellent historical study that many people may not know of. It was a study that was one of the largest studies on *dalit* Christianity. It was a survey of 3,000 households that was conducted in the 1930s by Bishop Waskom Pickett. His study was funded by the organization that funded the Middletown studies here in America. It was a very rigorous social scientific study of converts and it took place because there was this surge in mass conversions in India. The missionaries were skeptical, and the study was borne out of skepticism. So to say that missionaries are out there to inflate the numbers and have a sunny view of conversion is not entirely true, because the missionaries did not want to see these large numbers of converts—they felt they were being converted for material needs, that they were what we would call “rice Christians.”

Bishop Waskom Pickett and his associates conducted the study to identify what were the real reasons for conversion. Now, I’m not saying that none of the conversions took place for instrumental reasons. I’m sure there were some. But the study showed that, for the most part, people may also have converted for intrinsic spiritual reasons, and these are some of the findings

that I find in my own research. We could go deeper into this, but I can stop here for now.

THOMAS FARR: Okay. Well, let’s have a bit of interplay now that we have heard from all three of you. Bob gave us some history of conversionary Protestants and humanitarian work. I’m fascinated by the notion—and I’m sure it’s empirically true—that the growth of secular humanitarian work and the growth of government management—let’s call it that, not control—of humanitarian work has had a major impact on it. And the subtext, Michael, of this kind of humanitarian proselytism, if you will, can be secular, as well as religious. That’s the theme we’ve gotten.

And then, of course, we have the issue of the *dalits* and what’s going on with this interesting Hindu resistance in India. We see a little of this in Russia, don’t we, with the notion of the Russian Orthodox Church as being Mother Russia. It is Russia. If you’re Russian, you must be Russian Orthodox. If you’re Indian, you must be Hindu. This idea is, of course, poison for the notion of religious freedom, but it becomes a powerful force in the issue of proselytism and development in the way that these groups react to each other.

So Bob, could I get you just to respond to some of the things that you’ve heard here, particularly the notion that it’s just hard sometimes to see—I’m paraphrasing here—the positive impact of conversionary Protestants around the world. You’ve made a case, but respond to what you’ve heard.

ROBERT WOODBERRY: I don’t think it’s hard to see. I don’t think people look. Many times people pick anecdotes to

“I think in every situation there are asymmetries of power. As a professor, I have more power than my students. I have to be aware of that. As a government, I often have more power than these religious groups. As a dominant religious community, I have more power than minority religious communities. There’s power involved all over. It’s not just with missionaries. It is everywhere... But as long as we think of power as something that— ‘Oh, just *they* have it’—then we don’t learn from it. We think that it is just their problem and then we don’t apply it to ourselves when we have power.”

Robert Woodberry

stand for the whole, or they listen to other people who think like them and create an echo chamber. But it is similar to Democratic activists talking about Republicans or Republican activists talking about Democrats. So when we talk about unethical conversion or other things like that, I’ve never seen a survey where anyone actually sampled people and asked, “What happened to you? Did people offer you money to convert?” You just get religious leaders and political leaders who say, “Oh, this happened.” Or they find some example and tell it over and over again, and then they put a label on it, which they only apply to other groups—not themselves. So it’s *their* stuff that’s proselytism, *their* stuff that’s unethical conversion. But what we do, that’s good. We’re just trying to convince people, or protecting them from “bad people.”

But then they often initiate all kinds of things that incentivize non-conversion and force non-conversion, which I don’t think are any different from incentivized or forced conversion. For example, they have laws in India that if you convert, you have to make it public, which means you’re going to be exposed to all kinds of social persecution and lose access to government affirmative action benefits. But you get all these benefits if you remain or become a low-caste Hindu. In fact, this past week the highest court in India made a ruling that if you “reconvert” to Hinduism, then you get all the benefits that you couldn’t get if you were a Christian or some other religious group that’s not Hindu or Buddhist or Sikh. If you “reconvert,” then you get all the benefits of affirmative action—as if there is no discrimination against outcasts who are part of a minority

religion, but is discrimination against the same people when they join the majority religion.

That is the government incentivizing religious behavior. In fact, governments and militaries and majority religious groups are the people who can force religious change or stability. The minority groups that come in from the outside cannot force easily, certainly not in this day and age. They can incentivize exposure. That is what they do. They incentivize exposure.

Personally, I am against anything that forces or incentivizes change or lack of change. You can undercut forced or incentivized change in two main ways: through allowing options and letting people pick the option that imposes the lowest cost, or by regulations and restrictions. But, if you are going to restrict religious incentivization formally, you have to deal with the issue of the so-called “purity police”—who gets to be the “purity police” that monitors the motivation of other people and says, “Oh, that is not a good motivation. We’re going to shut you down”? Because then we’re assuming that the people policing have pure motives, which I don’t trust. I don’t trust Microsoft to regulate small software companies or Google to regulate alternative search engines, and I don’t trust dominant religious groups or governments connected to them to regulate their religious competition. Sometimes it’s better to have competition than to set up a “purity police.”

In the long run, religious competition undermines abuses. For example, the people who convert to Islam, Buddhism,

and Hinduism in the United States are disproportionately groups that Christians have been discriminated against. Blacks are more likely to convert to Islam because white Christians enslaved and discriminated against them. Gays and lesbians are more likely to convert to Hinduism, Buddhism, et cetera. People who have been exploited are more likely to convert. That happens all over and if the dominant religious group wants to stop it, the best thing to do is to stop discriminating or exploiting the group that is converting. To do things that make the aggrieved group feel included.

If people are actually using aid to force or incentivize conversion, or something like that, the best way to overcome this is to have multiple sources of aid. Then if I'm an evil person, and I'm forcing you to do something in order to get aid, you will just go to the free option right next door. That would totally undermine anything that I'm requiring you to do.

THOMAS FARR: Okay. But what about Michael's point that behind a lot of these examples there is no real competition? There are these asymmetries of power, as he puts it, and colonialism as a historical backdrop to this problem. How do you respond to that?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: I think in every situation there are asymmetries of power. As a professor, I have more power than my students. I have to be aware of that. As a government, I often have more power than these religious groups. As a dominant religious community, I have more power than minority religious communities. There's power involved all over. It's not just with missionaries. It is everywhere. We have to pay attention to that everywhere. But as long as we think of power as something that—"Oh, just *they* have it"—then we don't learn from it. We think that it is just their problem and then we don't apply it to ourselves when we have power. We need to be careful about that. We need to be careful to not make what other people do out to be something different from what we do. Otherwise we don't learn from it.

THOMAS FARR: Michael?

MICHAEL BARNETT: There are, I guess, two responses. Part of it will be wearing my hat as a political scientist, especially when I hear the word "competition." In economics courses, textbooks like to tell you what competition looks like. But then you ask, "Well, what does it look like in a real marketplace?" And facts on the ground tell you otherwise. There are all these regulations, and we have problems with the interest groups. All of a sudden

we have political power that actually restricts competition. It makes it difficult for people to enter into markets and things like that. So that's really what competition means; competition is almost always restricted and is never perfect.

So when we talk about religious competition, there have, I think, been very few historical moments—maybe the one I know best would be nineteenth-century United States—where there really did seem to be so much experimentation and there was competition that looked more like that religious marketplace of ideas. That's my first response.

The other is—and I'll just respond to Bob's point—that yes, I think that all social relationships are unequal. As someone who's been married for 23 years now, I'm deeply aware that equal also includes lots of asymmetries. [*Laughter*] I think that's understood. But you can't say that all asymmetries are equal, because we know that in some social relationships those asymmetries are grossly unequal, and that in some of those relationships one of those powers can actually have, in fact, enforcement power. And in that prior colonial experience, it wasn't as if the missionaries came in unarmed. They had, oftentimes, the army right behind them, and everybody understood that. So there was almost always an element of power and gross asymmetries of power in many of these contexts, and so I do think we can think of greater and lesser asymmetries.

But it's difficult to even understand, let's say, what's taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the kind of competition that exists, without fully appreciating that colonial dimension. This is not something that happened just a century ago. It's something that's understood as contemporary and ongoing. To ignore that, I think, is to fundamentally misread the nature of that experience. You don't have to take *my* word for it. There are a lot of surveys that have been done within the humanitarian sector that are an attempt to probe how it is that the recipients view those who are coming to deliver the aid, and what they're finding is not a surprise here. The colonial past still lingers very heavily over that present relationship.

THOMAS FARR: Sometimes this has nothing to do with religion. It has to do with the country that is delivering aid, right? It might be that the United States, just to take a random example, is perceived as an imperialist power when delivering aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, without any religious groups being effectively perceived as agents. Talk a little about that.

MICHAEL BARNETT: This is a hydra-headed kind of animal

“Whenever you say *the* Christian or *the* Muslim, whenever you say *the* anything and put the definite article before, I get nervous, because one thing I love about teaching religion to my students is the recognition that there are so many different interpretations that have emerged out there.”

Michael Barnett

called humanitarianism in which there are lots of different actors that have lots of different relationships to one another. To spin it a little bit away from Western Christianity, however, one of the central challenges right now within the humanitarian sector is the emergence of what are called new actors.

The new actors are not just simply religious actors, faith-based actors from the United States, but they're actually coming from Turkey. They're coming from the Gulf. These are private charities that are oftentimes associated with the royal family. They have a clear agenda when they are involved in humanitarian relief, whether it's in Sudan or in Somalia or in Syria and in its environs. This is in itself raising the same kinds of issues that those in the West have been struggling with for a while. So these challenges are ongoing. It's not simply the “West and the rest.” I think that, just as the examples from India point out, this is something that is very much a global phenomenon.

THOMAS FARR: Becky?

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you for your comments on competition. I wanted to say that my statement about competition was informed by not just the fact that Mohan Bhagwat, in making the statements about Mother Theresa, was inaugurating a home for the poor. Historically, the RSS and the VHP were not involved in humanitarian or development work. But we see that certainly in the last 30 to 40 years—and maybe intensively in the last 10 years—there has been a growth in the number of Hindu hospitals. For example, the state of Jharkhand had one mission hospital, which was the main mission hospital, the only hospital, and people from all over the state would come to that hospital.

Recently, I had to do a survey for a pharmaceutical company. What I found was that there was not just one hospital

but about eight to ten hospitals. And of the eight to ten hospitals, the majority of those were set up not by Christian missionary organizations but by Hindu groups. So, in a sense, proselytization and conversion have actually spurred a competition for provision of healthcare services in this very, very poor state. So that's what I wanted to say.

Mission schools are no longer the only schools now in India that provide English-medium education. If you come to my own state of Karnataka, which is home to Intel and Microsoft and Apple and all these companies—the Silicon Valley of South Asia, it's called—you won't necessarily find only Bishop Cotton School or Baldwin's or Clarence School, which are mission schools. You have top secular as well as Hindu schools that provide excellent English education.

And I'd like to mention one more thing, Tom, if I have time. Bob made a point about incentivized conversion, and he mentioned the apex court in India. It passed a law last week which said that positive discrimination—compensatory discrimination—is now available for people who reconvert. In fact, this ties in with what I was saying about Hindu nationalism, which India has, since the framing of the constitution in the 1950s, struggled with. We have Article 25, Section 1, which President Obama actually cited in his speech in India at Siri Fort at the end of January. This really rocked my country, because in January, we had the American president come and talk about religious freedom.

THOMAS FARR: Can I make a side comment here? We have, as some of you know, an International Religious Freedom Act, which we've had for 16 years or so. I sometimes criticize the way that act has been implemented. One of the few things that had been done during the course of the last 16 years was to ban a man named Modi, who was at the time I think the—

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: The chief minister of Gujarat.

THOMAS FARR: —the chief minister of Gujarat, from the United States. He is now the prime minister or president?

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Prime minister. It's a parliamentary system.

THOMAS FARR: When he was elected that ban was quickly dropped. He had been banned because of his alleged role in not saving, helping, or sending the Hindu police to save people—particularly Muslim women—who were being massacred by Hindu mobs in the state of Gujarat. He was the head of the police force. I think it was a Human Rights Watch report that included a quote from one of the Hindu police officers responding to a Muslim woman hysterical on the phone. She cried, "Come help us." But his response was, "We have no orders to save you." This was the title of the Human Rights Watch report. Well, Modi was banned from the United States because he did nothing to stop this. Now, back to President Obama; this was a terrific speech.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: It was an excellent speech.

THOMAS FARR: I like speeches. I like policy action more than I like words, but speeches are not nothing. So please finish your story.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: So he talked about Article

25, Section 1 in the Indian Constitution, which states that all men have the right to profess, practice, and propagate the religion of their choice. And President Obama mentioned this. But since 1950, since this was framed, the Hindu nationalists in India have wanted to, well, they wanted to get rid of the word "propagate." But then they started working toward, well, restricting conversion to people under 18. That was quashed by President Mukherjee.

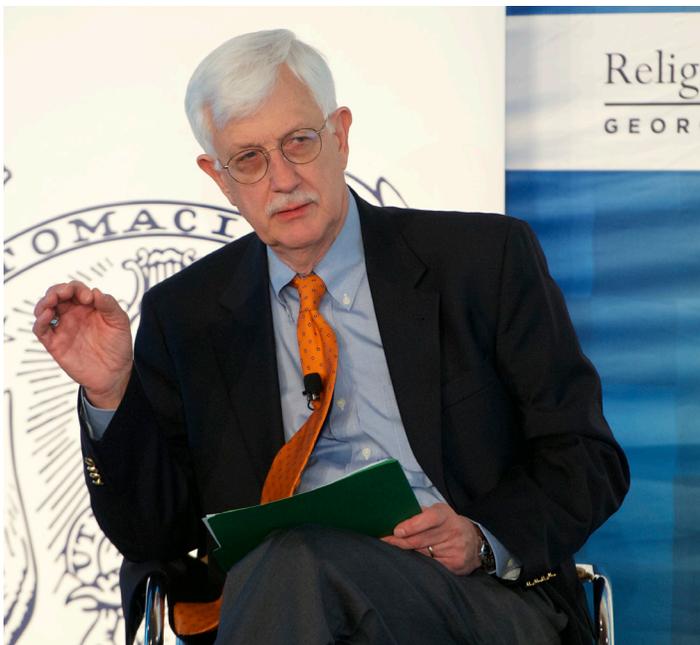
THOMAS FARR: Not permitting conversion for anyone below 18?

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Yes, below 18. And then in 1965 they brought this up again and said that we should prevent conversion for minors, and of course Jawaharlal Nehru quashed that. In 1967 the state of Orissa passed what was called the Freedom of Religion Act, and then in 1968 Madhya Pradesh passed it. In 1977 the Supreme Court upheld the act. The Freedom of Religion Act basically says what Bob mentioned earlier. In order to convert, you have to have 30 days. You have to have the magistrate's affidavit. You have to prove that you weren't being coerced.

And we're talking about *dalits* and people who are illiterate and uneducated who wouldn't really feel comfortable going to a court to get an affidavit. Many people saw it as the state's way of colluding with Hinduism. One Christian barrister actually said the Freedom of Religion Act gives or grants a person the right to express his beliefs but not convince others.

THOMAS FARR: All right. I want to bring our audience in. We have two excellent Georgetown students with microphones. So please state your name and any affiliation you care to give. And direct your question to our panelists.

CHUCK STETSON: Hi, I'm Chuck Stetson. I'm the CEO of Essentials in Education, a non-resident scholar at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor, and also a venture capitalist. This is a little bit of a related thing, but there's a lot of stuff is going on both here in the United States and in particularly Southeast Asia. We have a program which teaches the Bible in public schools. And if you were proselytizing, you certainly couldn't do that because this US Supreme Court has said you cannot do it. But you can teach it academically, and we're the only First Amendment safe program. We've had eight states pass legislation based on our research, seven of which encourage teaching the Bible and one of which, the state of Texas, mandates the teaching of the Bible in their public schools. And



Thomas Farr



Chuck Stetson asks the panelists a question

now we're starting to go overseas. We have partners in India, Singapore, Australia, Korea, and China.

And we're approaching it from an academic point of view. If you teach about it, you're safe. And many governments support it. The Chinese government, for example, has 100 universities that teach the Bible. But if you are proselytizing, you're in trouble. You can go part way there, but you just have to be very careful. And even in the United States, we've had all of the major groups sign on, including secularists, academics, all of the Christians, and the Jews. So there are ways of doing some of this stuff. Obviously, this is a proselytization conference, but what I'm saying is closely related. So I want to comment on what you were saying, but I'd also be interested in your comments on what I was saying.

THOMAS FARR: Thank you, Chuck. That sounds like a very American distinction between teaching and proselytizing that has to do with the American jurisprudence over the last couple of hundred years, particularly since the end of the century. Bob, could you talk about this in your own understanding? Is that a useful distinction between presenting the Bible as an academic subject but *not* proselytizing? Or is such a thing possible?

ROBERT WOODBERRY: The whole thing makes me a little bit nervous. You see, I don't think there is a clear line between proselytizing and not proselytizing. I think we are always trying to convince people of particular ideas—although we might be more or less open to other perspectives when we present what we think. So it's always a continuum. When you're teaching, when you're writing, when you're arguing, when you get upset

at someone, you are always trying to change people. It's just a continuum in terms of how much force is used and which other points of view are allowed. I always get nervous when governments get involved in issues related to religion because I worry about compulsion and I worry about teaching a dissected version of religion that people who practice it would not recognize.

When you're teaching the Bible, you're teaching something about it, which could include things you think are positive, which you hope will move people towards accepting the authority of the Bible. Or, alternatively, you could be trying to undermine the authority of the Bible and trying to make people safe from it or whatever. You're always teaching something and you always have a motivation for it.

THOMAS FARR: Yes. Michael?

MICHAEL BARNETT: I lived in Israel as a child, and the only time I ever actually studied the Bible was when I was in the public school in Beersheba, Israel, and it was mandatory. There was not an alternative. You were there for Torah training. It was in the public school. It was right after my math lesson. And this was designed for educational purposes. But I knew at the time, even though I was in grade school, that this was not designed for my literacy. This was actually designed to make me a better Jew, and that's the way it was.

And so, you know, I can't speak to how children in Southeast Asia or even in Galveston receive this mandatory Biblical education. But I know that as children in a public school who

were taught the Old Testament, we all knew what the reason was. We knew why the state and others were funding this. And it wasn't just the state. You also had private foundations that were involved in providing the books and things like that.

THOMAS FARR: But what about Bob's point, that somebody is always trying, even in your math class, to convince you that something was true. You say somebody was trying to make you a better Jew. Do you have a problem with that, or was it more about who was trying to make you a better Jew?

MICHAEL BARNETT: I don't necessarily have a problem with that. But we also understood the issue, that there was a goal involved. It wasn't simply about presenting a set of ideas in a neutral way. I agree with Bob that when we teach, we basically are force-feeding our students. We've carved the agenda in a way that points them in some directions rather than others. But—and I'm sure Bob does this in his class—we also spend a lot of time exposing them to alternative viewpoints.

ROBERT WOODBERRY: Exactly.

MICHAEL BARNETT: And so I think it's fine if there's an academic course on some religion that actually tries to take a somewhat neutral stance and think about it in a more academic way, as oftentimes happens in university settings. But that's not always the case. I can tell you that I wasn't exposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ when I was in Israel. [*Laughter*]

THOMAS FARR: Yes, Becky, go ahead. Then I want to get one more question.



Michael Barnett

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Interestingly enough, when I interview Hindu nationalists and political leaders in India, many of them were educated in mission schools. And when I was recently interviewing a group of Pentecostal converts in India and I said to them, "Well, aren't you scared? You've got the RSS and the VHP's office down the road," they said, "Well, they've all been to our Catholic school. They know us. They know the teachings of Jesus." So, in a sense, a lot of Indians for the longest time were open to going to mission schools, and that has helped solve some of the tensions, for the most part. But now I think that as nationalist fervor has risen, mission schools are probably not going to save them, but it does help.

THOMAS FARR: Okay. Great. We're going to take one last question here from Kent Hill.

KENT HILL: I'm Kent Hill of World Vision. I suspect virtually everybody in the room is committed to the liberal arts. And one of our assumptions in the curriculum of the liberal arts, of course, is that the whole point of education is to expose young people to the vast variety of cultures, including our own, so we will do that. If we do it right, we try to do that well. As you put it, we try to present competitive, different points of view, but presented accurately. I think what Chuck is talking about—when he asks whether we stand to gain something as Christians by just having a course that might actually describe accurately what Christians believe—a Christian might very well believe that's not a bad place to start.

When I was at Seattle Pacific University, my first career was as a Russian history professor. I taught a class in twentieth-century Marxism and I brought over from the University of Washington a Marxist who had been my professor at University of Washington, because I didn't feel that I had anything at all to fear from that Marxist presenting his view in as positive a way as possible. In fact, it caused my students to believe more accurately what they actually believed, and they could compare it with Christian beliefs. So I think actually it's a great place to start if you are of a particular religious orientation, and if you can just get a fair representation of what somebody else believes.

I'll end with this. I know of people in the Soviet Union who were art guides in the Hermitage and in Leningrad's various art museums, and of course they had to teach about the paintings, the great nineteenth-century Russian paintings which were often on religious themes. So one guide had to tell the story of what these paintings were about, these religious stories. And she'd been raised as an atheist. She eventually converted

to Christianity despite the fact that she was given the most negative possible presentation of the facts. So sometimes just getting the facts out there in any form, if you're really interested in the truth, can do an immense amount of good.

THOMAS FARR: Sometimes it's just the facts.

MICHAEL BARNETT: I can never turn down a testimonial to the liberal arts, which is always struggling on college campuses. So I think that's great. At least one way in which I think the liberal arts has done an immense service to the education and the erudition of American students is by, in some sense, jogging or disabusing them that there's a truth out there, and that there's an exposure to a variety of viewpoints that they need to actually take seriously. So if you're to ask me whether I have been successful at the end of a semester, I would say, well, are my students unsettled? Are they uncomfortable? If they come out of it a little bit skittered because of what they've heard, then I feel like I've done my job.

THOMAS FARR: You want to make sure they know that there is no truth out there?

MICHAEL BARNETT: No. I don't want to say that there's no truth, but I want them to be skeptical. As many religious thinkers have asked us to do, we should be skeptical of what the truth is supposed to be as presented to us. So in this case—just to sort of

proceed and to pull back on my childhood experience—it's that the Jewish way of thinking about Judaism in Israel is not coming from a competition of ideas. Israel is actually closer to Egypt in terms of religious freedom than it is to the United States. And why? Because the Orthodox community has a stranglehold over religious education in Israel.

So as someone who is growing up Reform or Conservative, you're not going to be exposed to that kind of interpretation of Judaism in Israel. So in the same way, whenever you say *the* Christian or *the* Muslim, whenever you say *the* anything and put the definite article before, I get nervous, because one thing I love about teaching religion to my students is the recognition that there are so many different interpretations that have emerged out there. Sometimes it's the debate within a religious community that I think is actually much more interesting than the debate between.

THOMAS FARR: All right. Well, on that principle, leave them angry and—

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Skittered. [*Laughter*]

THOMAS FARR: Not confused but in disagreement. Before we end, would you please join me in thanking our panelists for a terrific panel. [*Applause*]



Robert Woodberry talks with an audience member



PROSELYTISM, POVERTY, AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN TODAY'S WORLD

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Hello, my name is Rebecca Shah. Welcome to the panel discussion on “Proselytism, Poverty, and Development Practice in Today’s World,” which is part of today’s public dialogue, “Sharing the Message? Proselytism and Development in Pluralistic Societies.”

If anyone really had any doubt that these issues are incredibly important and also incredibly relevant and controversial, they only need to read the newspaper from my part of the world and Asoka’s part of the world. First, since the election of Narendra Modi last year, there’s been growing furor about Hindu nationalist groups proselytizing and promoting so-called “reconversions” among poor Muslims and Christians: reconversion to Hinduism from Islam and Christianity.

Second, last week—you may have heard this mentioned in the previous panel—Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the RSS—which is the pillar of the Hindu nationalist movement in India, the trunk from which the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) grew as a branch—took a swipe at Mother Teresa, of all people. He said, and I quote, “There was a motive behind Mother Teresa’s social services that those who are rendered the service should become Christian.”

Third, a tumultuous debate has been opened up by Bhagwat’s comments. A couple of days ago, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Delhi Anil Couto said, “Her [Mother Teresa’s] main aim was to affirm the dignity of every human being as a child of God who reflects God’s image, of course, according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Missionary activity will always proclaim the life-giving message of Jesus Christ in word and deed.”

These examples could be multiplied, but they suffice to dramatize the issues we will be discussing in the panel. The relationship in India and other parts of the world between religious proselytism and development is sharply contested, particularly in the context of religious pluralism. On the one hand, an international covenant and many national constitutions recognize that religious freedom includes rights to personal religious conversion and public religious witness. As I mentioned in the previous panel, an example is Article 25 in the Indian Constitution: “All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice, and propagate religion.” Note the word “propagate.”

Critics claim that proselytism can violate the rights of affected

communities to maintain their traditions and can sow division in fragile societies. They also claim, just as Bhagwat claimed about Mother Teresa, that the combination of development with intentional religious witness subtly manipulates the poor and vulnerable to receive and adopt a religious message in exchange for material help.

These are very tough issues. But thankfully, we have an excellent panel that will help us navigate and explore them in all their depth and complexity. I'm very grateful to the panel here. They're all brilliant people, and perhaps also a bit crazy to participate in something that can incite strong passion. [Laughter] You all have their bios in front of you. To maximize time for discussion, I'll introduce the panelists very briefly. If you want to know more about them, I think their bios are on the RFP website or in the booklet in front of you.

On my left is Professor Asoka Bandarage. She is a member of the Steering Committee of Interfaith Moral Action on Climate. She has addressed the UN General Assembly and led many national and international forums on such concerns as the transforming crisis of 9/11, the 2004 Asian tsunami, and the peace process in Sri Lanka. In addition, she has authored numerous articles and books, including *Sustainability and Well-Being: The Middle Path to Environment, Society, and Economy* and writes a column for the *Huffington Post*. Thank you for being here, Asoka.

Next to Asoka is Kent Hill. Dr. Kent Hill is the Senior Vice President of International Programs for World Vision United States. World Vision, as some of you may know, is a Christian humanitarian organization that supports children and their families by addressing the causes of poverty and injustice. An expert on democracy, international development policy, and religious freedom issues, he has extensive experience with multiple US government departments and agencies, assistance agencies from other countries, and hundreds of US and international NGOs, including faith-based organizations. Kent also worked with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). He served as the assistant administrator of Europe and Eurasia from 2001 to 2005. He has a Ph.D. in History and an M.A. in Russian Studies, both from the University of Washington. Thank you, Kent.

Finally, last but not least is Katherine Marshall. Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, where she leads one of the most important programs at the center on religion and global development. After a long career in the development field,

including several leadership positions at the World Bank, Katherine moved to Georgetown in 2006, where she also serves as a visiting professor in the School of Foreign Service. She helped to create and now serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. Thank you, Katherine.

I'm going to start off with you, Katherine, if you don't mind. As we've seen from your bio, you've been actively engaged in this issue of faith and development for a very long time. I want to ask you a question, Katherine, based on your work with the World Faiths Development Dialogue, which was established in 2000 by former World Bank president James Wolfensohn, with whom you worked very closely, and which you led for many years. The World Faiths Development Dialogue seeks to highlight the positive achievements and potential benefits of religion in promoting economic development.

However, I wonder if I'm right in saying that in your work with faith and development, you've encountered some skepticism about the "faith factor" in development. Some of it has clearly been driven by worry about proselytism. How much of this skepticism among secular development agencies and experts has to do with proselytism? How much of it is justified? Could you just talk from your experience?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Let me start with coming at the proselytism issue through three sets of experiences that we've had. The first was that when former World Bank president Jim Wolfensohn launched a dialogue process with a variety of faith actors in 1998 with the Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton—he was excited and optimistic. This was seen as a positive opening to a constituency that had been strikingly absent from a lot of the development discourse. We ran into very unexpected controversy on the topic, and to a large extent that controversy is still there. There is a sense that religion and development in the international sphere and in many bilateral contexts is an inappropriate mix. So we spent a lot of time back then exploring essentially what was behind this concern and skepticism.

One of the issues was clearly the sense—and this did not come out explicitly in the earlier panel—that a lot of religion is really about politics, that it is political. The issues of proselytizing come down to questions about motive. They also come down to different visions of what development means, what the path is, et cetera. There are particular concerns when public funding is at issue and the question of appropriate legal distinctions between church, mosque, and state.



Katherine Marshall

But just as an illustration—and again, it’s something that did not come up in the earlier panel—the first words out of many people’s mouths are Hezbollah, Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas. In other words, there is a question, or a set of questions, as to whether the services to the poor—which are provided not only in this context but equally in a number of Christian contexts—are as altruistic as they appear. There is a concern that religion has an enormous amount to do with politics. So that was sort of the first set of experiences.

The second is that we undertook a survey, which has lasted about eight years, in the Berkley Center, in cooperation with the World Faiths Development Dialogue. We looked at six different regions of the world and 10 or 12 development issues, ranging from corruption to malaria to housing to energy access—virtually all of the Millennium Development Goals. To our surprise, there are several issues that came up in every single one of our consultation processes. You can see these expressed in different ways in many of the roughly 300 interviews that were part of this process and that are available on the Berkley Center website. The issue of proselytism came up again and again. Another issue that came up everywhere was the treatment of women and the broader sense of gender issues, with the

assumption that religious organizations, to put it in a simplistic way, don’t get it in terms of gender equality.

Those are two issues that cut across the reviews. A number of other issues also emerged, but proselytizing was a particular, nagging concern. So I’m absolutely delighted that after many years of trying to see how we might move toward a more constructive discussion of this complex topic, we’re talking about it today.

The third set of experiences is that in the few countries where I’ve been very directly involved—and I’ll cite particularly Cambodia and Morocco—I’ve had the chance to go a little deeper into what is behind this almost allergic reaction to proselytism, this tendency to place limits on proselytizing. So in answer to your question, perceptions matter, we all know that, and so do realities. I don’t think we know enough about what really happens, but we have enough anecdotes and enough evidence from people who have lived the experience, that there are perceptions of the lines being crossed so that proselytism linked to development in ways that are harmful. There are egregious cases, but there are also enormous complexities as to where to draw the line.

I myself would distinguish humanitarian relief—which is largely, in my understanding of the definitions of humanitarian work, related to emergency situations and the relief of misery as Michael Barnett has said—from development, which is almost indefinable in the current world because it involves every issue. In the humanitarian arena, there have been quite extensive discussions of the limits and the definition of neutrality. There are quite clear understandings of where the limits are.

In the development field, that is much less true. It involves education, health, social protection, and orphanages—a number of areas where the model of development that is being advocated matters. Development is far more complex. The fact that an institution like the World Bank has almost never discussed these issues in terms of religious freedom or in terms of the constructive role of religion and development points to the fact that there is the need for this kind of discussion.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you, Katherine. Well, you mentioned a very important point, which was the treatment of women. I want to hold on to that because I have a good question for Kent, Asoka, and you on both the destabilizing effect and the positive effect that proselytism can have, say, on a culture. We'll hold that for a minute.

I want to ask you, Kent, just to follow on from what Katherine said. You're the head of international relations at World Vision. That's one of the largest Christian relief and development organizations in the world. Katherine said that there was a concern about many large faith-based development organizations like World Vision. One of the concerns was proselytization. And maybe—or at least it's a perception, because we talked about perception—these Christian organizations, these religious organizations, have a hidden motive or agenda.

In your experience, how widespread is that concern? I'm going to bring in Sri Lanka here again because we have Asoka sitting to my left. In the wake of the tsunami, there was a lot of concern that the religious organizations, which were there in Sri Lanka working to provide relief for many people displaced by this terrible tsunami, were actually there with a hidden agenda, which wasn't really hidden. I mean, there were cases like a contingent from Texas, I think, which the press accused of proselytizing. They had an agenda to convert the victims of the tsunami. How widespread is this concern? How do you respond to it if you hear it being articulated?

KENT HILL: It's probably very difficult to generalize about

all faith-based groups who are involved in humanitarian work or even transformational development work beyond World Vision's Humanitarian Emergency Affairs (HEA) program. I'm absolutely sure there are examples of folks who have used emergency situations or humanitarian assistance. Their primary goal is to save souls or something like that. I'm sure that's true.

But it's not been my experience that that's the common situation. I'll speak about the Christian faith-based organizations; I know a little bit more about them. It's not been my experience that "saving souls" has been the main motive for the vast majority of them. In fact, in 1994, when the Red Cross code of conduct for international development organizations came out and the Red Crescent and the NGOs of the world got together to set up clear rules, they explicitly denounced making the distribution of assistance conditional on advancing a religious agenda. The last count I saw was 546 organizations have signed that accord saying what's appropriate and what is not appropriate. Many of those signatories are faith-based groups.

That is also the position of the World Council of Churches and the Evangelical World Alliance and the Catholic Church when they came to their agreement in 2011 about how to do work in multi-religious settings. They completely ruled out these kinds of inappropriate uses of development assistance. Last night, I read one of the last documents of Vatican II from 1965, which was an explicit rejection of the coercive use of assistance to spread the faith. So I think there's really quite a strong consensus that this is not appropriate. Does it ever happen? I'm sure it does. Does it happen very often? It's not been my experience that it does.

Let me tell you what I think is the more serious problem for faith-based organizations. I spent nine years as an evangelical college president. I've done studies on Catholic and Protestant institutions of higher education. I have worked in the mainline and evangelical Protestant worlds. I used to teach the history of Christianity. The rule that I have come to really adopt—or the principle I've come to see—is that whether you're talking about a Christian individual, a Christian NGO, or a church, the drift away from the mission is always the most serious problem you face. For example, most Catholic and Protestant higher education institutions are no longer what they once were in terms of their commitment. This is also true for Christian NGOs. The biggest debate at World Vision is making sure that we don't drift away from our mission, that we don't become indistinguishable from another NGO that doesn't have any religious motivation for its compassion or attempt to reflect a belief in the Gospel, in the radical love of God.

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Our biggest debates are about that, not about the occasional coloring outside the lines in terms of promoting our religious beliefs. There’s a lot of discussion that tends to center on this question: What is appropriate witness to your faith as a humanitarian worker? The answers to that question run the full gamut. I’m talking too long now, but at some point, I think we do need to talk about the difference between proselytism, usually understood in a negative way, and simply bearing witness to one’s faith, which is not coercive and can be viewed in a much more positive way. Too often the two are confused.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: That’s an excellent point, and I think we’re going to bring this up. I’ll use the example from the Samaritan’s Purse website, which is sort of an intentional witness. I mean, they go out there and they do relief work. It’s on their website in the “About Us” section. It says that when they’re asked, “Why are you here?” they say, “We are here because we are motivated by Jesus Christ.” Once they go there and do their work, there is clearly a sort of witness, so we can talk about that. Thank you. We’ve now got two key issues to bring up in the next round of questioning which I’m excited about.

Asoka, tell us a little bit about Sri Lanka. There are concerns in Sri Lanka, of course, as there are in India, that proselytizing religions like Christianity and Islam disrupt local belief systems and in many ways try to induce people to convert. You’ve done work in this area. How does the presence of a faith-based organization, World Vision or otherwise, influence conversion in countries like your native Sri Lanka?

ASOKA BANDARAGE: Well, thank you for this opportunity to make a few remarks. But before I answer your specific

question, I want to put this issue in a broader framework, in the broader context of what is really happening in the world today. We see the rise of extremism of all stripes. There is horrific violence, and I don’t need to specify, since we all know what is happening. On the one hand, we have enormous ethno-religious conflict; on the other hand, there is environmental collapse, climate change, et cetera, and the very survival of humanity and the planet is at stake.

It seems that in this context we need an ethic that is global and that brings people together despite our differences. I think if we are talking about proselytizing, we should be proselytizing for a global ethic, a universal ethic, which emphasizes the equality and unity of people despite the diversity, because the unity is stronger. It has to become stronger in order for us to have sustainable development and a viable world. We are at that kind of a critical stage at this point in time.

I said this because of my own experience working with the interfaith coalition, Interfaith Moral Action on Climate, and the recent book I have written, et cetera. I just feel very strongly that I need to make that preface before I get into the specifics of today’s discussion. And I’d also like to put a plug for the most recent blog I wrote for *Huffington Post*, “Proselytism or a Global Ethic?” which was published last night. Please look at that as well. [See page 78]

With regard to Sri Lanka, how do faith-based organizations influence conversion? Again, we have to look at the situation in any particular region or country in the context of the broader political and economic realities of widening inequality, deepening poverty, more and more frequent wars, tsunamis,

floods, and disaster situations—which happen partly as a result of the kind of environmental and social collapse that we are experiencing on a global scale. Yes, there is a great need on the part of people for aid, material support, healthcare, food, housing, education, and jobs. When aid comes, it is greatly appreciated, particularly, say, in a context like the tsunami.

And why is it that there is dependence on external groups and development organizations, including faith-based groups? That's partly because of the kind of international policies that have been in place, particularly since the 1970s, and the privatization of state social services. In places like Sri Lanka, the state began to move away from the provision of basic social services. Many NGOs came in to fill that vacuum. That included a lot of faith-based organizations that came from the outside. Increasingly, faith-based organizations and their work, both in development and diplomacy, have become part of the policy of donor governments, particularly the United States if you look at the faith-based initiatives that are promoted by USAID and the State Department.

The use of aid in the context of humanitarian and development work does create a lot of conflict, as we have all referred to. In Sri Lanka, there are said to be over 1,000 faith-based organizations active in humanitarian and development work. They focus on the most vulnerable groups, particularly children and youth. These vulnerable groups may not be the ones who are in a position to really make informed decisions. As it was pointed out in the last panel, people in very vulnerable situations like, say, in the context of a tsunami, are not able to make those kinds

of decisions. Plus, religious conversion is not a decision that one can make overnight. It should be a gradual process of opening to a different way of thinking and gradually moving in a different direction, which I think should be available to all people.

The right to change religion—and the right to also maintain and have a religion—is also a fundamental human right. It is upheld in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. So when we are talking about the right to conversion, we must not forget the right to maintain and have a religion as well. These can come in conflict with each other. I think that's why it's important to look at the many dimensions of this issue.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: This is a brilliant time, I think, to bring Katherine in. I know I have a question on core development concerns and what good proselytism can do. But I'm going to ask you, Katherine, just to respond to this, because I think it'll be good for you to weigh in.

Katherine, I just asked you a question and you talked about the struggles you had at the World Bank. Asoka has mentioned this global ethic that needs to pervade a society and her work with interfaith groups. You had trouble for years—or decades, really—trying to create a sort of consensus with faith-based organizations, religious actors, and development groups. As you said, the key issue that kept coming up, apart from the other issues, was proselytism. How does one get over this? How does one get around this? This is going to come up tomorrow when we talk about other issues. People are going to say, “Ah, but all this organization really wants to do is proselytize. We

“The use of aid in the context of humanitarian and development work does create a lot of conflict, as we have all referred to. In Sri Lanka, there are said to be over 1,000 faith-based organizations active in humanitarian and development work. They focus on the most vulnerable groups, particularly children and youth. These vulnerable groups may not be the ones who are in a position to really make informed decisions... Plus, religious conversion is not a decision that one can make overnight. It should be a gradual process of opening to a different way of thinking and gradually moving in a different direction, which I think should be available to all people.”

Asoka Bandarage



Kent Hill

won't let them go here." I mean, you were at World Bank. You've worked at this. You've done projects setting this up. How does one do this?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Let me start by emphasizing that, to my mind, these issues of bridging gulfs between religion and development matter. Some of the numbers that were mentioned this morning—they matter. We're talking about enormously complex worlds in relation to the questions about engaging religious actors, institutions, beliefs, ideas, and so forth in development, which is also an enormously complex and varied field. The picture does vary widely by country. So every country is contextual, as we like to say.

But there's one particular area where I think it matters acutely, an area that is a focus now: fragile and conflict states, which might be somewhere between 35 and 50 countries, depending on your definition. In every single one of these fragile state situations, religion clearly matters. If you look at the literature on fragile states, it's very rare to see a real engagement with religion, except generally in a stereotypically negative way associated with violent extremism.

So in order to move the conversation forward about the religious engagement in this very difficult, complex group of countries, I think we need to have the adult conversation

about the complexities of religion. That does include the varied motivations and practices, including in some of the difficult areas, which include vulnerable children and so forth. So the lack of an appreciation of some of the complexities of how the faith-inspired organizations operate and what their origins is an important gap in the discussion.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Kent, how does one respond to that? I mean, there is certainly this risk that faith-based groups might proselytize, thereby destabilizing an already vulnerable, fragile situation. How do you respond to that? I mean, not just from your experience at USAID, but also as someone who's been in this field for very long time.

KENT HILL: I think Asoka is right that there is today the threat of religious extremism. Indeed, religious extremism can come from many different quarters, and is one of the most difficult challenges in fragile states. Katherine is right, too, to talk about that. I've asked myself the question: How do you fight religious extremism? There are a couple of views on this. One view, if you are a particular kind of skeptical, secular person, is to say that extremism is just another sign of the harm that religion does in the world. If you're a religious person—and I don't mean just a Christian, but a Muslim as well—you might very well have a very different perspective on this. You might look at this religious extremism as an absolute betrayal of your religious convictions and what you believe about God. You're particularly angry about people hijacking your religion, whether it's Christianity or Islam or whatever. I've often thought the best answer to religious extremism isn't the secular response, which says we ought to just not have any religion. The best answer to religious extremism is intelligent religion that's compassionate and moderate.

That doesn't mean that you don't have convictions. To give the Christian perspective on this, it's Christian theology that would require us to do precisely what Asoka was talking about, when she said we've got to find a way to find common ground with those who differ from us. This does not just mean to share our views and hope that everybody thinks like we do, but to find that common human ground.

Now, Christians are obligated, it seems to me, to seek that common ground. We have a theological warrant to seek that common ground, because our view is that all people are created in the image of God, including not just Christians, but proponents of other religions, and people of no religion. We are most Christian when we affirm that common human dignity.

So I think the antidote to bad religion is good religion. Often, good religion is born out of cooperation with other religious groups, who together can, from within their respective traditions, find a way to bring parties together who are at each other's throats. When you see religious extremism in the world, we've got to figure out a way to bring the best of our religions to the scene to be a healing balm and to work with others to accomplish that mission.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Asoka, I'll let you respond. But Katherine just wants to step in for a minute.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: I just have one footnote. In the question about destabilizing, I think one important point to make is that it is religious people who are often the ones who see the activities of insensitive development by people who proselytize as the biggest danger. It is something that, first of all, makes it more difficult for the faith-inspired groups to work in a given situation. I think they are genuinely concerned that the blunderbuss approach, to put it crudely, where someone comes in with a very strong view of what they need to do to change a given society, can be very destructive to the society. For example, it can encourage the growth of extremist reactions. So it is the religious people, not only the secularists, who raise these concerns.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you. Asoka, would you like to respond to Kent?

ASOKA BANDARAGE: Yeah. I think that this mix of religion and aid is a dangerous one. Both are needed. People need religion. People have had religion from the beginning of time. More and more people need aid and neither should be denied. But when they come together, it becomes a very dangerous, sometimes a lethal situation.

I guess that's sort of at the crux of our discussion. How can you have both without them sort of being identified with each other? That, I think, is where international norms and great responsibility on the part of donor governments and codes of conduct need to come into play, which we can perhaps discuss in greater detail. But there is also a real concern for peace and stability. I think that's where real religious practice should come in, with compassion, respect, and tolerance for diversity.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: I'd like to add just one more thing on the fragile states. I recently listened to an excellent speech by Jim Kim, the current president of the World Bank. What he was saying, too, was what often feeds a lot of the unrest is a lack of work and a lack of employment. As you said, Kent, Christian religious organizations have an imperative to go out there and work for everyone.

I'd also like to make a plug for Brian Grim's work. Of course, Brian Grim, who's got his own foundation but who's also an associate scholar of the Religious Freedom Project, does precisely this. He works with people from all faiths to encourage businesses and the private sector to come in and invest in difficult situations. I remember a talk that Rick Warren—who was here earlier—gave a while ago, where he said you need three legs of a stool—the government, the private sector, and religious organizations—to keep a country stable.

KENT HILL: I think this discussion of fragile states illustrates one of the key misses we make in analyzing these situations. There's this underlying assumption that if only we can bring enough money to the table in these fragile states and dig the boreholes and provide the vaccinations and provide the food that's missing, et cetera, everything is going to get better. Anybody who looks at the fragile states knows that the root causes of the conflicts in those places are the real problem. They're going to keep these areas continually impoverished. It's

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Kent Hill

“Doesn’t a kind of proselytism become necessary to advance core development objectives? I’m thinking here of issues such as gender equality—which you mentioned in your introductory remarks—or child marriage, HIV-AIDS awareness, maternal health, or female genital mutilation. Don’t we need a kind of a proselytism to shake things up, to change the culture, to advance core development objectives?”

Rebecca Samuel Shah

here that I think good religious communities, humanitarian organizations, and not just Christian ones but other ones as well, have something to offer. They have something to say about problems that are caused by humans, problems not caused by things like famines or earthquakes.

You have to put your mind to the human problem of greed and sin and conflict and vengeance and say, “What can religion and religious communities bring to the table in discussing how to attack those root causes?” If those players are not involved in asking those kinds of questions, you’re never going to really make the kind of progress you want to make in solving the root problems of the poor and the rich as well.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: I think we’re going to move on to the next issue. Please bear in mind that we are trying to get a good amount of question time in. We know that the connections between proselytism and development are complicated, but hopefully getting less complicated. Otherwise, we’re not doing a good job. But sometimes, the only way to promote holistic development is to alter basic beliefs, including religious beliefs that are central to people’s culture and practices.

I’m putting this question to the whole panel. I’ll start with you, Katherine. Doesn’t a kind of proselytism become necessary to advance core development objectives? I’m thinking here of issues such as gender equality—which you mentioned in your introductory remarks—or child marriage, HIV-AIDS awareness, maternal health, or female genital mutilation. Don’t we need a kind of a proselytism to shake things up, to change the culture, to advance core development objectives?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Yes. There is a view that human rights are the “religion” of the United Nations. I’m concerned personally by what I see as some backlash in various quarters,

including various religious quarters, against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and against a number of the covenants and so forth that have followed from it. But in my view, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the evolution that’s taken place over the past 60 years do come close to the global ethic that Asoka was talking about, as well as some of the principles that are laid out by Hans Küng.

In other words, there is a change. There is an evolution. We should never forget that modernization, development, whatever you want to call it, is profoundly disruptive of traditional societies. Now, the question is how do you deal with traditional views on some of these basic issues? To me, there’s nothing as central as gender relations, because gender affects every human being every day of their lives. The meaning of equality between men and women is profoundly different from many of the traditions of many of the world’s religions and cultures. It is profoundly disruptive.

The question then becomes how do you engage when you have disagreements about these issues? The LGBT issue has clearly become something of a lightning rod. But I want to emphasize that the basic rights of women affect half the world’s population. It is as much in question and an issue now as it has ever been.

So I think the question that you’re asking is: Is there in fact something approaching a global consensus? We all know the questions that surround the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 concern the dominance of the Western powers and possibly their insensitivity to other cultures. But it’s the best we’ve got. I think that not to take it as an anchor in these discussions would be a mistake.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Yes, what you said is very helpful. What I was also suggesting is some kinds of proselytization are

helpful—the proselytism, say, by religious groups going into a particular culture and saying the current culture for women is not right, it needs to be changed. In my own work in India with *dalits* and the caste system, I realize that one of main reasons that people are drawn to the Christian faith is that it is, in a sense, a relief from the bondage of being an outcast for centuries, with no hope of ever getting out of it. They see a sort of radical departure in the sense of who they are.

What I'm asking is whether a kind of proselytism where we alter these beliefs and these cultural traditions is a good thing? You know, you've done a lot of work on female genital mutilation. We've had people from various faith traditions go in and say this is not right and question that practice.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Let's not forget the point that I made earlier that we're dealing both with perceptions and realities. As you suggest, the perceptions can go both ways and I am aware that there are perceptions that secular development actors "proselytize" in pressing (perhaps appropriately, perhaps less so) for changes in cultural practices that do not always go in positive directions. Addressing specifically the question of gender equality, which is seen as a litmus test of serious commitment to the core changes that development practice aims for, we have heard a wide range of secular development actors—the United Nations, bilateral, multilateral, and large NGOs, and businesses—raise questions about engaging many faith-inspired actors with the argument that they (the faith organizations) do not believe in full equality between men and women in the modern sense.

That's obviously a very complicated matter because it varies enormously. But if we're looking at blanket perceptions, you're not going to find very many development people who think that religious organizations are on the cutting-edge of gender relations, whether it's fighting domestic violence or really combating female genital cutting or having a global alliance against child marriage. Nor—and this is a particular hobbyhorse of mine—do you see religious leaders and institutions and religious actors at the cutting-edge of another of the big hot-button issues: fighting corruption. There are various reasons for that. But it's where you would expect to hear the ethical, moral voice loud and clear. Yet if you are part of international meetings and discourse about corruption, it's unusual to hear a prominent voice from religious actors.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Kent, would you like to respond?

KENT HILL: Yes. I guess I'm a little surprised by the last comment. At least for World Vision, it's such a huge part of our work, the issues that Katherine has talked about. Although, I think we should do more on corruption than I think we do. We don't do as much on civil society except in a program called Citizen Voice and Action. For us, all of the issues she talks about are critical.

I just want to make two quick points about this. I think Christian and non-Christian religious people first need to acknowledge that we don't have a lock on compassion. Other secular NGOs are just as concerned about these cultural issues as we are. We can and should join hands with them. Again, I think from a theological perspective, it makes perfect sense to me that if you really believe that everybody has a conscience, the instinct for doing good, whether they think they believe in God or not, then it makes sense that they are people that you can talk and work with since they are people of goodwill.

Secondly, when you try to address these difficult issues of early marriage or female genital cutting, et cetera, what we've had to do, and what other NGOs have had to do, is you need to go in and talk with the cultural and religious leaders. You have to make your best case as sensitively as you can. And we've discovered that you can make progress. You don't just go, hit them over the head, and say that they're awful people. You explain why this is not good for the girls. You explain that a girl who is 15 and gets pregnant is going to have a much more difficult time. Well, these people care about their daughters. Once you explain it to them, you can often make progress.

So I honestly think that if you think this through, you can make all sorts of progress on cultural things that need to change, things that both religious and cultural actors know need to change. We can make the kinds of improvements that we need to see happen.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you. Asoka, go ahead.

ASOKA BANDARAGE: These are very large questions. The whole development paradigm is now being questioned. It is not necessarily being accepted by all, in terms of its impact on social inequality, environment, and even diversity. That needs to be prefaced.

In terms of the gender issue, again, I think it has to be contextual. We need to not simply look at the complexity of aid organizations or faith-based organizations coming from the outside, but also consider the complexity and depth of the recipient countries.

“Aid organizations need to understand that they don’t always bring the best ideas about rights or equality in diverse settings. But having said that, I do recognize that there are certain basic fundamental human rights that need to be supported around the world. It is best to do that in a secular way rather than via religious organizations or getting states involved. The moment you get state involvement, whether it is the local state or the state of the donor countries, it leads to a lot more complexity, particularly when there is a relationship between religion, aid, diplomacy, and development programs.”

Asoka Bandarage

Many of them have cultures and traditions that are thousands of years old. They’re not all necessarily patriarchal cultures. For example, if you look at the Buddhist cultures, there’s been equality of men and women, though it may not always take the same form as what we expect in the West. So I think that there has got to be greater sensitivity. Aid organizations need to understand that they don’t always bring the best ideas about rights or equality in diverse settings.

But having said that, I do recognize that there are certain basic fundamental human rights that need to be supported around the world. It is best to do that in a secular way rather than via religious organizations or getting states involved. The moment you get state involvement, whether it is the local state or the state of the donor countries, it leads to a lot more complexity, particularly when there is a relationship between religion, aid, diplomacy, and development programs, like we see in the case of the United States.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Kent, did you want to respond to her? I saw you scribbling something.

KENT HILL: You see, the point is, though, that with religious communities, it’s often a “religious” argument that will have the most currency. If you can find within their culture an argument for what we might consider progress—if you can do it from within their own context—you never want to lose that opportunity.

For example, in the HIV crisis, when there was a lot of prejudice in Christian circles against people with HIV-AIDS,

World Vision ran a whole series of programs called Channels of Hope in which we brought pastors together—and we actually did this with Muslim imams as well. By directly engaging the religious traditions and their sacred texts, we showed that their intolerance and their lack of charity were actually in conflict with their own beliefs. That was a far more effective way to change their behavior than to give a secular argument to that religious group. If we use religion correctly, it can be a tremendous force for good. It’s all a question of how religion is used.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: On that note, we have about 25 minutes left for questions. I think that’s a good amount of time for questions. I saw a *New Yorker* cartoon recently. It said something like, “Now, we have time for a 10-minute comment disguised as a question.” Perhaps, we ought not to follow the *New Yorker* cartoon and ask our illustrious panel some questions I’m dying to ask. [Laughter] Bob Woodberry.

ROBERT WOODBERRY: I’m just curious. You talked about various types of changes that you think would be important, like gender attitudes or a global ethic or various things like that. All of those seem to involve changes in belief and behavior and identity, which could be viewed as proselytism. Given your concerns about other forms of proselytism, are those things that should be banned in fragile states or from the context of disaster relief?

Then my second question is related to international meetings on corruption and gender and things like that. How much can the lack of religious group involvement be attributed to who decides who comes rather than what people are doing on the

ground? Certainly, in my work on the history of the mission movement—movements against corruption, movements against female genital mutilation, movements against early marriage, et cetera—missionaries and Christian groups were doing those things since the early nineteenth century, and they were doing them quite regularly. And I presume they're still doing them. But maybe they're not being invited to the meetings.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Thanks, Bob. A hefty question, I'd expect nothing less. Katherine, would you like to respond?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified by all nations of the world. I think that it clearly does reflect values at a given moment in human history. But there is a character and quality to them, which I think sets them apart from the sort of generic question of belief. For that reason, I think it does amount to a common currency in the same way that the Millennium Development Goals—for example, having all children finishing primary school and so forth—are goals that I think we can stand behind.

That doesn't mean that human rights are not complicated. I mean, one of the complexities of human rights, for example, is that there's quite a controversy around issues of children's rights,

which I'm sure Kent knows about. Some people have really pushed children's rights to a point that parents and teachers feel that it's eroding their authority. There are all kinds of debates about when and under what circumstances child labor should be ended abruptly and so forth. So, I guess I question the implication that I read into your question—that these are somehow similar in character to the kind of beliefs that a specific religious organization might proselytize.

Let me make very clear my thoughts on the corruption issue. My mission is to bridge this gulf between religious and secular actors on issues where I think there is enormous common concern. That's what I've done for the last 15 years. In order to do that, you clearly have to try to understand what the concerns are on both sides.

On the corruption issue, it is a bit of a puzzle. We have written and thought about that. My general conclusion is that, first of all, the mainstream anticorruption movement, notably Transparency International (TI), is quite Northern European in its organizational culture; therefore, it is particularly uneasy in engaging with a wide range of religious actors. I think secondly, a lot of religious organizations really have not dealt with the latest thinking on combating corruption. Some of them are still in the

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Kent Hill



Rebecca Samuel Shah

process—with internal accountability and so forth—of coming to terms with their own houses, and therefore are still deciding what it is that they'd recommend. But given how important it is as a root cause, something that evokes such passion and such a reaction in the countries that we're most concerned about (the issue of weak governance), I think there's an enormous area of potential collective engagement.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: I guess what I'm trying to also figure out is the reason these religious groups are absent from these discussions. And to echo what Bob said, is it because they have just absented themselves? Or is there some sort of regulation or someone controlling their attendance at these events?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: No, I don't think so. There's a huge international anticorruption conference. It was supposed to take place in Tunis last October. It had to be cancelled because of the election. It will now take place in Malaysia in early September. There have been invitations for panels and proposals. I'm on the advisory group for that. I'm having a series of discussions of who might attend and how religious organizations might have a stronger voice.

It's been difficult on both sides. There's no rule. It's one of the sort of things you have to try to understand and diagnose. These [global integrity organizations] are chapter organizations. In other words, a lot of the decision-making is made in each country, where there are different dynamics of who is fighting corruption and how they understand the origins of corruption, et cetera. Between now and September, I think there is a lot of scope for bringing in a wider range of voices.

I would say something similar on gender—except that on gender, there's a wider gap, I think. There is a more conscious gap between those who are perceived as feminists and religious organizations and religious men, but also religious women. That gulf is more pronounced in the United States and Europe than it is in many other parts of the world. But it's not insignificant. It is something that I think we can and need to work on so that there is more engagement and more appreciation of what's happening on both sides.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Kent and Asoka would like to chip in.

KENT HILL: I'd just like to point out that Christian NGOs are no different than national governments in many respects, in the sense that they have to work in a particular context. In a lot of places we work, the political situation is not very favorable to what most of us would consider transparent or democratic. You're always walking a fine line; when you push too hard, you might get thrown out of the country and you won't be able to feed children or give them healthcare. A lot of folks want to do what they can do, but they are also very conscious that they can't do anything if they get so crossways with the government and get thrown out. That's not just unique to Christian NGOs. All NGOs face it, including secular ones, and other governments trying to help face the same thing.

But here again is a place where I think the faith-based organizations have a particular role to play that provides an unusual opportunity. We're community-based organizations. Most of the healthcare in Africa is delivered by faith-based organizations. We have the best networks on the ground. A lot of the change that has to occur has to happen at the grassroots level, having as many people as possible to do the right thing. In fact, converting people from selfishness to being concerned about the common good—anytime you cooperate with the church and that kind of change in a person's life occurs—has a positive effect on the community.

I'll give you example. I just came back from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) a week ago. On the road from Kinshasa to the airport in DRC, we saw all of these vans absolutely packed with humanity, with people hanging out at the back and the front. You've seen these things before. The person I was with from World Vision said these are called "spirits of death," because 80 percent of all the casualties occur in these terribly over-packed vans. Well, a Christian—a very serious evangelical Christian, as a matter of fact—became the Minister of Transport. He felt an obligation to not be corrupt and to do something different. He had a whole fleet of minivans and minibuses produced that were safe and that could transport people well. You know what he put on the sides of the buses? "Spirit of life."

Anytime a person becomes infected with the love of God and has a sense of an obligation to the community, they will have a positive impact on their community. So if faith-based organizations help inspire that even by their own example, that is a positive step that can make a difference.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: So it's the importance of belief. Asoka, would you like to comment?

ASOKA BANDARAGE: Well, there are so many different and complex questions.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Welcome to the RFP event. *[Laughter]*

ASOKA BANDARAGE: I would say that some of the critiques on how the continuation of poverty and inequality provide the ground for proselytization need greater examination. Ideally, basic things like healthcare and food should not have to come from the outside. We live in a world of such incredible inequality that even basic food and vaccinations have to be provided from organizations that come from the outside, when it doesn't have to be the case. But this is the reality of our world.

If we are really asking these questions about change, then we have to conceptualize a world where there is self-sufficiency, where communities can provide those basic services for themselves. This means reorganizing the way the world operates in terms of greater equality, and not having a handful of, say, transnational corporations control so much of the resources and the power in the world. It is in that kind of context, where local communities have greater control over their lives, when they can make informed choices about conversion or accept religion

with greater freedom. I'm just throwing that out here, as one of the larger questions for which there is no easy answer.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: There certainly is not. I see Tom Prichard clutching the mic for the last 10 minutes. Tom, introduce yourself.

TOM PRICHARD: Yes. I'm Tom Prichard. I'm with an effort that Becky's associated with called Sudan Sunrise. One area that I would love to have the panel's reflections on is not faith-based organizations but faith-friendly organizations. We became engaged in one initiative after the burning of a couple of churches in Khartoum. There were young Sudanese Muslims who said, "We need help because we want to help rebuild the church to show that we stand for freedom of religion. And we want to do this in South Sudan as an expression of reconciliation." The Darfurian Muslim man who led the effort was actually tortured and almost put to death for this.

But interestingly, the brick wall that we finally ran into was on the Christian side, who did not receive the effort of the few hundred young Muslims who wanted to do this rebuilding.



Asoka Bandarage

“One of the things that we’re looking for and arguing for passionately is religious literacy. In other words, we hope that people in the development world, the foundation world, and the business world have enough acquaintance with the religious landscape that they can make smart decisions about where the right person to talk to is and whether their beliefs and proposals are significant, or whether it’s a loopy idea, which does happen.”

Katherine Marshall

Now, we did do such things as help them take aid to victims of the government’s attack on Abyei. They were taking aid to non-Muslims who’d suffered at the hands of the government in the North. We’ve engaged the opposite side, too, helping South Sudanese Christians take aid to Darfurian Muslims.

But I’d like your thoughts and reflections on the niche of faith-friendly organizations where religion is not pushed aside but treated with respect, where people of any religious values are welcome.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Would you like to go? Yes, please.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Let me use this great question to introduce two ideas that we haven’t talked about very much. One that has a lot of appeal is interfaith activity. It does sometimes involve very practical cooperation between people from different faiths. Sometimes interfaith dialogue focuses primarily an intellectual dialogue. But there is also a sense that if people do work together and get to know each other, then first of all, they’ll be able to know who to contact in times of trouble. But also, in general, social cohesion within a society will develop. It’s also much easier for some governments to look to an interfaith organization than to be open to another twist in all this, which is the sense of favoritism.

Now, there are a lot of very small anecdotal—well, maybe not so small—there are a lot of anecdotal cases of interfaith activity. One of my favorites is in Ghana, the Interfaith Garbage Initiative, where there was an effort by the religious leaders to clean up the city. I think they hoped—this is another issue we haven’t really focused on very much—to get some financing from the World Bank, which was a nonstarter because garbage collection is probably not the main mandate for an interreligious group. But when the election came and there was tension, the

group of religious leaders who had been involved in the garbage effort knew each other. They were able to play a significant role in heading off tensions during the election. So I think the interfaith dimension is clearly important, whether planned or as an unanticipated benefit.

The second one is a bit related. Tom, you said, “faith-friendly.” I guess the implication is that people from the outside should be supportive—whether that’s in moral terms and speaking out, or even supporting such efforts financially. One of the things that we’re looking for and arguing for passionately is religious literacy. In other words, we hope that people in the development world, the foundation world, and the business world have enough acquaintance with the religious landscape that they can make smart decisions about where the right person to talk to is and whether their beliefs and proposals are significant, or whether it’s a loopy idea, which does happen.

I think that this question of faith literacy is very important. But so is development literacy. The number of misunderstandings of what development organizations do is extraordinary. There’s also a huge time lag. A lot of the comments I hear about organizations are really 20 to 30 years out of date. If there’s some way that we can bring these worlds closer together—because they share so many of the same concerns—I think will bring great benefits. That’s what we’re trying to do.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Kent, would you like to respond?

KENT HILL: I’ve asked myself the question: Why is it that World Vision has been able to function in hostile situations? We function in some areas that are Christian and areas that are non-Christian or Muslim. A quarter of our work is in Muslim areas. Do you know that most of our protection in the Muslim communities comes from the Muslims themselves? It’s because

of the methods we use. When we go into a community, we meet the imams. We explain why we're there and what we're doing. We're not trying to keep a tally sheet of people who become Christian. We're here to help. We're here to work with them. We are Christian. Often, there will be inter-religious dialogue. That is very often a very positive thing. But we make it very clear that our purpose is to help. If we're there for any length of time and they get to find out that that, in fact, is true, I think the reputation of Christianity goes up.

But then when radicals show up on the scene, guess who comes to our assistance? It's the people who know us who are of the other religion and say, "Don't hurt them. They're helping us. They're working with us." It all has to do with the way you engage a community that is different from yourselves; this is what makes the positive difference.

One example occurred right after 9/11. I think it was in Mauritania, though I can't exactly remember. Our national director was shot at and his daughter was hit by an extremist. She survived and insisted that World Vision not leave the country. When we showed back up in the country, it was the leaders of the country—a Muslim country, an Islamic state—who met World Vision at the tarmac because they were so touched by us being willing to come back after experiencing extremist violence. Now, I think that communicated more about who we are than any tract we could have handed out or anything else we could have done to improve the relationship.

Obviously, for us and many other religious NGOs, we will do the work whether or not anybody ever changes their faith. The work itself is important enough. It deserves to be done just because the need is there. We can take that position and not compromise who we are as Christians. In fact, the status of who we are probably goes up because of this genuine commitment to meeting the needs of those we serve. We don't keep track if someone happens to become a Christian. It would be the worst return on investment in development history if we looked at who became Christian because of the work we do. But that's not the point. That's not why we do the development work. Yet I seriously think we are a Christian organization.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: I think Asoka wants to give a very brief comment.

ASOKA BANDARAGE: In terms of the difference between faith-friendly and proselytizing organizations, I think there are plenty of examples, say, from among the Christian organizations

in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, which is a multi-religious society, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Christians have been living together in relative harmony for centuries. But it is with the influx of proselytizing organizations that new forms of conflicts have emerged. Many Christian and Catholic organizations have worked in the Sri Lankan context without being charged of unethical conversions or anything like that.

But with the influx of the new Christian evangelical organizations, particularly from the United States, local communities have conflated the two. Now, all Christian organizations—including some of the traditional, pre-existing Catholic organizations—are being charged with unethical conversions and proselytism. I think that distinction is important within a particular religious community.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: That's a very good point you make. This is one of the questions we wanted to raise when we were having the formal discussion. Different religious organizations actually do things differently. The Roman Catholic organizations do things differently. Mother Teresa was mentioned earlier. She said, "I do the work. I leave the conversion to the bishops." Other Christian traditions all vary in the way they do their work. This is, of course, a tension, because all these different types of organizations operate in these various contexts. Some people mix social work and religious work. Other people keep it very separate. I mean, this is an issue that we need to be aware of. Different organizations do things differently.

CATHY GROSSMAN: I'm Cathy Grossman with the Religion News Service. I'm fascinated that at no point have I heard a specific mention of overpopulation or family planning as one of the major issues in developing countries. These are, of course, highly value-loaded issues.

My question is, when a religiously motivated organization chooses to act—whether it's a Jewish group motivated by *tikkun olam* to heal the world, or an Islamic group motivated by the one of the pillars of Islam to do charity, or a Christian group motivated by the love of Jesus—nonetheless, the choice of priorities of where they give the aid and where they put their human bodies to help people is made on their home base here in largely American and Western turf, influenced by Western value systems.

Where is the issue about the priorities being set by the country that's being helped by the developed nation? What if their



Cathy Grossman asks a question

priority is family planning or girls' education or something, which doesn't match or coordinate with the values of the particular faith-based organization? Do you only put your money and your human capital where your values are in accord, and it doesn't matter if the developing country says, "Well, that's priority number four. Priority number one is actually not that?"

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: That's an excellent question. I'm also getting signals to bring this conversation to a close. Very quickly, could I ask you, our excellent panel, to answer this question about the recipient countries' priorities? Don't they matter?

KATHERINE MARSHALL: One of great mantras of the development business these days is country ownership. There are all kinds of mechanisms now to translate that into practice. There is an appreciation that outside ideas alone or dominating will not work. That's unethical. But "country ownership" does sometimes come in tension with international wisdom and vice versa.

Let me give you two examples. Family planning is clearly one of them. I wish that a lot of the passion for family planning did come from some of the countries with highest birth rates. That's not the case. There are some exceptions. We've done a big review of how different religious groups look at family planning. They're more positive than the image that is conveyed. We're actually working in Senegal with some of the senior Muslim religious leaders to try to engage them more actively in child spacing and family planning. But it's a new notion for many of them, so that's a complicated issue.

As for this question of country ownership, there is a whole slew of mechanisms that involve consultations, country strategies, country diagnostics, and so forth. But it does come back to some of the questions we've been focusing on here. It is about both respect and dialogue. Respect does not mean that you just support whatever somebody says they want. It does, of course, raise all the questions of who's representative and what really is the voice of the people. Are women's voices, for example, really being heard? Are community priorities being accurately presented? The one comment that I can make is that this is clearly something that has penetrated into a very wide variety of organizations that work in this field.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Very briefly, Kent, do you have anything to add?

KENT HILL: Not too much. I think Katherine really said it very well. As for country ownership, of course, I don't know who's going to make an argument against that. But I would say this: We're back to the insight that Bob Woodberry said earlier in the first session. That is, it doesn't matter if you're Christian, Muslim, secular, or a government. You come with a point of view. You can inappropriately use that point of view, or you don't have to. There are plenty of examples of secular NGOs and the US government going into situations, acting very clumsily and not paying attention to the cultural or religious values of the situation. They make the aid practically conditional and then put in charge the kind of people who have values much like those you would find in New York City or Washington, DC. It's not very culturally sensitive. It's a challenge we all have to face, to do this work right.

The second point is simply the importance of what I call the "big tent." The point is not for the Catholics to agree with the evangelicals or with the secular folks on family planning. The question is: Is there a way that you can take those disparate groups and find a way to advance the well-being of women

and children and mothers? You can. There are certain things Catholics can't do. But there are other things they can do that are very, very positive. And there are other things that Protestants might do, and other things that secular folks might do. All of these groups can be part of a "big tent"; they can agree that they want to move forward, each doing what they can do in good conscience. This idea that it's one size fits all, that we should exclude from the tent people with whom we do not completely agree, is antithetical to pluralism. It's antithetical to good development.

ASOKA BANDARAGE: I'd like to add something very quickly. I've written a whole book on population from a gender perspective. I hope you'll look at it. In terms of the other issues, I think that the forces of globalization are so dominant that local countries have a hard time establishing alternative paths of evolution or even protecting their own traditions and cultures.

Take the fact is that we have one global economic system. There is no choice whether one works within that or not, because it's a given. The globalizing forces, including the transnational

corporations, the international organizations, and the faith-based organizations, have an overwhelming influence. That has fared differently in different societies. For instance, in a country like India, which is much bigger, or in an authoritarian state, there may be different ways to withstand some of the globalizing forces. But in smaller countries like Sri Lanka, there may not be as much room. They cannot withstand the converging global, political, economic, and cultural forces.

REBECCA SAMUEL SHAH: Well, thank you very much, Katherine Marshall, Kent Hill, and Asoka Bandarage for this excellent conversation. I've learned a great deal and I'm sure people here have learned a lot. Thank you for being brave enough to step in to talk about proselytism and development. Thank you to the audience for their questions. As with any RFP event, the conversation continues. In a few days, the wonderful staff of the RFP will put this conversation on the Internet. I urge you to go on the RFP website—it's an excellent one—and read this as well as the blogs. [See page 78] Thank you.



Kent Hill, Cathy Grossman, and Rebecca Samuel Shah



KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Welcome to all of you. I'm Timothy Shah, associate director of the Religious Freedom Project here at Georgetown University. The Religious Freedom Project is a part of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. It is, as Tom Farr noted today, the only university-based center in the world, as far as we know, that's devoted exclusively to interdisciplinary inquiry about religious freedom, what it is and why it's crucial for the flourishing of individuals and societies everywhere.

Welcome all of you to this exciting conference on "Sharing the Message? Proselytism and Development in Pluralistic Societies." Let me thank again our partners who have made the Religious Freedom Project possible. First, the John Templeton Foundation, as well as the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University. We're very grateful to them. Let me also acknowledge and thank my Berkley Center colleague, Katherine Marshall, who is head of the World Faiths Development Dialogue, over to my far left. Katherine has been instrumental in working with us to make this conference possible. Katherine is among the world's leading—if not *the* world's leading expert—on the intersection of faith and development. I can hear Rick Warren saying amen right next to me.

RICK WARREN: Amen. I met her at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: That means a lot coming from this man. Let me also just thank some of my own students from my own class here at Georgetown. I see a few of them here in the audience. I'm grateful that they allowed me to proselytize them into coming to this conference. *[Laughter]*

RICK WARREN: You used the word correctly.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: I'm especially grateful that they came, given the methods that I used were not entirely ethical. There may have even been some subtle and not-so-subtle forms of inducement and coercion. *[Laughter]* So thank you for being here.

I'm especially grateful to the rest of you who are here entirely by your own free will and volition. There was no inducement or coercion. You're here just because you wanted to be. Thank you very much. It's great to have all of you. If you're here, you're here because you want to be part of a serious discussion of some serious issues with outstanding, globally recognized leaders in

the area of faith and development. So thank you very much for being here.

If I may, I'd like to set the stage by talking about some of the global dynamics that make a conversation about proselytism and development so important, timely, and relevant right now. First, we live in a world of enormous religious dynamism, vitality, and creativity. Despite what sociologists a hundred years ago were saying, the world is not becoming a more secular world. It is not proceeding along some linear path of secularization. Instead, all around the world, we're seeing the revitalization of religion and religious movements with public and political consequences all over the world.

Witness, just to take one example, the striking, sweeping victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Indian elections last year. The BJP is the largest Hindu nationalist party and one of the largest religious nationalist movements in the world. They swept parliamentary elections in India last year with an outright majority. There are many, many other examples that could be named of the vitality and the public activism of religious movements all around the world. So first, we live in a world of growing religious dynamism and vitality.

Second, as the great sociologist of religion Peter Berger has observed, the modern world, rather than growing in its secularity, is nonetheless growing in its plurality. We are witnessing a deep and growing plurality, or pluralism. There is growing and intensifying contact and interaction between people with different religious and philosophical beliefs. This doesn't just mean that religious people are confronting other religious people. As Peter Berger has emphasized, the growth of pluralism necessarily means an increase in the number of people of any and all religious opinions, including people who consciously disavow religion altogether.

We're seeing in many countries a rise of the "nones," n-o-n-e-s. I don't mean a rise in female religious vocations, n-u-n-s. I mean a rise in "nones," people who disclaim any particular religious affiliation. We see this across Western countries. We see that in many other countries as well—Brazil and others—more and more people with different religious beliefs and with no religious beliefs are talking to each other and interacting with each other. In our world, lots of different people are confronting lots of other different people in conversation and dialogue. The result, as Peter Berger says, is that everyone is talking to everyone.

This has potential upsides because there are more religious options, more religious choices. We also can learn from each other. People who have different beliefs can combine beliefs from different traditions in new and unexpected ways, creating the possibility of innovation and progress, just as thirteenth-century scholars mixed Christian theology with the philosophy of Aristotle, and just as nineteenth-century Hindu reformers mixed Hindu ideas with Western philosophical, religious, and political ideas.

As we interact with each other across these conceptual divides, we might also get some strange hybrids that may or may not be a sign of progress. I came across one such strange hybrid the other day when I glanced at the website of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. In a section on its website called "Unitarian Humor," the following riddle was posed: What do you get when you cross a Unitarian Universalist with a Jehovah's Witness? The answer: somebody who comes knocking at your door for no apparent reason. [Laughter] I hope there are no Unitarians or Jehovah's Witnesses in the audience, or I'll probably get a call from President DeGioia. [Laughter]

In other words, religious pluralism brings unexpected and sometimes unpleasant consequences, such as people proselytizing for no apparent reason or for reasons that we might find offensive. Religious pluralism brings the possibility of mutual learning and the fruitful mixing of beliefs, but it also brings the possibility of growing misunderstanding, growing distrust, growing tension, growing mutual incomprehension, growing conflict, and even the potential of growing strife and violence over religious differences between religious communities, as we're witnessing around the world. As Asoka Bandarage and others have emphasized in the earlier panels, we're seeing the rise of religious extremism, sometimes by people who are not comfortable with the growth of religious pluralism around the world.

Finally, the third key global dynamic and fact that sets the stage for our conversation today is that we live in a world of enormous poverty and terrible, desperate degradation. Unlike me, all of the other people on this panel, these three world-class experts who've joined me on the stage, are genuine experts on this last phenomenon—the fact that we live in a very poor, very fragile, very desperate world. Nearly one-half of the world's population—more than three billion people—live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty—less than \$1.25 a day. One billion children worldwide

“Religious pluralism brings the possibility of mutual learning and the fruitful mixing of beliefs, but it also brings the possibility of growing misunderstanding, growing distrust, growing tension, growing mutual incomprehension, growing conflict, and even the potential of growing strife and violence over religious differences between religious communities, as we’re witnessing around the world.”

Timothy Samuel Shah

live in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. 22,000 children! 805 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat, and more than 750 million people lack adequate access to clean drinking water. Diarrhea caused by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and bad hygiene kills an estimated 842,000 people every year globally, or approximately 2,300 people per day.

These three global facts—growing religious vitality, growing pluralism, and growing poverty—constitute the background to our conversation right now.

They raise a number of very urgent questions. How can we harness the world’s enormous and growing religious dynamism in ways that can alleviate this desperate poverty that we see in so many contexts without exacerbating conflict and misunderstanding? How do we harness the incredible ingenuity, moral energy, and dynamism of so many religious communities—Saddleback Church, World Vision, American Jewish World Service, Samaritan’s Purse, Islamic Relief, and Catholic Relief Services? How do we harness these and other organizations to address the world’s desperate poverty and suffering without increasing mistrust, misunderstanding, and even conflict between religious groups? In particular, how do we harness, channel, and focus the proselytizing and missionizing energy of religious groups in ways that will lead to a net gain rather than a net loss in our ability to solve the desperate human problems of development?

After all, it seems clear that with respect to some very basic and important human development problems—such as inequality between men and women, unequal education for girls, female genital cutting, or sex-selective abortion—it’s not enough just to bring material development or opportunity. In many, many cases, people’s hearts and minds have to be changed.

Yet, how do we do this in ways that don’t foster distrust and misunderstanding and increased tension and conflict?

These are really, really tough questions, because it’s not clear how we balance the goods and the imperatives and the principles at stake. How do faith-based groups working in development bring the hope and dignity that they feel called to bring as a matter of religious duty, while also showing respect for the indigenous beliefs of the needy and the vulnerable, and without unnecessarily sowing seeds of division and mistrust? How do we respect the religious freedom of groups that believe they are called to intentional witness and the religious freedom of people who want to change their beliefs, while also not exploiting the vulnerability of poor people?

It’s hard to think of more difficult questions. It’s hard to think of more important and relevant questions. But thankfully, it’s hard to think of people better suited to address these questions than the people you see here on the stage. I would first like to introduce my colleague, as I mentioned earlier, Katherine Marshall. Katherine Marshall and I will co-moderate this panel conversation. Again, I’m grateful to Katherine for being instrumental in making this event happen in every aspect.

As I said earlier, Katherine Marshall is among the, if not *the* world’s leading expert on the nexus of faith and development issues. She’s a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, where she leads the center’s program on religion and global development after a long career in the development field, including several major leadership positions at the World Bank. Katherine moved to Georgetown in 2006, where she also serves as a visiting professor in the School of Foreign Service. She helped to create the World Faiths Development Dialogue when she was at the World Bank, working with James

Wolfensohn and the then-Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. She now serves as its executive director.

Sitting to my immediate left is Pastor Rick Warren. We're delighted to welcome Pastor Rick Warren back to Georgetown. Some of you may remember that he was here two years ago, when we had a wide-ranging conversation in Gaston Hall about religious freedom, its importance, and the way in which, as Pastor Warren put it, it is the civil rights issue of the twenty-first century. We're so grateful that he has come back to be with us.

Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church, a nondenominational California megachurch. He's a leading author and is very well-known for a book that I suspect virtually everyone in this room has heard of, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which was reissued in a second edition a couple of years ago. Pastor Rick has staked out positions and supported programs that address a wide range of policy and development issues, including poverty, education, and HIV/AIDS, working both nationally and increasingly internationally—as he told us the last time he was at Georgetown—in Africa and Rwanda and other countries. During the 2008 presidential election, he hosted candidates Barack Obama and John McCain for a public forum at Saddleback Church, and then he subsequently gave the invocation at the inauguration of President Obama in January of 2009. *Time* and *U.S. News & World Report* have recognized Pastor Warren as one of the most influential Christian leaders in the United States.

And finally, let me introduce Ruth Messinger. We're very grateful to have you with us, Ruth. Since 1998, Ruth has been the president of American Jewish World Service, the world's leading Jewish organization working to end poverty and realize human rights in the developing world. In addition, Ruth currently sits on the US State Department's Working Group on Religion and Foreign Policy and co-chairs the sub-working group on social justice. She previously served on the Obama administration's Taskforce on Global Poverty and Development.

Before coming to American Jewish World Service, Ruth spent 20 years in public service in New York City, for which she received the Albert D. Chernin Award from the Jewish Council for Public Affairs in 2006. That award also, I should say, specifically recognized and honored her for her work to address the conflict in Darfur, about which she has been very active. *The Jewish Daily Forward*, *Jerusalem Post*, and *Huffington Post* have named her on the list of the world's most influential Jewish leaders and the most influential religious leaders of any background. Ruth

earned a bachelor's degree from Radcliffe College and a master's in Social Work from the University of Oklahoma.

We're going to ask our panelists a series of questions and then enable you to jump in with your own questions. The first question is actually a very simple one. Ruth and Rick were both with us ever since the conference started this morning. We want to ask both of you whether you have any comments or reactions to what you've heard so far, and then we'll get into other questions.

RICK WARREN: Go ahead, Ruth.

RUTH MESSINGER: I do have some reactions, Tim. First of all, I want to thank the Berkley Center at Georgetown for doing this. I thought the morning panels were really impressive and raised a lot of good issues. I want to comment on them, if you will give me one minute, just to tell you how I'm approaching all of this.

My approach—and I would have to say right up front, my objection—to the problem of combining proselytizing and development aid is really based on two things. One is a fiercely personal—and, for me at least, faith-based—view of development as needing to be bottom-up and community-led. I'll come back to that in great length later. And the second one, which I thought I should put out early, is that I'm from a faith, but not in the way that many of you may think about the Jewish faith in the twenty-first century. I'm from a faith that's had millennia of experience with coercion, of being threatened with violence, of being required to convert in order to survive. That historical experience colors a great deal of what I think about the particular issue today. I'm going to come back to both of those things.

But in terms of this morning, I heard a lot of great things. I want to just pick up on two and leave them to you and Katherine for questions. One was this question which was really nicely posed on the last panel: If you want something to happen, if you see something as a good—ending female genital cutting or family planning, for example—then aren't you imposing that view on the group that you're trying to help? So what I want to say—and I'll talk at great length about this later—is you might be doing that, but in our experience, it doesn't work. You want those changes. The good news is that there are people in every country, in every community, in every urban slum, and in every rural area who have stepped forward and are questioning some of the practices that many in the community think may



Timothy Samuel Shah and Rick Warren

actually be dictates of their faith. Sometimes, they're not really dictates.

I'd like to just pick up on one example because you both mentioned it. The people who made the radical change in ending the practice of female genital cutting in Senegal were women who had the notion that this was a practice that needed to change. The importance of talking about the Senegal example is that they converted—and I'm deliberately using that word, perhaps unfairly—they converted an imam to support their point of view, which made a huge difference. I just think that you can't tell people that they should be doing something different until you find the people who are already thinking about making the change.

The other thing, which is going to be one of the themes of my presentation, is there was not enough discussion of the power dynamic. The issue of proselytizing is one thing. There's a second issue: the issue of proselytizing to people that you, Tim, described really nicely as half of the world's population, people who have virtually no choice, who are tremendously influenced by anything that happens in their communities. People can say and mean that they're not expecting any conversions, that they're not asking for anything. We hear it over and over again in communities where we work.

By the way, when people heard about this panel, they wrote me to say, "Could you please raise this problem that our faith group is facing?" Given the circumstances and the power dynamic,

they feel that the message is that they need to convert, that they need to change their faith behavior, and that they need to abandon something or sign on to something else in order to continue to be recipients of aid or development help.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you, Ruth. Good point. Rick?

RICK WARREN: Good points. First, I'd like to thank all of you for coming to this because these are very important issues that we're talking about. Thousands of people chose not to come, but you did. It shows that you care. I just want to say that I'm on the same team with you, because we all care about these issues.

Second, I would like to thank those who spoke on the previous panels. I took pages of notes. Everybody who spoke taught me a lot. I'd like to thank Tom and Tim for starting with the history of proselytizing and development, because let's just remember that over the past 2,000 years, the church has been doing development work longer than any government or any NGO. The church invented the hospital, not a government or an NGO. In almost any nation in the world, the first school and the first hospital were started by missionaries. There is great hubris in looking with suspicion at faith-based development. Some people ignore 2,000 years of history and cultural development.

All compassion should be without strings, period. If it's not unconditional, it's not compassion. So all compassion should be

without strings. But here's the problem: The government wants to hold faith-based organizations to a standard they themselves will not keep. If you want to talk about strings attached, look at our AIDS program. We have a cultural agenda that we are now imposing all around the world.

I have a philosophy of what I call "co-belligerency," which means I can work with people I totally disagree with on things we agree about. We don't have to agree on everything to work together. For instance, my wife and I have personally given millions of dollars to help people with HIV and AIDS because of *The Purpose Driven Life* book. And so we worked with people to fight AIDS and HIV all around the world.

And yet the government won't work with organizations, for instance, that have problems with birth control. I'm not a Catholic, but I can work with LGBT and Catholics and anybody else if they want to work to prevent AIDS. That's a humanitarian issue. I don't have to agree with everybody on every issue. The government won't do that. The government clearly has a strings-attached development policy now, promoting their view of culture around the world.

The reason I know this is that for the last 12 years, we've been doing a thing called the Global PEACE Plan at Saddleback Church: P-E-A-C-E. The P stands for "Promote reconciliation in war territories"; E is "Equip ethical leaders," which is an anticorruption issue; A is "Assist the poor"; C is "Care for the sick"; and E is "Educate the next generation." In the last 12 years, I've had 24,869 of my members in 197 countries. That's more countries than the United Nations has. And so I've been on the ground and I've had a first chance look to see how our government promotes development with strings attached all around the world with its own cultural agenda.

Thank you for asking about what everybody else said first. I wrote down a couple of thoughts. All compassion should be without strings, but it doesn't mean it should be without motivation, because everybody has a motivation. In the second panel, Asoka talked about the tsunami. The day after the tsunami, I stood up at Saddleback Church and said, "We need to help these people." On that day, our congregation gave \$1.6 million in cash for the tsunami. Nine months later, Hurricane Katrina hit. I stood up for literally a 30-second announcement and said, "We need to help these people." They gave \$1.8 million.

We gave that no strings attached. We just gave it, and we did it because we love Jesus. I'm not ashamed of that motivation.

You don't have to have that motivation. If there's a fire going on in a house, and there are children trapped inside, and five people run in to catch those kids, they might have five different motivations. I don't care what their motivations are, as long as the kids get out safe. Businesses have a profit motivation. It's not my motivation for humanitarian work, but it's not a bad one. The United States has self-interested motivations in humanitarian work. It's not my motivation, but it's not a bad one. I was recently asked to testify before Congress on why it's cheaper foreign policy to give aid than to send troops. Well, duh. [Laughter] Of course, that's not my motivation, but I'm not against it. I'm just interested in getting the job done.

Before we go on, I think it's important that we define both "development" and "proselytizing." First, development in itself, without proselytizing, is controversial because it involves change. I've seen forced development. I've seen coerced development. I've seen all kinds of development that were not religious in nature. It was purely coercion, which people didn't want.

And then there's proselytizing. By the way, do you know where that word comes from? It's from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. The Septuagint translation is where the word proselytizing comes. It's not in the English Bible. I don't like the word because it has such a negative connotation today. It implies coercion. I do like the word "witness," though. Somebody said it earlier. I like that. The Bible does say, "Be ready to give an answer to those who ask of you the hope, but



Rick Warren

“The church offers some things that the government will *never ever* have in development. First, we have universal distribution. I could take you to 10 million villages around the world and there’s nothing in each of them but a church. I can take you to millions more where there’s nothing but a mosque. It is the only form of social government outside of the cities in many developing countries. We have the most volunteers. Let’s just put this in perspective. There are 600 million Buddhists in the world. There are 800 million Hindus in the world. There are about 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. There are about 15 million Jews. There are 2.3 billion Christians in the world. Most of the world has faith.”

Rick Warren

do it with gentleness and respect.” That’s my philosophy. So everybody has a motivation. I think it was Bob who asked, “Who gets to be the motive police and determine why you’re doing good—as if my version of doing good is better than your version of doing good?” I think that’s important.

Another thing I wrote down is that I think the greatest proselytizer today is the media, because they have far more power and influence today in setting values and setting the agenda than the church, the government, or anybody else. The religion of America is “media-nity,” and they set the agenda.

I would say that the reason I do what I do is I believe that the church has numerous advantages that no government and no NGO will ever have. I’m talking about local congregations. When I talk about spiritual congregations, it could be a temple or it could be a mosque. We have done interfaith work in many places and with many people—with Muslims, Jews, and others—and like I said, we are working together on different issues.

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Let’s just put this in perspective. There are 600 million Buddhists in the world. There are 800 million Hindus in the world. There are about 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. There are about 15 million Jews. There are 2.3 billion Christians in the world. Most of the world has faith. The actual number of people who are agnostics and atheists is actually quite small outside of Europe and Manhattan. [*Laughter*]

Tony Blair once asked me to be on a panel at Davos. I shocked everybody when I said, “Now, you may not like this, but the future of the world is not secularism, it’s pluralism.” You may not like that, but if you’re a businessman, you’re going to have to learn to get along with it. How do you get along in a pluralistic world?

I believe in religious liberty because I believe everybody has a place at the table, and may the best ideas win. I do not believe in coercion, but I do believe in persuasion. People are trying to persuade me all the time. Environmentalists try to persuade me. Political parties try to persuade me. LGBT groups try to persuade me. Christians try to persuade me. Advertisers try to persuade me. Teachers are proselytizing their kids and parents are proselytizing their children. This is a fact of life: Everybody’s trying to persuade everybody. We just need to make sure it’s fair.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you, Ruth and Rick.

RUTH MESSINGER: I'd like to add to what Rick said. I think the question is just to that specific point about fairness, Pastor: What's fair when one group has all the resources or all the power?

I appreciate what you said about the government, but I don't want to make that the standard because that's not my standard. I know what issues my government has at play in its geopolitical life. Very often, from our point of view, US geopolitics dictate that US aid is used to win the hearts and minds at the top levels of a country, to look for and secure allies. But I know—and I know that our government knows—that a great deal of the aid that they deliver in that fashion doesn't go beyond the president or the prime minister or a few members of the cabinet. It doesn't go to the people.

So I'm talking very specifically about a different kind of development. Yes, I'm always trying to persuade and convince the US government to support that kind of aid and development, but I really want to speak for ourselves. For me, it's this power relationship that so influences persuasion.

Now I need a moment of personal pleading here. I come from Manhattan. *[Laughter]*

RICK WARREN: I apologize.

RUTH MESSINGER: I served for eight years as the borough president of Manhattan. At least for those eight years, the borough had a faith-based, faith-believing, synagogue-attending Jew who really cared about Jewish rights. *[Laughter]*

RICK WARREN: That's great. Yeah, you ought to applaud for that. *[Applause]*

RUTH MESSINGER: But I want to go back to this history. I just have to note—and I know that there are about two of you in this room who have any notion of what I'm talking about—that we are actually on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Purim, a holiday which, even if you knew what it was from the public discourse, you wouldn't really know what it is because of the way it's celebrated. By the way, for those of you who would like to adopt Judaism today, here's the point of persuasion: It's the holiday on which you're directed to get as drunk as possible. I am not yet drunk. It starts tonight. *[Laughter]*

But I said that before we had a lot of laughing because if you actually read the Book of Esther, which is the Purim story, it is premised around an adviser to the king who decided that for his own good and for the higher elevated status of the king, all the Jews in the kingdom should be killed. That is not exactly a conversion story. It's not about converting. It's about eradicating them. But it is this notion of picking on a religious minority.

In your introduction, Tim, I loved your question of, is this expanded pluralism going to lead to rising levels of tolerant, shared living and understanding, or will it lead to increased tensions? Just as another marker out there, we all are going to have to deal with a religious war that is rising in Western Burma—Myanmar to some people—where there is gross religious intolerance on behalf of one religious group attacking another religious group. The government of that country not only isn't intervening, but really does seem to be on the side of the oppressors.

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Rick Warren

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: You're referring to the war against the Rohingya Muslims.

RUTH MESSINGER: Right, the war against the Rohingya in Rakhine state in Western Burma. It's basically a war of fundamentalist Buddhists against Muslims. It's got all kinds of roots in history.

But I want to go back to this issue of power. The government of Burma, of Myanmar, having pronounced itself a democracy—and I'm using those words deliberately, because the same people who were part of the military autocracy remain in power—has said that it will hold a census as a prelude to elections, which is exactly what, from the geopolitical or from the American point of view, we'd like to hear.

But we know that in Rakhine state, the census takers are told to ask people what their religion is. If people say "Muslim," then census takers leave without counting them. That's a perfect example, to me, of power. It's a combination of government power and Buddhist power. It's literally using power to take the first or second steps toward obliterating the people. If they don't exist, then it's much easier to perpetrate violence against them.

I'm just going to take another example from Jewish history. Whether it's the Crusades or the Inquisition or the effort that I know some of you are familiar with in the last few decades—which has supposedly stopped but is clearly not over—of the Mormons trying to convert Jews who are dead, there's a real interest in conversion, I guess. But it's insulting, and it is a practice that we believe is still going on.

I come at this as somebody aware of the history of her people with a real allergy to anybody using their power in any way. In this case, Pastor, we're talking specifically about their power in the distribution of aid, their power in helping in development. I don't disagree with what you said about the government, but

let's just be clear about what the power base is before we move too fast.

How do we as faith-based groups do everything we can to pull back from imposing who we are and how we choose to live our lives, which we would love for people to see and be impressed by? How do we take that extra step to be sure that people don't think that the only way they can get aid—or in some cases are told that the only way they can get aid—is by signing on and changing their religion? In my experience, whatever that does in the short term—and it might produce more converts or some great new adherence—it's exactly what's going to lead to those rises in religious tensions.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you. You both laid down some excellent opening points and there are some important markers for our conversation now. I want to invite Katherine Marshall now to ask a series of questions. We've developed a line of questioning for you both to go even deeper into these issues.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Well, you've upset our line of questioning. *[Laughter]*

RUTH MESSINGER: It's your fault. You changed the first question. We were ready to be well behaved, both of us. You can imagine that, right? We're both very well behaved people. *[Laughter]*

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: We're a bit thrown off now. Yeah.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: I'm going to add one sentence to Tim's introduction, which I think as a global issue is something that's very important to keep in mind. For the first time in human history, we have the possibility of ending poverty. It's not clear that poverty is increasing. Poverty is a scandal, but it's a scandal because we know we can end it. That's the message of

“For the first time in human history, we have the possibility of ending poverty. It's not clear that poverty is increasing. Poverty is a scandal, but it's a scandal because we know we can end it. That's the message of hope, and it's never happened before in human history and it is a possibility now.”

Katherine Marshall



hope, and it's never happened before in human history and it is a possibility now.

Let me try to pick this up, Ruth. I think it would be interesting if you could go a little bit deeper into the sort of Jewish dimension that lies behind American Jewish World Service's approach, the community approach that you described before. What are the kinds of issues that you encounter on the ground, including the question that we talked about in the earlier panel: To what extent is this concern about proselytizing or evangelizing with strings attached exacerbating tensions in situations that you've seen? You talked about the Rohingya, but there are other situations.

RUTH MESSINGER: The short answer to the end of your question is, I think, yes. I think the people who Tim mentioned earlier—the three billion people living on less than \$2.50 a day and 1.3 billion living in extreme poverty—want help, and in many places in the world some help has been provided. But they are a little bit leery because they expect a string or two to be attached. Sometimes they experience the arrival of Westerners with great hope, and then they discover that the aid that's being offered or the service that's being provided is not what they think they need. That creates its own new source of tension.

I could give you lots of examples of that. The most dramatic occurred recently, and I think it's a good one. Maybe a lot of you saw it in the newspaper. It's just a dramatic example, because it involves two huge needs in which the givers had one priority and the receivers had the other priority. The issue is bed nets for children with malaria. Everybody in this room would agree that that's an extraordinary need. This is a disease that we can wipe out if every child in the world sleeps under a bed net. You would imagine that you could easily explain that to any parent. It's only a question of how many bed nets you can bring into a village and who's going to handle the distribution.

But the people in several villages in Africa felt that their most acute need was to feed their families. Fishing was slowing down. Here was a delivery of magnificent, perfectly designed fishing nets. And so don't put your children under them at night, because what's the point of saving your child until morning if she has nothing to eat? Take the fishing nets. Go and fish and bring the food back, and then after you've fed your family—which is probably the strongest instinct from any parent—you can think about disease prevention.

And so here was the problem. The West in general—and I'm lumping a lot of people and a lot of groups into this—didn't ask or wasn't on the ground. We delivered—here's the keyword, guys—insecticide-treated, fine-mesh bed nets that the villagers now use to fish. Don't stop eating healthy. But nobody knows whether the next fish you eat—or more to the point, whether the fish that those villagers are now consuming are additionally contaminated—because nobody has ever studied the effect of impregnated bed nets on whatever. Much more importantly, from a development point of view, the tiny mesh on the bed nets designed to prevent the mosquitoes from getting in takes everything out of the ocean. So if you know anything about the ecology of fishing, all of the tiny plants and animals are swept up every time these nets are used. The fishing industry's effectiveness will plummet.

I can give you five more examples like that. What this teaches us, going back to your question, is that we should take seriously the Jewish commandment to pursue justice and take seriously the Jewish understanding that every person is equally created in the image of God—*b'tzelem Elohim* in Hebrew. If you believe that, you would come to understand that the solutions to the problems of land grabbing in Cambodia or fishing in Africa or planting in Mesoamerica are going to come not from the World Bank or from American Jewish World Service or from



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Saddleback or from the United Nations without the involvement of the people who live there.

RICK WARREN: Absolutely.

RUTH MESSINGER: I speak from our experience as Jews but also as development experts who have developed a niche of finding the grassroots groups on the ground who have their own vision of justice and asking them what we can do to help. I would say we do a better job of this than many people, certainly better than the US government. If you start there—and this was well addressed in the last two panels—you will find those people who want to make a change.

At Georgetown right now, a phenomenal university that I'm very fond of, there are some people thinking about how we are going to educate the next decade and the decade after that. They see a need to make some changes in the curriculum, in tenure, and in scholarships. But you know what? A lot of people are just like, "I like it the way it is. I won't be here in a decade or two." This is true in every community. In the middle of Mathare, where some of you have walked, or in an urban slum in Kampala, there are people who are saying, "Wait a minute. Things here need to be a little different." If you ask them what should change, then you get a level of leadership from the bottom-up that makes it much more likely that the aid you provide will be used. For me, going back to the broader theme of today, this is an example of shifting the power dynamic.

It is absolutely true that we choose who we want to help. Of course, we're acting on some of our values. I agree. I'll admit that. But we're helping in a way that leaves the people who live at the heart of the problem in charge of the step-by-step solutions to solving it.

RICK WARREN: I actually saw that happen in Tanzania, the story that Ruth was telling us about. Everybody is using bed nets for fishing. I think Kent or Asoka said it in the earlier panel: You just have to ask the people what they need. We never, ever assume we know what people need. In fact, one of the themes of the PEACE plan is we don't come to solve. We come to serve, because we don't even know what you need.

Let me give you a case in point. When we went to Rwanda, we said, "Look. We specialize in these five things. We have no idea what you need. What would you like us to do?" They said, "In Western Province there are two million people and only one doctor. We need healthcare." We said, "Fine, that's what we'll help you with." We went and we served.

Later, President Bush asked me to be the closing speaker at a conference on malaria. I put a map up on the screen. I said, "Let me just show you why you have to have faith-based groups to solve any global problem." You can't do it without them. They're the third leg of the stool. If you could solve the world's problems with just business and government, we would have solved them by now. But as I said, the church has things that nobody else has, including 2.1 billion volunteers.

And so I said, "Watch this." I put up a map. I told them that in the Western Province of Rwanda there are two million people and one doctor and three hospitals. They're not like the hospitals you would imagine, because they're not staffed. They're run by volunteers. It's a two-day walk to the nearest healthcare clinic. That's not good healthcare. And by the way, two of those three hospitals are faith-based. So you'd only have one of them if it wasn't faith-based. That's not good enough healthcare.

Then I put up a second slide with 18 dots. I said, "Here are the 18 clinics in the Western Province of Rwanda." Now that's better, because it's only a one-day walk to the 18 clinics. But if you've been in these clinics—if you've ever been in any clinic in a developing country—there's a bottle of aspirin on the shelf. I've been in those 18 clinics. In one of them, there's a woman on the ground just giving birth to a baby. There was nothing there, just a roof. Another one had a microscope from the 1950s and no medicine, but it's better than nothing. So I said, "Here are the 18

clinics. By the way, 16 of these 18 clinics are faith-based. They're in churches. You wouldn't have those without churches. You'd only have two if it weren't for churches."

Now watch this. I put up a picture—dot, dot, dot, dot. I said, "Here are the 867 houses of worship in the Western Province. Where would you like to get your healthcare? A two-day walk, a one-day walk, or five minutes away?" Melinda Gates is sitting on the front row. She comes up and says, "I get it. The church could be the distribution center." I said, "Melinda, the church has been the distribution center for 2,000 years. Long before anybody else thought about it, the church was caring for the sick."

The key to end poverty is not aid. It's trade. What people need is jobs. These people are not dumb. They're smart. They just need a hand up, not a handout. The West has put enormous amount of aid—trillions and trillions of dollars—into the developing world, and many of those countries are actually worse off than they were 50 years ago.

I have sat in front of presidents in Africa and said, "Are you going to rip me off?" The president says, "Excuse me?" I said, "We have the ability to bring in enormous resources into this nation, but if you're just going to put it in a Swiss bank account, then you don't want me and I don't want you. You just need to tell us right now." You've got to confront corruption head-on. If you don't hit it head-on, then a lot of it is just going to go into the king's slush fund.

Jobs are really the key to ending poverty. Now, everybody knows the old saying, "Don't give a man a fish. Teach him to fish." I say, that's not good enough. You need to not just teach them to fish, but also teach them how to sell a fish because you need to develop a market economy. If all you do is teach a man to fish, you produce a village of fishermen where everybody catches the same fish, sits on the side of the road, and sells the same fish. One of them gets sold, the other nine die, and they all go home hungry. What you need is somebody who says, "I'll make the nets. I'll build the boats. I'll can the fish. I'll skin the fish. I'll preserve the fish." You build a mini economy. That is a matter of training. Really, what people need more than anything else is opportunity and training.

Let me go back to Rwanda. In Rwanda, the average income for a farmer is \$0.64 a day. He grows coffee all day and makes \$0.64. At the end of the day, he can't buy a cup of Starbucks. That's the power problem. The real issue is going in as a servant.

Going in as a servant means you don't go in with an agenda. You go in to serve.

By the way, let me just give you the follow-up on that healthcare problem in the Western Province. I said, "I'm going to prove that I can do it faster than any NGO." I went to the churches in the western province and said, "You're never going to have a doctor in your village because there aren't enough doctors in the world to put a doctor in every village. You're never going to have a doctor. We're going to have to train people in your church to do basic healthcare." Eighteen pastors said, "I'm in"—a couple of priests, a couple of Catholics, a couple of Protestants, and a Pentecostal. The Muslims came to me and said, "Can we be in?" I said, "Of course, you can be in. This is a humanitarian issue." The Muslims went to the mosques and said, "Each of you pick two people."

We began to train them in simple stuff. First, how to wash your hands; how to hang the sheets out to dry in the sun so they're sanitized; how to do basic sanitation; how to dress a wound. Then we showed them how to stitch a wound and how to set a bone. Finally, we showed them how to administer antiretrovirals or ARVs, which is a very technical skill for fighting AIDS. We took those 32 people and we trained them, and we gave each of them seven families to visit a week and said, "You're going to make house calls." And then we had them help us train 64 more workers, and then 128, and then 246. The numbers multiplied.

Last August, I went to Kabuye in Uganda and held a rally for 6,000 trained healthcare workers who were each making seven visits a week to families. What did it cost me? Nothing, because it's not about money. It's not about money. It's about training. That is the power of distribution. I'm just saying that we must involve all three layers: business has a role, faith has a role, and government has a role.

RUTH MESSINGER: I just want to expand on Pastor Warren's point. I certainly agree that it's not just the public sector and the private sector, business, and government. But I think when we get to that third or fourth or fifth leg, I don't want it to be just civil society NGOs. I don't want it to be just faith-based organizations, such as the ones represented here. I want to be sure that there's space for the voice of those people who are being helped.

That was a great story. I guess the only thing I'd add to that is an almost parallel story. It was over the last six months,

“Now, whatever your faith in this room, whatever your common care practice for holding your child when she’s sick, or for dropping everything and going to take care of your father because he’s ill, or for being part of the family that buries your uncle—imagine if you were suddenly told by somebody that you can’t do any of those things because you yourself will die and other people will die from Ebola? What if you were told that by people that you specifically didn’t trust, including, in Liberia, your own government? So changes have got to involve the people who live there orchestrating the steps.”

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when American Jewish World Service was asking our long-time grantees in Liberia, “What is going to work here?” My government had sent in 2,800 Marines and they’d built, I think, 30 Ebola treatment units. My people on the ground tell me the Ebola treatment units are largely empty. First of all, there’s no staff—your point exactly, Rick. But second of all, and more importantly, the view of the average Liberian is that white guys and gals in space suits brought a dangerous virus here, and they expect us to take our sick family members to the hospital where we know there’s no treatment and where the neighbor’s child went last week and is now dead.

So we said to our people on the ground, “What’s the next step?” They said, “We can’t right now do the land rights work that you trained us for. But if you can get us information and advice, we know how to go door to door and tell people what you in New York may not get.” But they first have to be told the virus is real, then they have to be told there are steps to prevent it, and—I want you all to think about this, each person in this audience—then they have to be told that every single thing that they ordinarily do to care for a sick member of the family or to bury a family member who’s died will lead to rapid spread of the virus and many more deaths.

Now, whatever your faith in this room, whatever your common care practice for holding your child when she’s sick, or for dropping everything and going to take care of your father because he’s ill, or for being part of the family that buries your uncle—imagine if you were suddenly told by somebody that you can’t do any of those things because you yourself will die and other people will die from Ebola? What if you were told that by people that you specifically didn’t trust?—including, in Liberia, your own government?

So changes have got to involve the people who live there orchestrating the steps. I’m very happy to say—just a small correction to what you said before—that in this case, the White House said to us, “We probably shouldn’t have built all the units until we figured out what it would take to get people to go to them.” [*Laughter*] That’s good.

But it was an amazing story. There were a few weeks where the largest number of deaths to Ebola in Liberia—which is the only one of the three countries we worked in—were local taxi drivers, because they were being called on to take these families with two or three people literally bleeding out of every orifice crowded into the cab. Who was the person who got sick who hadn’t been sick before? It was the driver.

You sort of asked me what’s Jewish about this, and I just want to keep going back to this. So some people know the most commonly said Jewish prayer begins with the word *Shma*, or listen. We’ve actually taken that to heart. As I say, we are going to listen to the people we want to help because over and over again, they have ideas that make a difference. You talked about fishing and what fisher-people need to learn. I agree with you. That’s part of what they need to learn to be successful.

But in Kenya, the Ethiopian government and the Kenyan government signed an agreement to build a dam that would have produced hydropower for that region. This is good news for development, since we’re all for development. But that hydropower would’ve been produced—and it may still be produced, I’m sorry to say—at the cost of a dam that lowers the water in Lake Turkana by 30 feet. That will put the people who use that lake for fishing, for herding, for feeding their cattle, and for farming out of livelihoods and out of life. That’s

400,000 indigenous tribes-people. We have a local activist who stopped the dam right now, and stopped World Bank funding for the dam right now, and is now organizing with the help of the United Nations to see if Ethiopia and Kenya can agree on a different proposal that will bring hydropower without destroying people's lives.

There's no way and no reason why some person at some desk in the State Department or USAID, or, I want to say, anyone of our religious organizations, would know that only sitting stateside. For me, it's the question of listening, letting people drive their own efforts at social change and then partnering with those that will create change for sure. It will create change. Some of that change will be people organizing against some provisions of how they were raised, some provisions of their culture. But it also can, for example, assert the rights of women.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Both of you actually have spent many years in this development field. What's going to make a difference in addressing some of these questions? Is it a code of conduct that people talk about? Is it changing the actors? Is it a revolution? What do you see as the most positive directions that come out of your experience?

RICK WARREN: Kent mentioned a couple of the codes of conduct. I think they're just fine. I think people just need to sign on to them.

RUTH MESSINGER: For me, I want to look again at some of the statistics that Tim offered and then your observation that despite those statistics, we have the power to make change. And so it's really going step by step. What do we need? One thing that doesn't get mentioned here, and certainly something that many of our faiths teach but that doesn't mean it gets practiced, is ending people's willingness to keep amassing for themselves to create scarcities. That's a tough change. But if we believe in the teachings of most of the faiths represented in this room and in the world, most of our faiths don't urge us to acquire all we can and use it profligately. They urge us to really be thinking of the "other" all the time.

My husband follows me around the kitchen and says, "I know what you do for a living, but could you please put the plastic in the recycling bin?" [*Laughter*] All of us have behaviors that we need to learn to change. I think that's a piece of it, and that goes directly, of course, to Katherine's question which I want to address. I think Pastor Warren raised some of the problems with government aid as well.

But I also want to say, folks, that we live in a world in which every single person, in any faith and in any congregation, when asked what percentage of the US budget goes to nonmilitary foreign aid, will guess wrong by a factor of at least 100 and probably 10,000. A study was done several years ago. It was basically a public survey. What percentage of the US budget do you think goes to nonmilitary foreign aid? Twenty percent, people answered. What percentage do you think should go? Is that too high or too low? Oh, it's much too high. What percentage do you think should go? Five percent. But the answer is still two-tenths of one percent. And so that has to do with how we use our government resources, as well as how we use our own resources.

And then we get to the question that I think Pastor Warren raised very fairly, which is, if we provide more resources to make a difference in the Global South, who is going to say how they're used? How are we going to remove the power dynamic as much as possible? This is obviously my issue for today. Because if it's Jews or Muslims arriving, it's like the Hindus who got in touch with me who said, "Speak up and say that this is predatory proselytizing." Every group is aware of it.

What I love most about your doing this today is that it's sort of opening up, not a dirty little secret, but something that doesn't get talked about enough. If we believe in aid, if we believe in helping the poorest people in the world live their lives differently, how are we going to do that as Americans with adherence to a particular faith? How are we going to do that in ways that remove as much as possible the power dynamic that tells people who they need to be, what they need to swear to, or where they need to sign in order to get help? How are we going to do that in a way that simply respects them as people who are already running their own lives and who have new ideas for how to run their lives better?

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: We want to turn to the audience in just a minute. May I just ask one question that really builds on your comments, Ruth? I want to pose it to you, Rick. Rick, you've argued eloquently for the importance of making the church central to the delivery of development in vulnerable contexts. Though one, in hearing that, might worry precisely because of what Ruth said about radically unequal power dynamics. If the church becomes the vehicle for the delivery of development, doesn't that put, at least implicitly, very inappropriate pressure on people who may not want to be part of the church to be part of the church, just in order to receive development aid? And we know the concerns about the

rise of material inducement. Pope Francis has expressed concern about proselytism as well. How do you respond to these kinds of concerns that there is inevitably going to be an inappropriate pressure on people to convert?

RICK WARREN: When you talk about the local congregation, one of the expressions in Africa is that the priest sleeps in the same blankets as the villagers. They're not rich, so there's no power play there. When a church is as poor as the village, there's no power play at all. They're as poor as the villagers. So I reject that argument that they're going to have power over the people.

I'm sorry, I just keep going back to Rwanda, but when the genocide hit in 1994, every single NGO left, including the UN. Who was left? The church. Why? Because the church is the community. You cannot do community development without houses of worship in most of the world. They are the community. Whether it's Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist or Christian, they are the community. And to say we're going to ignore the number-one pipeline to humanity is nonsense. And then to say that we're going to doubt your motives while we have our own motivations is also hypocritical. That's all I'm saying.

RUTH MESSINGER: For me, that sounds like a great answer, but that's again about the struggle with the government recognizing the power of faith-based institutions to make a difference on the ground. For me, the next question—and I'm not questioning anything you've done in Rwanda and it sounds great—but what is it like from the point of view of a villager when the aid is coming from anybody, including us? Who are

you? This was one of the questions you were going to ask that we didn't get to.

But you know, people do ask us, "Who are you?" What are Jews? What do you believe? And sometimes they say, "Is there something you want from us?" And sometimes they say, "Are you going to build a religious building?" So obviously, they've had some experiences with strings attached to aid. I think the problem is not *that* we mobilize, but it's *how* that mobilization is perceived from the person on the ground. That's why I asked you all to imagine Marines showing up in Liberia.

Another example would be Hurricane Katrina, which you mentioned before. I can't think of a disaster hitting Washington, DC, other than politics and snow. [Laughter] Let's imagine we're living in an American city in the West Coast with a catastrophe like an earthquake, a tidal wave, or a hurricane. What if that were the situation in the neighborhood in which you live? What if you were suddenly told there are lots of people here without power, and we're going to be literally rolling people out? But what if you were told suddenly that this was an area that had been given to the Muslims to provide relief services, or that this was an area where Buddhists would be helping out?

I promise you folks—be honest with yourselves—there would be a little bit of what, who, why? Why are they coming out? It doesn't sound quite logical to us because we would expect the government to come. But we all have these experiences.

So the question is if that's true, if that's your situation and

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“Let’s imagine we’re living in an American city in the West Coast with a catastrophe like an earthquake, a tidal wave, or a hurricane. What if that were the situation in the neighborhood in which you live?... But what if you were told suddenly that this was an area that had been given to the Muslims to provide relief services, or that this was an area where Buddhists would be helping out? I promise you folks—be honest with yourselves—there would be a little bit of what, who, why? Why are they coming out?”

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that’s who’s providing the aid, are they going to provide the aid as people totally motivated, as Pastor Warren said before, by compassion? And they’re never going to say to you, “Oh, by the way, we’re Buddhists.” “Oh, by the way, our synagogue is down the block.” “Oh, by the way, because you just joined us, this is one of our five times a day to say a prayer.” If they go about doing their work and they don’t do anything more than say, “We are the people that the government or the aid plan asked to take care of evacuation in your area,” hopefully you’ll end up feeling comfortable.

But I think we have to try really hard—and I don’t think my organization ever does this well enough. But our constant challenge to ourselves is what does this look like from the point of view of the person we’re trying to help? And what does that person whom we bond with—who almost by definition is a natural leader—see as herself and her life and her family and her story? What can she tell us about what she most needs?

And my last point is: How will she see American Jewish World Service? I want her to see us—obviously I have a horse in this race—as a people motivated by a drive to do justice and not

motivated by a desire to get her to change her religion or her cultural practices or her observances in order to get help from me.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you all very much. May I now ask the audience for questions? Inspired by Ruth’s mantra to listen, we’re going to listen to you now. We have several students and others with microphones, so we invite you to raise your hand. I see a gentleman in the back there whom I recognize, Jay Kansara from the Hindu American Foundation. Thank you for being here, Jay.

JAY KANSARA: Thank you to all. And thank you, Ruth, for mentioning what one of my board members had brought to your attention. It’s one of the problems that we see at the Hindu

American Foundation. Just yesterday in Idaho, a Hindu priest was to give a prayer at the Idaho State House, and I think he did it, but there were some objections by lawmakers. Steve Vick, a senator—he made a public statement so I don’t have a problem saying his name—said that America is a Christian nation. America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles. And then there’s a study that came

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Jay Kansara

out last week that over 50 percent of Republicans, who are now the majority in the House and Senate, said that they would be okay with the United States being a Christian nation. I'm not saying that the members of the House and the Senate have said this themselves, but people who espouse their Republican ideology in their political lives have said it.

So I think the problem starts with how America views itself, how those who are coming from America view the founding of our nation, how they view this space for religious freedom and the separation of church and state here at home. No matter how poor the church is, if they're attached to something bigger, that is always going to be reflected in the work they do. I would like to hear your points of view on that.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you, Jay. Thanks for being here, too.

RICK WARREN: I think it's important to remember that the countries that have had the greatest religious freedom were those who supposedly had a Christian foundation, not other religions. America is not a Christian nation now. Was it founded by people who were Christians? The first people came here to leave persecution from the Church of England. They were called pilgrims. So even before the founding fathers, we had the pilgrim fathers who were definitely Christians, who

came here for Christian reasons to practice their own faith, and then they turned around and ended up persecuting the other Christians who came, like the Baptists and others.

Somebody said it earlier: "Whoever is in the majority tends to put down everybody else." When I go to Thailand, it doesn't bother me that there's a statue of Buddha in front of the capital. It's a Buddhist country. When I go to India and I see Hindu gods, it doesn't bother me. That's their heritage. When I go to any of the Muslim countries, I'm not offended that I walk in and I see a crescent moon and I see no symbols except mosaics. They're Muslim countries. To me, the question is not what were the roots of America or any other country, but is freedom provided for all right now? That's the real issue.

Historically, if you want to thank anybody for religious freedom in America, you need to thank the Baptists, because it wasn't anybody else. It was the Baptists who promoted religious freedom. I used to own one of Thomas Jefferson's two famous letters on religious liberty. It's worth about \$2 million now. Jefferson wrote two famous letters, one to the Danbury Baptists and one to the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Connecticut. In the Danbury Baptist letter, he actually uses the phrase "separation of church and state." Separation of church and state is not in the Constitution, it's in a letter to Baptists. That's where the whole idea comes from.

What Jefferson meant by separation of church and state is the exact opposite of what people think it means today. What he meant was we were going to keep government out of the church's business, not that you couldn't have a religious idea in the public square. Everybody brings a worldview when they vote. Christianity is one worldview. It's one of many, but it is a worldview. Everybody has a worldview. And what we need is to ensure that everybody's worldview is allowed at the table. In a democracy, nobody wins all the time. I happen to be against abortion, but it's legal in America right now. I'm not leaving the country for it. I believe it's wrong. Nobody wins all the time.

In the letter that I owned, Jefferson wrote that the dearest provision in the Constitution is that which protects the freedom of conscience and religion. And government basically—I'm paraphrasing—should totally stay out of it.

He wrote that letter on a Friday. That Sunday, he went to church, as was his custom. Jefferson was in no sense a Christian, but he did go to church. And he went to the church which had been planted in the Capitol and met in the Capitol for eight years. So

the man who wrote the phrase “separation of church and state” had no problem with the church being planted in the Capitol Building of the United States. His idea of separation was foreign to that. And so we’ve gone a long way from that.

I think what we need is—again, this is why I believe in what Tim and Tom are doing here in the Religious Freedom Project—we need to understand that this is the fundamental principle of America. It is not by accident that religious liberty is called the first freedom of America. It’s not the second; it’s not the third; it’s not the fifth. It’s the first. Religious freedom is the first phrase of the first sentence of the first paragraph of the First Amendment of the United States. It comes before freedom of the press. It comes before freedom of speech. It comes before the right to assemble. Why? Because if you don’t have the right to practice and believe what you want to believe, you don’t need the freedom of speech, you don’t need the freedom of the press, and you don’t need the freedom to assemble.

The freedom to practice and propagate your religion is the fundamental thing that makes America different than every other country in the world. No other country was founded on the idea that everybody has the right to believe what they want to believe. And you have a right to persuade me, and I have a right to persuade you. We do not have a right to coerce each other.

RUTH MESSINGER: I want to go back to where the question started. I want to go back to the beginning of my statement. I am from a group that over millennia was a religious minority that suffered persecution from people who said, “We’re all tolerant here. You can be whatever you want. But by the way, if you keep being who you are, you’re likely to get yourself in increasing amounts of trouble.”

And the example that you gave from Idaho is common. And believe it or not, I went through it in New York. I know it’s been a long time since I was in government. But when I was in the city council, we had to say this is not a Christian city. This is not a Christian country. This is a country that aspires to religious freedom. And if it aspires to religious freedom and also chooses to have a prayer at the beginning of a legislative session, then it has got to respect every religion in the city and every prayer group that anybody wants to have without those kinds of objection. So I’m very sympathetic to the way in which you raised the issue.

Pastor, I want to say I love much of your version of American history, but those pilgrims who were escaping to establish

religious freedom beat up on a very large nation of Native Americans who had their own religion and were persecuted and killed in the process. *[Applause]*

RICK WARREN: I’m not defending them, but I am saying this: No country has ever established freedom of religion that was dominated by any religion other than Christianity. None. I say that without fear. And it is true. For instance, even today, Israel is more like Egypt than the West in its religious freedom views. Somebody said that earlier.

RUTH MESSINGER: I don’t have the basis to challenge the fact of what you said. But I do want to challenge the notion that it’s only in countries that are predominantly Christian that religious freedom really flourishes. When I go to Guatemala and the group that I’m working with, the group of midwives who are changing birth practices, says, “Would you mind if we began with a Mayan ceremony of candle lighting?” I don’t say to them, “Okay, but only if we can also light candles on Shabbat.” I say, “We would love to participate with you.”

RICK WARREN: That’s what I was saying about Thailand.

RUTH MESSINGER: I want to see more and more countries, whatever their dominant religion, able to cope with the majority that Tim described. And as the world gets increasingly religiously diverse and increasingly pluralistic, it figures out a way for everyone to live together in any one of these countries, whether it’s a Muslim country, a Hindu country, a Jewish country, a Christian country, or whatever.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Let’s get a couple more questions. There’s a questioner at the back.

CARRIE DEVORAH: Hi, my name is Carrie Devorah. I founded God in the Temples of Government a decade ago after *Van Orden v. Perry*. Twenty-seven of my pictures rocked the location of faith in the Capitol, and my images appeared in the case *Van Orden v. Perry*, which was about the right to keep the Ten Commandments on the grounds in Texas. I’m a soferet, which means I’m a Hebrew calligrapher. And the core of the Bible, I believe—and our code for living by—is in the Hebrew letters and their creation. And on this paper, I laid out two letters. The first one is known as the letter *gimel*. The second one is known as the letter *dalet*. This is the lesson of giving charity: that the man giving charity, the *gomel* or the businessman, is supposed to walk after the *dalet*, the poor. But you can notice that the *dalet* is not looking at the man who’s giving the charity.

The purpose is that charity is supposed to be given anonymously and it's not to embarrass people.

And I think it's so important when faith is brought into a conversation of how charity is done, and there's a reference historically back to the origins that we start here. And Ms. Marshall, in terms of the code, it does exist. In marketing, we call it bullet points. In faith, we call it the Ten Commandments.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you. Let's get another question then. Yeah, right here in the front.

SAM MALL: Thank you, Tim.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Try to be very brief because we have only a couple of minutes left.

is Christianity, the other is Islam—that are in this business of spreading the gospel that they believe in. And from what I have heard from the people here and the organizers is that it is only the Christians who are guilty of this and not the others. If we look around and open our eyes, I think we will find that over the last 13 centuries, there have been a lot of issues with these other religions. Even today we have problems with Boko Haram and ISIS.

I am the director of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Federation here in the United States. Our best man was also Muslim. I was born and raised in Pakistan. So please understand where I'm coming from. I think this is something that we have missed, and we should have paid more attention to this.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: The point was made that many groups have proselytized across history, but I think we

“I just would love to urge people who have an interest in exploring this more to sort of think about this in terms of the work that you do, about how you think about the other person, the person next to you, the person in your congregation or your faith-based community. Extend that same thinking to the people wherever it is that you are doing social change work, justice work, and charitable work, and be sure you equally see them as people in control of their own destiny.”

Ruth Messinger

SAM MALL: This is a very insightful and vibrant discussion. Thank you very much, all of you panelists. You guys have done tremendously and moved the discussion further. In the two earlier panels, I felt that there was too much reference given only to the medieval church, Mother Teresa, Christianity, and others as being the agents for proselytizing in the world. The entire emphasis was on Christians doing that. One thing I am a little unhappy about is that I don't see any Muslim scholar among the panelists here today. I wish we had some Muslim scholars here. And I am a Christian.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: If you can come quickly to a question.

SAM MALL: The question is that I think we should have also discussed that there are only two religions in this world—one

could have done a better job of talking about the variety of proselytism. We do need to come to a close, I'm afraid. I'd like to give our panelists opportunity to offer closing comments and then we'll take a short break before our last panel of the day. Ruth and then Rick, go ahead.

RUTH MESSINGER: I really want to be very brief. First of all, you've been a wonderful audience. Second of all, I think we've actually—Pastor Warren and I—shared a great deal of what we each think and not given Katherine and Tim maybe enough time to ask the questions that they planned to ask us. But I just would love to urge people who have an interest in exploring this more to sort of think about this in terms of the work that you do, about how you think about the other person, the person next to you, the person in your congregation or your faith-based community. Extend that same thinking to the people wherever



Carrie Devorah

it is that you are doing social change work, justice work, and charitable work, and be sure you equally see them as people in control of their own destiny.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Good. Thank you, Ruth, good work. Rick?

RICK WARREN: My final word would simply be coercion is not conversion. They are not the same. It's not conversion unless I choose. I believe that God gives me the right to accept or reject Him, and so I must give that right to everybody else, to accept or reject Him. That's where I stand. So I am absolutely opposed to coercion. I'm absolutely opposed to strings attached and all of this kind of things.

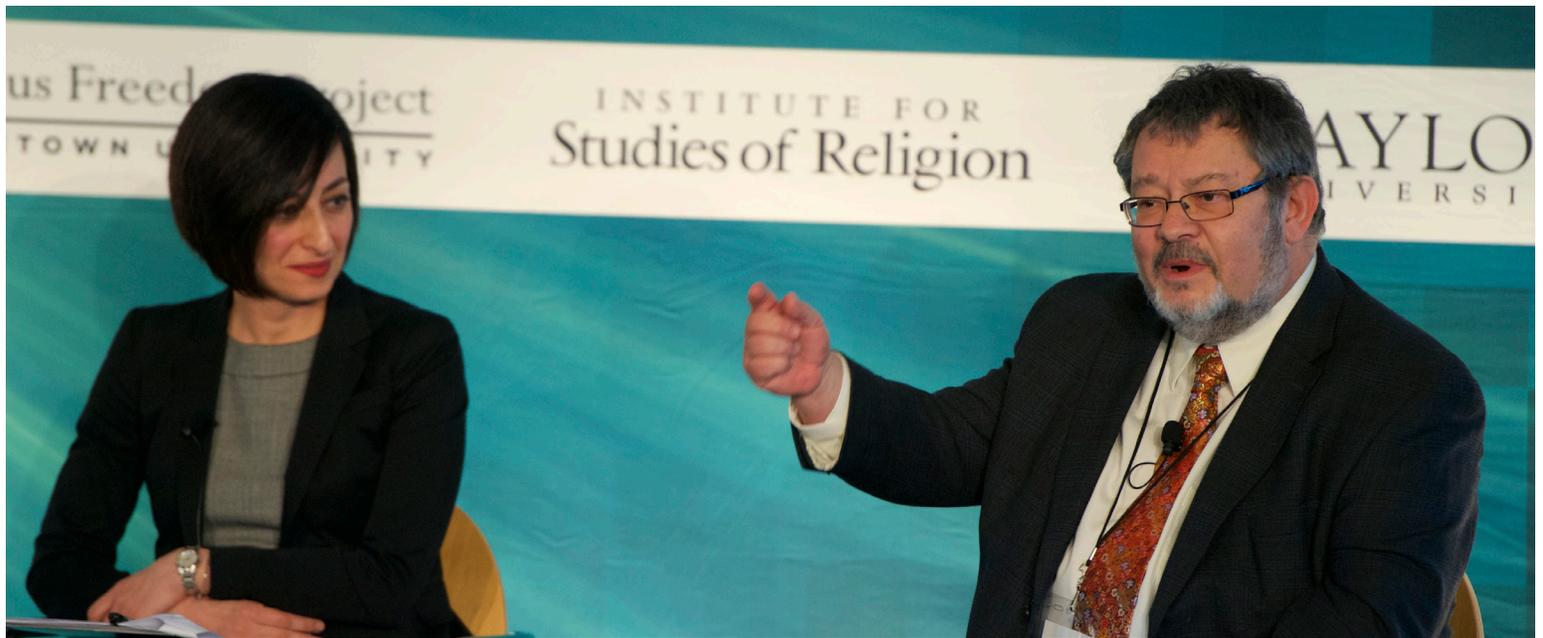
But I do believe in sharing what I deeply hold, and I make no apology in that. If I'm a doctor and somebody comes to me

with a cut arm and all he wanted was a Band-Aid, I'll give him a Band-Aid. But if I discover they have cancer too, it is unethical for me to send them off with a Band-Aid. And I believe Jesus told me to love your neighbors as yourself, treat everybody with dignity, love everybody, and share the good news. I believe in both the good news and the common good, and I think you can hold both in balance.

TIMOTHY SAMUEL SHAH: Thank you, Rick Warren. Thank you, Ruth Messinger. *[Applause]* Thank you for sharing so profoundly from the depths of your hearts and the depths of your experiences. We're very, very grateful to both of you. And thank you, Katherine Marshall. This was fun. Someone mentioned the Ten Commandments. We had about 10 questions, and we were able to ask only two of them because Rick and Ruth had so much to share. *[Laughter]* Thank you.

“If I’m a doctor and somebody comes to me with a cut arm and all he wanted was a Band-Aid, I’ll give him a Band-Aid. But if I discover they have cancer too, it is unethical for me to send them off with a Band-Aid. And I believe Jesus told me to love your neighbors as yourself, treat everybody with dignity, love everybody, and share the good news. I believe in both the good news and the common good, and I think you can hold both in balance.”

Rick Warren



PROSELYTISM, SOCIAL STABILITY, AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN TODAY'S WORLD

ALLEN HERTZKE: My name is Allen Hertzke. I'm a professor of political science at the University of Oklahoma and one of the associate scholars here at Georgetown's Religious Freedom Project. Our panel focuses on the issues of proselytism, social stability, and political development. We're going to look at some of these political dynamics. I know it's late, so we're going to make this very conversational. We'll be crisp with our answers so that we can get to more questions. We have a really distinguished panel, so I'm going to introduce them now briefly and you can read more about them and their work.

To my immediate left is Brian Grim. If there's ever a person who is truly a pioneer in the field of global religious freedom, it is Brian Grim. Brian is the one who developed the mechanism, the methodology, to actually measure restrictions on religion, which has been used and is still being used at the Pew Research Center for their massive *Global Restrictions on Religion* reports. He also co-wrote the book *The Price of Freedom Denied*, in which he and Roger Finke apply that methodology to an understanding of the linkages between religious freedom and other social goods. He's now the founder and president of the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, which I'm sure he'll be able to talk about. He brings an extraordinary amount of experience and travels

the world. We're just delighted to have Brian with us.

Next, we have Ani Sarkissian, who's an associate professor of political science at Michigan State. And as I was reading through her resume, I was just stunned by how prolific she has been in such a short scholarly career. She is the author of a book that just came out which is central to this topic here: *The Varieties of Religious Repression: Why Governments Restrict Religion*. She's also written the paper, "The Freedom to Proselytize and the Quality of Democracy," which we will discuss here in a few minutes. She's also, of course, an associate scholar of the Religious Freedom Project.

And finally, Hans Ucko is an ordained minister of the Church of Sweden. He has worked at the very highest levels of interfaith dialogue with respect to proselytism and codes of conduct. He worked with the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, and the World Evangelical Alliance at the highest levels to develop codes of conduct. He'll be talking a little bit about how that came about and what he's learned from that experience.

Our plan here is to have a conversation. I'm going to pose some questions and let our panelists respond. We're going to let each

of them provide something unique to the conversation, and then we're going to open it up to you all.

I want to start with the whole discussion about proselytism. There's been a lot of discussion about what it is: Is it uniquely abusive or inherently coercive, or is it just a term that has become pejorative without necessarily any reason? So I thought I'd ask the panelists for your reflections on the word proselytism, and whether you can distinguish it from witness or conversion, and what you would add to what we've heard already in the discussion. Brian, you might start and then we'll let the rest of you chime in here.

BRIAN GRIM: Thank you, Allen. It's good to be here at Georgetown, which, by the way, is a Catholic university. So I have four cans of worms that I'm going to open up if there's time and—

ALLEN HERTZKE: We'll let you open them up later. *[Laughter]*

BRIAN GRIM: My first can of worms is that the Pope said, "Don't proselytize." Since I'm Catholic, I think that's just the end. We're done, and I can sit down now. *[Laughter]*

But it might be good to read a little bit of what he said. The Pope said this during his weekly Sunday Angelus in St. Peter's Square, addressing the skeptical in the crowd. He said, "The Lord is calling you to be part of His people, and He does it with great respect and love. The Lord does not proselytize; He gives love. And this love seeks you and waits for you, you who at this moment do not believe or are far away. And this is the love of God." According to Vatican Radio, "Pope Francis prayed that "all the Church" may be "steeped in the joy of evangelizing," invoking the aid of the Virgin Mary so that "we can all be disciple missionaries, small stars that reflect His light." So the Pope has said he doesn't believe that we should proselytize, but this is a pretty nice description of what we've been talking about: sharing the faith, witnessing—

ALLEN HERTZKE: Missionizing.

BRIAN GRIM: Yes, even missionizing. But sharing love, too. The Pope often speaks very eloquently about the Gospel that's read every day by Catholics. He talks about the Good Samaritan. If you think of the Good Samaritan story—one of his favorites and mine—the Good Samaritan was a foreigner with a foreign religion, and he's our model for somebody who should do good.

This radical idea that Jesus talked about is something the Pope is very animated about. All the world should get in touch with this exciting idea that's so radical: that love is more radical than radicalism. This is what animates the Pope, and he hopes all Catholics get out and talk about it. But that's not proselytizing; that's just sharing our faith, what he calls evangelizing. It's quite an interesting perspective, and people have all kinds of takes on it. But I thought that might be a good perspective that I could share.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Thank you, Brian. Ani, do you have anything to add to this?

ANI SARKISSIAN: We talked a lot today about proselytism having a negative connotation. A lot of my research has to do with putting restrictions on religion. So, one of the things that governments try to do is restrict the type of coercive or fraudulent proselytism, the type that many of us disagree with. But I want to steer the conversation in a little bit of a different direction, a direction that I think is more relevant to power relations and how politics become involved in the question of proselytism. I want to discuss—and we talked about this a little bit—who gets to decide what is coercive, fraudulent, or negative proselytism. Do we want states defining that? Do we want to put a government in the position of deciding whether a message is coercive or fraudulent?

Another way that I'd like to think about proselytism—particularly in terms of restrictions on proselytism—is through things that are related to proselytism. Proselytism is not just delivering aid and trying to teach people about your religion while you're giving them aid. It also includes things like public preaching—going out in the open and talking about your religion. It includes publishing religious tracts. It includes having radio programs where you talk about your religion. So when we think about how proselytism might be restricted by states, we also need to pay attention to some of these other ways that religions are being restricted and prevented from spreading their message. And I think I'd like to bring this discussion back to basic freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

So proselytism is not just about sharing your religious message. It's about sharing your views on all sorts of things. When we do get into issues of whether states should be involved in restricting proselytism or not, we need to keep in mind some of these other types of issues that often go along with restrictions on proselytism.

ALLEN HERTZKE: I like your point about introducing a different kind of power dynamic, because I thought Ruth Messinger's point was very compelling, about how religious messages and aid are received by a very vulnerable, needy person. And you're pointing out that the state is a powerful actor. When the state engages in deciding to restrict religious proselytism, what does that mean? We'll be exploring that question further.

Hans, I think this might be a great opportunity for me to ask you to describe how you came to this work as a minister and began developing a code of conduct, because it's a fascinating story. And the code does come from what you were hearing, or what people were saying on the receiving end.

HANS UCKO: I will begin by saying it began long, long before I became a minister. I'd like to mention that I'm a convert from Judaism, though I was never a practicing Jew. But nevertheless, the moment it became known that I was a convert, I came across so many Christians who made very strong and strange comments. They looked upon me as a hero, announcing the coming or return of Christ, saying, "Now are the end days" or "You are the one who is carrying the church." [Laughter] And this, as I stood on the receiving end, was something I had some problems with.

And one of the problems that I've had today—though I think having a problem doesn't mean that I am against it—is that the first issue related to religious freedom seems to be whether or not I can proselytize. To me, this is not number one on my list. I would like to quote Pope Benedict XVI, who quite poignantly said that "the Church does not grow by proselytizing; she grows by attracting others." And this is what I think the Church and every religion should be all about. Religion should not be about going out and making the other an object for my desire to have him or her become what I am.

I think that it is strange that the first thing that comes to mind in the context of religious freedom is the right to proselytize. For me, religious freedom is what someone said in the session before: to be allowed to believe what I believe; to be allowed to express it; to be allowed to be genuine to my faith; to be allowed, if asked and invited by anyone attracted by it, to answer according to my faith. For me, the term "proselytize" is bad, because it suggests that I'm out to get others. Now, you ask how—

ALLEN HERTZKE: Can I interrupt for a minute?

HANS UCKO: Yes. I'm sorry.

ALLEN HERTZKE: That's great, Hans. I want to carry this conversation a little bit toward something that's implied in what you said: Does proselytism carry a negative connotation because it implies a transitive act? As you said eloquently, "I'm making the other an object of my desire," or "I'm acting on the other." Does proselytism have to be that? Or is there some agency on the part of the person that you're persuading? And do we sometimes undermine this notion that the person being persuaded or converting has agency as well?

HANS UCKO: I don't know. First of all, you have the language—English. So you may say, no, proselytism is completely neutral. But if I go to the ecumenical dictionary which includes concepts such as mission, evangelism, and proselytism, it says "the term has acquired the negative connotation of the perversion of witness through secret or openly improper persuasion such as bribery, intimidation, or external coercion."

I'm a theologian, so I don't know what states are doing. I'm a theologian, and in theology, there is a very important German word: *Wirkungsgeschichte* [the "history of effects"]. What effect has this once-innocent concept of proselytism had throughout history? And today, when you go out in the street, I'm sure if you ask anyone, they will say it's negative. So I think we need to take this into consideration. So for me, it's negative. But again, I'm a foreigner to this country and to this language.

ALLEN HERTZKE: You're a pretty eloquent foreigner, I must say, Hans. [Laughter] Yes, Ani.

ANI SARKISSIAN: I can say that when states regulate proselytism, they understand it negatively. So it's usually framed in a negative context.

ALLEN HERTZKE: In terms of inducements, coercion, fraud—

ANI SARKISSIAN: Yes, all those things. And many times—my expertise is more in democratizing in authoritarian states—it's worded in a way that targets specific groups that are perceived as using these negative means of proselytizing. I think that's part of the reason we have this negative connotation with proselytism, though I don't think that we necessarily have to, if we think of proselytism as a neutral idea of sharing your religion and trying to convince others to share it as well.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Good. Brian, go ahead.

BRIAN GRIM: Everybody has a data sheet on your table, and the definition of proselytism I have there is to share your faith with someone else in the hopes that they join you in your belief. That's how I measure it. If I wear my social science hat, I don't measure proselytism as the attempt to coercively or underhandedly trick somebody into changing their faith. As I measure it from a social science point of view, I just take it as the attempt to share your belief with someone else in hopes that they join you in that belief.

One of my other cans of worms—something that's very interesting, I think—is that this whole day is talking about something that's becoming less of a problem. According to the statistics that are on this paper, seven years ago, 25 countries had instances of hostilities related to proselytizing. In the most recent year, 2013, only 12 countries have had cases where there have been hostilities over proselytizing. There's been a remarkable drop; it's becoming less of a problem according to the data.

ALLEN HERTZKE: So before we turn to how big a problem it is, I want to get back to you, Hans, and have you share with us a little bit of how you came to work with the World Council of Churches in developing a code of conduct. Perhaps you've been successful because there's less tension over this issue, as the social scientists say.

HANS UCKO: I was the staff person in the World Council of Churches for some 25 years. The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Orthodox and Protestant churches. We had particularly from India and Sri Lanka recurrent requests that we address the question of proselytism. These requests came from our member churches. Particularly after the implosion of the Soviet Union, in many countries around the world, like India and Sri Lanka, there were quite a few groups from outside these countries—or groups that were paid with money from outside countries like the United States, Finland, or South Korea—who came and proselytized. Or they witnessed in a way that targeted—as was also said before—the indigenous people, the *adivasis* or the *dalits*, in a way that hadn't been that frequent before. As a result—as was also said before—some states like India considered making conversion unlawful.

The problem for the mainstream churches, like the Lutherans or Anglicans or Orthodox, was that they feared that authorities would look upon their age-old institutions, like schools and hospitals and clinics that had been there for hundreds of years, as attempting to convert people. That's why they asked the



Hans Ucko

World Council of Churches to do something about it, because their activities were being jeopardized.

ALLEN HERTZKE: In other words, you're saying the churches themselves were saying, "Our work, our ministry is being undermined because people are associating us with aggressive evangelists."

HANS UCKO: Yes. And there was a second factor. Those with whom we were in dialogue—Hindu organizations, Buddhist organizations—said, "Isn't that what we've always known? Basically, you are out there to proselytize and convert us." And when we, all the mainline churches in India and Sri Lanka, said, "No, it's not we who are proselytizing aggressively," they said, "We can't tell the difference whether it's you or someone else. Now we've seen your real face."

So that's why we—and when I say we, it's not only the World Council of Churches but also the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the Vatican—decided to embark on a project which we hoped would lead to a code of conduct on conversion. We didn't think that legislating against conversion or against proselytism was good because we would end up with questions about what conversion is and what ways of converting are proper or improper. Instead, we wanted to make the churches take a stand morally and ethically and say, "We are against any



activity that uses or abuses young people or differently-abled, vulnerable categories in society with a plan to convert them. We are definitely against this, and this should not be part of what we call the witness of the church, the mission of the church, or the evangelization of the church.”

We first wanted to hear from people of other faiths. We held an interreligious hearing to learn what Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists and Jews are saying about Christian presence, activities, witness, proselytism, and so on. We heard some very salient points, which I mentioned in the blog of the RFP, *Cornerstone*.

ALLEN HERTZKE: So you refer people to your blog post on *Cornerstone*. [See page 88]

HANS UCKO: Yes. And then along the way, the World Evangelical Alliance said they would be interested in being part of this. So we had three constituents: the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the World Evangelical Alliance. And then in 2011, a document was agreed upon. I wished it had been called a “code of conduct on conversion,” but—I think I can say this now—Pope Benedict wasn’t very happy with the name “code of conduct” because, it was said, he recalled the *Da Vinci Code* and that turned him off completely. [Laughter] And so now it’s called something else, something like “agreeing on issues of conversion.”

ALLEN HERTZKE: Very good. Well, let’s move on and let me address the issue that has been a subtext of the whole day—the notion that somehow there is a predatory proselytism. We heard this in a letter from the Hindu American Foundation and others who are concerned about what are seen as abuses of human

rights or predatory proselytism or “cultural genocide,” to use that word. So how big of a problem is the abuse of proselytism? I’d like all of you to elaborate a little bit. How big of a problem is the abuse of inducements, fraud, power differentials, or coercion, in your view?

BRIAN GRIM: The biggest abuse happens when people are prevented from freely choosing their faith. And that happens in countries that prohibit conversion.

ALLEN HERTZKE: So in other words, the problem is actually the countries that prohibit conversion, that prohibit people from freely exercising their faith.

BRIAN GRIM: Yes. So it happens within the context where you are born in a faith, you’re expected to die in that faith. When the government supports that notion, that’s government-sponsored coercion. You could say that it’s not quite proselytism, but it’s the prevention of proselytism. I would say that’s where the big problems come. When that is the situation, then that same government will probably also prevent proselytism, because they don’t want any challenges to that status quo. So when the government itself sets up laws preventing people from having a free choice to freely choose their faith, change their faith, or have no faith at all, then that creates the situation in which proselytism becomes really a hot topic.

ALLEN HERTZKE: It creates more social hostilities.

BRIAN GRIM: Yes it does. So if you look at the data chart that you have in front of you, you see that when governments restrict proselytizing—and those tend to be the same ones that restrict conversion—social hostilities across all 13 measures in

the study are higher than in countries where they don't restrict conversion.

So that restriction tends to be what the bigger problem is. It sets up the case where someone is proselytizing and then someone else drags them in front of the police and accuses them of proselytizing. And if the police don't do anything, vigilante violence can then target those people. This happens in a number of countries. India is one where it's quite common.

So I think that is the important counterbalance to this question. There are cases where coercion is used in matters of religion at the state level. At the local level people are proselytizing, and perhaps that can be a problem. But I would say it pales in comparison to the power of the state preventing people from freely following their conscience.

ANI SARKISSIAN: I agree with Brian. I think if you look at the motivations for restricting proselytism, one of the major ones is following some religious law or upholding religious law. So you find this in a lot of Islamic countries where states will try to uphold laws against conversion and anti-apostasy laws.

But this doesn't only happen in Islamic states. The other example is in states that have a very strong nationalistic bent. You find this in a lot of Orthodox Christian countries as well, where you

have restrictions on proselytism. And that argument is a cultural preservation or group preservation argument. So you have, on the one hand, this tension between religious and secular law; on the other hand, you have a tension between group and individual identity.

I think those are valid arguments and valid tensions. But when you have the state taking one side and enforcing religious law or enforcing cultural preservation, who is targeted, who is harmed? It's oftentimes religious minorities or minorities in general. I think that's a very big problem with proselytism, when you get the state enforcing restrictions against proselytism. I don't know the data, or even if there are data on instances of unethical proselytism in a country. That would be very difficult to measure and to collect, but we can look and see what states are doing. States have enormous power, and they do tend to use it against minorities.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Hans, what is your sense of the size of the problem of missionary abuse?

HANS UCKO: Of course, I don't have any statistics. I can only go to sermons or homiletics on missionary work. There I can hear the justification for going out and bringing the Gospel to the "heathens" or the "pagans." This is so old and, as someone also said before, the missionaries didn't come alone; missionizing is so intertwined with colonization, the military, and so on. I don't know if today you can say so many are forced to convert. But Ruth Messinger talked about the Jewish experience of forced conversion, or the *conversos*. It need not be that you take a gun and say, "Convert." Perhaps you yourself simply feel that conversion is the best thing for me.

We talked earlier about China. Before I joined the World Council of Churches, I was the secretary for the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) in Asia. In China and other countries, we saw that schools teaching English were more popular than you can imagine. Why? Because they helped people master English, bringing them a bit closer to the West, which they admired. There is also a subtle—I don't know if it's intentional—way in which language schools, paid for by churches, teach English. But they could also have another reason to teach, a hidden agenda.

ALLEN HERTZKE: The joke is that every English teacher in China is a missionary—and many are. [*Laughter*]



Ani Sarkissian

HANS UCKO: Last week, I met with a friend of mine from Nepal. He has been serving the UN and UNICEF for many years. He came back and told me that Nepal used to be a Hindu kingdom. People were thrilled, absolutely thrilled, when this system was abolished and replaced by a secular democracy. Today, people are almost longing for the days of the Nepalese kingdom. Why? Because so many groups have now come into Nepal to missionize or convert and people can't handle the plurality of values or the lack of cohesion.

I agree that we need to be very vigilant on the question of state restrictions. For instance, in Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia—the greatest ally of the United States—it's not even allowed for Christians to come together for prayer and worship. The state is interfering. But my concern is above all that among churches and Christian religious organizations, there is an intention to bring the “pagans” or “heathens” to Christ, and this is sometimes done in a way that I find is against a code of conduct on conversion.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Let's switch the conversation now. What's interesting to me is that we, in a sense, agree that there needs to be great sensitivity when you view the other as an object and when there are power differentials, as has been raised earlier. But there's also a view that when the states are involved, we have a different dimension, and that's what I'd like to turn to now.

So I want to start with you, Ani, because you've done work

on the way in which restrictions on proselytism or conversion or mission work relates to the quality of democracy. This is fascinating to me, that you find that there's really a strong correlation here between restrictions and the quality of democracy. So why don't you share a little bit about that, and then we'll have Brian talk about social hostilities.

ANI SARKISSIAN: I have to emphasize the word “correlation,” though I've tried to get at the causality a bit. I'm throwing out a lot of social scientific terms here. If you control for their levels of wealth, ethnic and religious heterogeneity, or dominant religious traditions, the countries that have restrictions on either proselytizing or related activities—like restricting conversion, religious literature, or public preaching—tend to have not only lower levels of democracy in terms of procedural aspects, such as elections or number of parties that are allowed to compete, but they also seem to have less protection of things like freedom of assembly, demonstrations, and open public discussions.

There is also less freedom for non-governmental organizations and labor unions. There is less freedom for the media, cultural expression, travel, and employment. This even affects freedoms related to business—the right to own property and establish private businesses—as well as personal social freedoms like whether they're allowed to choose their marriage partners and the size of their family. There is also less equality of economic opportunity. I'm really interested in looking at what the outcomes are of restricting proselytizing.

“The countries that have restrictions on either proselytizing or related activities—like restricting conversion, religious literature, or public preaching—tend to have not only lower levels of democracy in terms of procedural aspects, such as elections or number of parties that are allowed to compete, but they also seem to have less protection of things like freedom of assembly, demonstrations, and open public discussions. There is also less freedom for non-governmental organizations and labor unions. There is less freedom for the media, cultural expression, travel, and employment. This even affects freedoms related to business...as well as personal social freedoms like whether they're allowed to choose their marriage partners and the size of their family.”

Ani Sarkissian



Allen Hertzke and Brian Grim

ALLEN HERTZKE: So you're saying that when states, under the banner of, say, protecting indigenous populations or existing traditions of the dominant majority, restrict proselytism or conversion, all of these other restrictions are linked with that.

ANI SARKISSIAN: They are.

ALLEN HERTZKE: And in a sense, that's the dangerous thing about state engagement in this arena.

ANI SARKISSIAN: Of course, I have to admit that there is a chicken or the egg problem here as well. We don't know if it's because they're democratic that states choose not to restrict proselytism. We don't know if it's because they already have all of these other liberties and then they decide that they're also not going to restrict proselytism, or if it's the other way around. But, so far, what I've been able to do with the data, with the appropriate types of control, seems to suggest that there is a causal arrow in that direction, that restrictions on proselytism lead to restrictions on other rights as well.

ALLEN HERTZKE: All right. Brian, why don't you describe a little bit about your vast work in this area. I haven't seen your chart yet.

BRIAN GRIM: I'll share it with you. There are copies on the tables in the audience.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Okay.

BRIAN GRIM: So speaking of chickens and eggs, from a social science point of view, if 13 things all work in the same direction, it's hard to say that's an accident.

[*Pointing to handout*] On this chart, there are 13 different kinds of social hostilities, and all of them are higher when the government restricts proselytizing. There's a relationship there. In fact, if you look two-thirds of the way down the page, the level of hostilities over proselytizing are five times higher in countries where governments restrict proselytizing. Thirty-nine percent of countries that restrict proselytizing have incidents of hostilities over proselytizing, whereas only 8 percent of countries without government restrictions have hostilities.

You can argue that there's a chicken and egg problem, but whenever you can put a chart together like this and it's not just random, there's a real relationship there. I think it's very clear that when governments get involved and start micromanaging what happens in faith, it often has the unintended consequence of stoking tensions. Maybe those tensions are sometimes intended to be stoked.

ANI SARKISSIAN: Yes. Many times, governments justify those restrictions, saying, "Well, we're imposing these restrictions to minimize hostilities." But they actually make things worse.

BRIAN GRIM: And the other side of this—if you flip my data chart the other way—shows that peace is five times more likely in countries where proselytism is allowed. I think that's the other side of it.

ALLEN HERTZKE: That seems so paradoxical. Why would that be?

BRIAN GRIM: Why is it that proselytizing might be associated with more peace?

“And no, the Catholic Church doesn’t ‘have’ any souls. I mean, the remarkable thing about Brazil is that religious freedom came after Vatican II. All this change in Brazil happened after Vatican II. This is an example of the majority faith, the Catholic Church, not coercively stepping in and trying to prevent people from following a different path. There has been relatively no violence and no social hostilities in Brazil. It’s because that majority faith was transformed, I think, in Vatican II. It became one that accepted religious freedom as the law of the land, not the government needing to protect orthodoxy. I think that’s part of what the story is.”

Brian Grim

ALLEN HERTZKE: Yes, I want to know what the mechanisms are here.

BRIAN GRIM: Well, the mechanism is very interesting. And I’m going to open my next can of worms. [*Opens soda, laughter*]

ALLEN HERTZKE: All right. Good demonstration with the visual aid.

BRIAN GRIM: I received no money from the Coca-Cola Company. [*Laughter*] I’d like to give an example of Coke taking on a religious problem—and this parallels how proselytism works. Everyone is probably familiar with the divide between Pakistan and India that happened after the British pulled out. The area has a predominantly Muslim north, called Pakistan, and a Hindu and multicultural south, called India.

Coca-Cola wanted to market a soda on both sides of the border. What the marketing teams realized—and these aren’t people in Atlanta but local teams of Muslims in Pakistan and Hindus in New Delhi—was that if they market this as an Indian drink, a drink for Indians, they’re going to lose the Pakistani market. And the opposite is also true: If they market this as a Pakistani drink, they’re going to lose the Indian market, because they’re not going to want to drink the drink of their presumed enemy.

So Coke did an amazing thing. They took a risk, and they made what they called Small World Machines. You can see this on my foundation’s website or you can find it on YouTube. They got Coke machines and put one in a shopping mall in New Delhi, India and one in Lahore, Pakistan. And then they had people come up and get a Coke. But when they came up to

the machine, instead of just seeing a machine, there was a live video link to the people in Pakistan, and vice versa. And then they found out that they could touch hands through these video screens’ new technology, and they could then dance together. The video is really fabulous to watch. By the end of it, if you have a heart, you’ll have tears in your eyes. Even if you have a cold heart, it will melt when you see this.

So Coke is selling a drink that’s not really all that nutritious, and there are lots of problems with that and I’m not advocating for Coke. But the business was really proselytizing, saying that our product is the thing for everyone. Coke is the answer. Coke will bring people together. That desire to get their message across made them try to bring people together, so that it wouldn’t be something for only one side or the other.

I think that’s part of the mechanism in proselytizing. When somebody is proselytizing, they’re going out and they’re trying to help somebody who’s not from their faith understand their message. When you do that, you may be encountering somebody who might be very hostile to your faith. Now, I’m not speaking of course of coercive proselytizing, but rather what we’ve been talking about: sharing your faith, or what Pope Francis calls evangelizing.

In that process, others may say, “Well, I don’t think science backs up the idea that God even exists.” Then pretty soon, you start a dialogue, going from where you stand to where they are. That is what interfaith dialogue is about, right on the ground. That’s where gabfests often fall short and where maybe missionary work has a much greater impact, where people are out on the ground, because they’re actually encountering other people

on the ground and not just talking with intellectuals. They're talking with others and having their views challenged. There have been plenty of missionaries who have realized, "Wow, I don't know how to answer that question." It challenges their faith. Proselytism goes both ways.

ANI SARKISSIAN: I really liked that anecdote and I like what Brian is saying. I agree that dialogue is a very positive thing that can come out of proselytism. But that assumes that the person that you're proselytizing to can defend what it is that they believe in. I did some work in post-communist countries, and some of the Orthodox churches were objecting to American evangelists coming in. The Orthodox churches were saying, "You're sheep-stealing." That's how they refer to proselytism.

ALLEN HERTZKE: That's something that Hans mentioned.

ANI SARKISSIAN: Yes. The churches were saying, "These were our people for decades. We weren't allowed to teach them about our religion. Now, you're coming in. You're teaching them about your religion. You're not giving us a chance to bring them back to their native religion." You can understand why it would be objectionable to them, why they might be offended by outsiders coming in, when they feel like they have no chance to argue with these people who come in with money, resources, and training.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Is money one of the dimensions of this power differential, Hans? I mean, is there a sense that the Westerners have lots of money that they bring to evangelism? Is there some sense of that?

HANS UCKO: Well, you know, they come with Coke, and Coke is attractive if you haven't had it for 70 years, like in

Russia. I know that today's Russian Orthodox Church plays a very difficult role in chauvinistic nationalism. But I can very well understand their resentment, how after the collapse of the Soviet Union—after 70 years of pushing the Orthodox Church against the wall, of taking away churches, of not allowing education, of putting up alternatives to confirmation and other rites of the church—after this implosion of the Soviet Union, in come American evangelical churches with lots of money, lots of Coke, lots of soup kitchens and charities that provide what people had been longing for and had been deprived of. I can understand exactly how resentment grows out of that.

The Russian Orthodox Christians and their leadership said to us, "If only these evangelical churches in Finland or South Korea or the United States had come to us once the Soviet Union broke down and said, 'We could come and work together. Could we use the church for the distribution of the soup that we have brought?'" But no, they used their own imported apparatus, importing and neglecting the voice of the local churches.

I can understand the resentment. That is why we cannot just talk about proselytism, mission, without the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the effect it has had throughout history.

BRIAN GRIM: I think the counter example to the Russian experience is Brazil. For most of the Catholic cardinals that I've talked to about this, including the two in São Paulo and Rio, it's a touchy subject, because Brazil has gone from being 100 percent Catholic to two-thirds Catholic. A third of the population has left the Catholic Church, and they have religious freedom. Well, how is that good, from the Catholic point of view?

Well, Cardinal John Onaiyekan of Nigeria—several of you know him—said to me, "Whenever I talk to my colleagues in

"That's where gabfests often fall short and where maybe missionary work has a much greater impact, where people are out on the ground, because they're actually encountering other people on the ground and not just talking with intellectuals. They're talking with others and having their views challenged. There have been plenty of missionaries who have realized, 'Wow, I don't know how to answer that question.' It challenges their faith. Proselytism goes both ways."

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Ani Sarkissian

Brazil, I say, well, you guys really didn’t have those folks in the first place.” The norm in Brazil is to just assume everybody was Catholic. The rule was that you needed to go to mass at least once a year. For people who are religiously interested, once a year just doesn’t do much.

So the evangelicals came in, and the Baptists came in, and the Mormons came in, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses came in, and the Seventh-day Adventists came in, and a third of the population now has shifted. Cardinal Onaiyekan from Nigeria commented on this, saying, “Well, the Church just didn’t have those people. It wasn’t meeting their needs. So now, the Catholic Church itself is realizing that we’ve got to do something. We’ve got to meet people’s needs.” That’s how I would respond to the Orthodox example.

HANS UCKO: But still, the situation in Russia and the Soviet Union is completely different.

BRIAN GRIM: No, it’s the same. The people were not very well Catholicized. The parallel is the Soviet Union, where people didn’t have an Orthodox faith.

ANI SARKISSIAN: But they were not allowed to practice.

BRIAN GRIM: They weren’t allowed to, but the church is still very weak. I would argue that the best challenge for the Russian Orthodox Church, and the way to make it stronger and more muscular, is to have a little bit of competition. Then the church would have to get out there and work for souls, so to speak.

HANS UCKO: I’m not the spokesperson for the Russian Orthodox Church, but after 70 years of being imprisoned and not being used to the world of competition, the world of Pepsi Cola and Coca-Cola, it is quite a lot to say, “Oh, get your act together and compete.” It takes time—particularly if, as in the Russian Orthodox Church, there is this temptation for the church to remember the old days and to think that the old days is the thing. There are, of course, Russian Orthodox priests who today understand the meaning of *aggiornamento*, that the church has to be here today. But the 70 years of imprisonment has not really been doing very much but keeping the church as a remnant of the past.

ALLEN HERTZKE: We’re going to turn to some questions in a minute here, but there’s a fascinating paradox that is sort of emerging here, which is that there’s a lot of hostility or ambivalence or concern about proselytizing and power differentials and so forth. But as we’ve heard from Brian and Ani, there’s also a huge problem when the state then attempts to repress proselytism, and it undermines democracy and creates religious hostilities. This suggests to me that self-regulation and an enlightened understanding of the meaning of “sharing your faith” is probably the best antidote. It’s mutual respect. It’s respect for the dignity of the other. But it doesn’t bring the state into the calculation. I just wonder if you all have some thoughts about that.

ANI SARKISSIAN: Just very quickly—this is kind of related but also a response to the competition argument, to which I’m very sympathetic as well—what competition did in the case of

the Russian Orthodox Church was push it to lobby the state to get more restrictions put on other religions.

ALLEN HERTZKE: It pushed it into Putin’s lap, in some sense. Yes.

ANI SARKISSIAN: So competition can be good, but it can also push desperate religious groups to then go in a different direction. Rather than innovating and trying to keep up with these groups, they say, okay, we’re going to try to get the state involved.

ALLEN HERTZKE: They cut a deal with a coercive power, with the sword of the state, in other words. Well, let’s open up to some questions. Yes. We’ve got one here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (unidentified): Thank you very much for taking the time to come speak with us. I found Hans’ comments really sobering and refreshing and absolutely consistent with the intellectual tradition that I think we celebrate both in the context of the West and definitely here at Georgetown. But I actually found quite problematic the comments that came from both Ani and Brian—specifically this notion of bringing a market language into the concept of human souls. Dealing with individuals and entire populations as mere commodities to be captured is incredibly offensive to human dignity, I would argue.

I guess you should also take into account the knowledge of the societies that you’re speaking of. Brian, regarding your comment

about Brazil—as someone who is South American, whose family is in Brazil, I can tell you that it’s actually largely about community, not about ever having owned the souls or having held on to them, but rather about maintaining community. If one person in your family is at risk of being disconnected because of their relationship with an American church, you make a choice: Either we join them or we lose them. That’s really the dichotomy that many of the evangelicals take into the communities, whether it be in Russia, India, Latin America, Africa, et cetera.

So I think that the conversation is necessarily more nuanced than it has been presented. I think that there is a level of respect that must come across in your discourse.

ALLEN HERTZKE: I think that’s a very trenchant question, so we’ll let Ani and Brian respond.

BRIAN GRIM: Well, I take your point very well. I would say that there are two very important things, and they’re summed up by how Jesus responded to the young lawyer who asked, “How do I get eternal life?” And Jesus said, “What does the law say? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Who is my neighbor? Well, this Samaritan who’s a foreigner with a foreign religion.

Perhaps the other important story is the Prodigal Son, accepting anyone back. When I personally think about my own faith and what it has to offer, those are radical ideas: to accept somebody back who’s thrown everything in your face, the Prodigal Son,



and to identify as my neighbor the person who is absolutely nothing like me.

That's what I see when I talk about the Orthodox Church. If they're not living that out and if they're not able to be authentic about what it means to be Christian, then if someone else can spark that light, like the quote I read from Pope Francis, those very small dots of light can really illuminate the world. That's what I'm talking about. I used market language because I'm a sociologist of religion working from the religious economist's perspective, and so I've adopted some of that. If you're in a meeting of sociologists of religion, we can talk that way and nobody is offended. I understand what you're saying. From deep within my heart, I think that when you have freedom for

Church, not coercively stepping in and trying to prevent people from following a different path.

There has been relatively no violence and no social hostilities in Brazil. It's because that majority faith was transformed, I think, in Vatican II. It became one that accepted religious freedom as the law of the land, not the government needing to protect orthodoxy. I think that's part of what the story is.

All the things you said, I think, are entirely right. And if I were giving a sermon, I would preach a bit differently than when I talk from a religious economics model.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Ani?

“I'm not the spokesperson for the Russian Orthodox Church, but after 70 years of being imprisoned and not being used to the world of competition, the world of Pepsi Cola and Coca-Cola, it is quite a lot to say, 'Oh, get your act together and compete.' It takes time—particularly if, as in the Russian Orthodox Church, there is this temptation for the church to remember the old days and to think that the old days is the thing. There are, of course, Russian Orthodox priests who today understand the meaning of *aggiornamento*, that the church has to be here today. But the 70 years of imprisonment has not really been doing very much but keeping the church as a remnant of the past.”

Hans Ucko

real faith to come out, then it's so powerful. And that's what's lacking.

I've met with Metropolitan Hilarion, who's the number two guy in the Orthodox Church. He just bemoans the fact that there's no authentic faith, even among the lower-level priests, the priest legions, and in the congregation. So that's the question. I think that allowing people to be free to share their faith can stimulate that kind of authentic faith.

And no, the Catholic Church doesn't "have" any souls. I mean, the remarkable thing about Brazil is that religious freedom came after Vatican II. All this change in Brazil happened after Vatican II. This is an example of the majority faith, the Catholic

ANI SARKISSIAN: I come from the same perspective as Brian. So as a social scientist, I speak in this kind of markets model, but it's out of a concern for the amount of regulation of religion that I see. So when you speak about regulation, speaking in terms of markets and economics is just easier language with which to talk about those things.

I think the choice of religion is a very individual one, but it's also one that has to do with community. One of the reasons why proselytism is such a big issue is because it's seen as tearing people away from their communities and breaking up communities. That's why I'm concerned with the state being involved in trying to regulate that, because then they're deciding which community gets to stay together and who gets to do what



Hans Ucko talks with an audience member

in which community. I used this language to get a grip on how to deal with these very complicated issues.

ALLEN HERTZKE: In fact, Rebecca Shah's research on the *dalit* woman who convert to Pentecostal Christianity shows that they create a community that they feel that they own. They gain a greater sense of agency, then, by the act of saying, "I am going to be this person." In that sense, if the state says no, you can't become a Christian, you can't show that agency, then they're repressing the emergence of that community. And that's part of what your research is finding.

Let's get to another question. Katherine, go ahead.

KATHERINE MARSHALL: Hans, I'd love to hear more about the process of negotiations that went on and what came out of the codes of conduct at the World Council of Churches. What were the main sticking points? What persuaded people? I don't think you were 100 percent happy with the outcome. Why not? What's happening now? What's happened since 2011?

ALLEN HERTZKE: Fabulous question. Thank you.

HANS UCKO: Well, neither the process nor the end result is something that has been vetted in the member churches of the world, in the World Council of Churches, or in the Roman

Catholic Church. But it has guided interreligious dialogue in both the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, and I think in the World Evangelical Alliance as well. So I should be honest and say that it's not like a very wide constituency has definitely said, "This is it. This is our final code of conduct."

We realize that we cannot legislate and we shouldn't ask for legislation. We should try to do our best to make, for instance, the Indian states give up these bills against conversion because that's not a very good *modus operandi*. What we need to do is to show that church leaders are willing to say that as far as we are concerned, we pledge that we will not proselytize in our work.

I use that word now because in the ecumenical dictionary, it is a negative word. We will not use the vulnerable. We will not use the uneducated. We will not try to get converts because we are helping out in the post-tsunami relief and so on. That was our intention: not to make legislation, but a code of conduct. That was clear when we stated, "We will not do this."

We didn't arrive at that clear language. Those in the constituencies of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance were in the end not prepared to be that specific and that articulate. They left it a bit more vague. They harmonized the language. Personally, I wish there would have been more.

“Religious freedom is the freedom for religion to do good. If religion doesn’t use people’s faith to do good for others, the value of religious freedom is certainly not worth fighting and dying for. I think that that’s part of what religious freedom is about. In our secular societies, people of faith should be able to stand up and say we have something to offer, we have solutions. We heard about it on several panels today. Faith has solutions where a secular approach doesn’t.”

Brian Grim

ALLEN HERTZKE: Okay. I think we’ll have enough time for a few more questions.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (unidentified): Thank you. This may be obvious, but is there not an obligation on the part of the person who proselytizes or evangelizes to be informed about what the other person believes, and not to give incomplete or wrong information about what is going on? I have a lot of experiences working, for instance, in Ukraine at an evangelical service run by people from Florida. They had electric guitars and violins and they were wonderful, but they were really dumping on the Orthodox Church. The final point to me was when they introduced a “new” hymn with great fervor. It was *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, which most of us have known at least since the fourth century. So isn’t there an obligation to be truthful?

ALLEN HERTZKE: Anyone want to take that question on?

BRIAN GRIM: I think just “yes” is a good answer.

ALLEN HERTZKE: I think that’s good. “Yes” is a good answer. Next question? Go ahead, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (unidentified): I want to thank the panel again. I have a question and anybody can answer it. We’re coming up to the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther. Germany for the last three years has been preparing for this worldwide with Protestant and ecumenical communities. Germany is also pressing this whole notion of universal faith, the universality of the Christian faith—not just the Protestant but also the Catholic faith. What you mentioned today, Brian, about the Pope’s recent statement suggests that there is more and more convergence occurring that way.

At this point, is there a growing issue in terms of this whole concern with proselytization? Isn’t there really a bigger issue, namely that there is also a conflict with radical secularization, which is creating a need for balance—not just by the state but increasingly by the individual—to have that resonance of a spiritual dimension to their lives? That was my question.

ALLEN HERTZKE: Fabulous question. Brian, go ahead.

BRIAN GRIM: I just have a very interesting story about this. I just came from the Vatican, the European Parliament, and the House of Lords in London—

ALLEN HERTZKE: Just that? Is that all? [*Laughter*]

BRIAN GRIM: Just that. I was there for meetings over the past month discussing how to counter radicalization. The consensus is that government programs don’t know how to deal with it because they can’t address religion. They have to keep religion out of the equation.

In response, the most interesting coalition of groups has formed. It’s based on the idea that there are two problems with violent radicalization: that radicalized individuals tend to be isolated and not integrated, and that they tend to be on the socioeconomic margins of society. And then they have a third piece: spiritual corruption.

Well, I’ve been working with a consortium of people led by one of the most missionizing, proselytizing, and evangelizing groups in the world, the Mormon Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Worldwide, they now number about the same size as the Jewish faith. In their evangelization, they have won converts all over the world.

But they've found that as people come into the church, they're lacking skills in business, education, and how to find employment. So they developed this wonderful curriculum called the "Self-Reliance" program that helps their church members know how to start a business, know how to get a job, know how to get an education. That's done in a group setting, and it's actually the most perfect program I've ever seen to counter violent radicalization. It gets people who are at risk into groups like that.

We've had meetings in these places I've just mentioned, where Muslims and Catholics and evangelicals have come and listened to this example from the Mormons. The thing is that when people are out proselytizing, they're also meeting the needs of people.

I'm not Mormon. I'm just looking at what they've done, and I've become impressed with it. In what they call self-reliance, the first principle is that you've got to spiritually stand up for yourself and take responsibility or agency. That's probably what radicalized people don't do; they give their agency up to some radical preacher, and they're not taking responsibility.

What you're saying is that in a secular society, they've stripped us of perhaps our greatest tool: agency. I float around a new definition of religious freedom that everybody rejects. But I like it, because at least it shows why religious freedom is important. Religious freedom is the freedom for religion to do good. If religion doesn't use people's faith to do good for others, the value of religious freedom is certainly not worth fighting and dying for.

I think that that's part of what religious freedom is about. In our secular societies, people of faith should be able to stand up and say we have something to offer, we have solutions. We heard about it on several panels today. Faith has solutions where a secular approach doesn't.

ALLEN HERTZKE: I like your definition.

BRIAN GRIM: You like that? Well, I get a lot of pushback on it.

ALLEN HERTZKE: There's a great passage in the Qur'an. I think it's sura 5:48 that says, "Had God willed, He would have made one people with one faith. But instead, He made many people with many beliefs so they could vie with one another in virtue," so that they could compete with one another to do good. So the freedom of religion, in a sense, is the freedom to do good, the freedom to show that you can do more.

HANS UCKO: Add to that *ta'aruf*, the idea of getting to know the other. It's not only to do good, but also getting to know the other.

BRIAN GRIM: That's the other corollary, to vie with one another and to know one another.

HANS UCKO: If I may, I think that you are right. There are other dangers emerging. Speaking from a European perspective, there is a question of how to maintain the cohesion of society. We cannot simply live in what Germans call parallel societies; there must be some kind of glue keeping us together. What is that glue in a post-Christian, pluralist, consumerist, individualist society?

“Speaking from a European perspective, there is a question of how to maintain the cohesion of society. We cannot simply live in what Germans call parallel societies; there must be some kind of glue keeping us together. What is that glue in a post-Christian, pluralist, consumerist, individualist society? That is a question that I think, from my Swedish perspective, the secular society realizes. The government has realized that it has failed, but it doesn't know what to offer instead.”

Hans Ucko

That is a question that I think, from my Swedish perspective, the secular society realizes. The government has realized that it has failed, but it doesn't know what to offer instead. People are asking whether religions could give up their proselytizing and realize the very age-old ecumenical principle: That which we can do together, we should not do separately. So get your act together, religions, and see the whole of the European societies. Come up with a spirituality that is sustainable and that is helpful for the cohesion of society.

ALLEN HERTZKE: I'm just stunned by the eloquence of our panelists here. One last question right here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (unidentified): This is a big issue, but how do you deal with history? India came up many times in the conversation. I spend a lot of time in India, and among the majority Hindu population, there's definitely a very strong sense that there were so many conversions imposed by Christians in the past under the British Empire. And there were so many conversions of Hindu people under the Muslim empires, et cetera. That history causes a very high level of sensitivity, and that's the perspective through which they see everything.

How do we address that in an era when we simply want to say, "Let's be fair, let's be ethical, let's just be good people," when there's a sense that the gun went off and you got a hundred yards down the road before we started to move forward?



RFP Research Assistant Justin Pinkerman and Brian Grim converse after the panel discussion

And related to that, how do we avoid the kind of extreme reactions that Hans mentioned in Russia, where the flipside might occur, where the Hindu community might be a minority? Just last year, through powerful efforts of the state and with the support of the Orthodox Church, there was an effort in court to declare the Bhagavad Gita, the principal Hindu scripture, as extremist literature and thus have it banned in the entire country. They lost, but they even took it to the appellate level.

So how do we take into account history and help people see with the proper perspective and deal with people in a reasonable way? And at the same time, how to we help people avoid the extremes that sometimes occur with these government partnerships or when native churches take advantage of the power potential that they have?

ALLEN HERTZKE: It's a very good question. Unfortunately, we've run out of time. I want to thank Brian Grim, Ani Sarkissian, and Hans Ucko for this wonderful panel, and thank you all for your participation.

THOMAS FARR: We have come to the end of a long but very rich and fruitful discussion. I daresay we have not answered all of the questions that I posed earlier in the day. I wish I could give you another hour to get deeper into this, but that's okay.

As I said at the outset, one of our jobs at the Religious Freedom Project is to change the dynamic in the discussion about religious freedom. We want all voices involved. In fact, that is one of the definitions of religious freedom: all voices involved with respect to religion on a basis of full equality and full respect for the other.

I think we achieved that today. I hope we gave you some enlightenment as well as a little fun. And I hope you will stay involved with the Religious Freedom Project. If you are not signed up, please give us your card. We'll put you on our listserv so that you'll receive notifications of events like this and our quarterly newsletter.

I'd like to thank our audio visual crew for a magnificent job, as always, and thanks to my colleagues at the Religious Freedom Project for the hard work putting this on. And finally, thanks to you, the audience. Thanks for coming today. We'll see you next time.



CORNERSTONE DEBATES PROSELYTISM AND DEVELOPMENT

In the week leading up to the “Sharing the Message” conference, the Religious Freedom Project’s blog, *Cornerstone*, hosted a forum titled, “The Effects of Proselytism and Development on Pluralistic Societies.” Seven conference participants—Asoka Bandarage, Brian Grim, Katherine Marshall, Ani Sarkissian, Rebecca Samuel Shah, Hans Ucko, and Robert Woodberry—posted entries to our blog, which are available online at <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/cornerstone>. Their posts are reprinted below.

Proselytism or a Global Ethic?

Asoka Bandarage, Steering Committee Member, Interfaith Moral Action on Climate

On March 4, the Religious Freedom Project of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University held a day-long public dialogue in Washington, DC on the controversial topic of proselytism and global development. Three panels of religious leaders, development practitioners, and scholars examined the issue from diverse perspectives. The keynote conversation featured Pastor Rick Warren, founder of

Saddleback Church, and Ruth Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service. This column seeks to contribute to the discourse on this timely and important subject.

Proselytism is commonly understood as attempts by religious organizations or religious individuals to convert people to their own religious beliefs. The international instrument most pertinent to the issue of religious freedom is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which came into effect in 1976. Article 18 of the ICCPR upholds that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of... religion including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” The article also states that “No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion...” and that the “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” In addition, Article 18 calls on parties of the ICCPR to “undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents... to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”



Asoka Bandarage

All religious groups are expected to respect these stipulations. This applies equally to Christianity and Islam, the two largest religions in the world which also have theological injunctions to convert others. However, many religious groups are violating ICCPR stipulations in many different ways, including using the Internet for conversion purposes. Many groups are also making use of international humanitarian and development aid to convert poor and vulnerable communities to their own religious and political ideologies.

Funding from oil rich Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, helps provide basic provisions and education to poor children in countries like Pakistan and Indonesia. Where education and schools are controlled by Islamic fundamentalist groups, the funding facilitates “Islamist extremism and the activity of jihad” that critics see as “violent expressions of an Islamic proselytism project.” Many also see terrorism and the “war on terror” today as a global struggle between extremist forms of Islam and Christianity.

Christian evangelical organizations from the industrialized North, active in the Global South (and the former Soviet bloc), are closely aligned with the foreign policy of the United States and its western allies. The Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives launched at the US State Department in 2013 (a continuation

of the policy of President George W. Bush) seeks to advance the Department’s diplomacy and development objectives through greater engagement with faith-based communities. However, as Elizabeth Hurd from *Foreign Policy* magazine points out, “When the United States officially engages actors abroad as ‘religious,’ it sets standards that effectively bolster the sects, denominations, and religious authorities that it has defined as benevolent, while marginalizing less desirable counterparts.” Indeed, partisan engagement can foment division and conflict instead of fostering peace and unity in plural societies.

Hundreds of faith-based groups, including those aligned with donor governments, routinely provide aid—food, housing, education, and employment—to children, youth, and victims of disasters around the world. Many faith-based NGOs use the provision of aid as an opportunity to gain access to vulnerable communities for religious conversion. Psychologist and former evangelical Valerie Tarico points out the moral plight Hindu and other non-Christian parents face, when they have to choose between a “bare local school or a Christian school that provides paper, pencils and books.” In such situations, parents’ freedom to pass on their religious heritage to their children, a right upheld in ICCPR Article 18, is violated. World Vision, the world’s largest private development aid organization, has come under much criticism for making use of the poverty and desperation of poor parents in advancing its evangelical mission to convert children to Christianity.

Poor communities do not have materials and other resources to compete in a modern “religious marketplace” desired by proselytizing groups backed by external economic and political powers. Adoption of a new religion in exchange for material necessities does not come from inner conviction. It does not constitute free individual choice as called for by Article 18 of ICCPR. Rather, it signifies a loss of the right to “have” or maintain an ancestral religion, a freedom also stipulated in the same article.

Proselytizing strategies of Christian charities and NGOs, such as attempts to indigenize or appropriate local traditions, create psychological confusion and identity conflicts in individuals, families, and local communities. Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous communities in India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and elsewhere were historically open to religious diversity and new religious influences. However, threatened by the advance of Christian proselytism and other factors, such as relatively higher population growth rates of Muslim communities, they are now becoming intolerant of other religions. Their efforts to ensure

religious and cultural survival are giving rise to various forms of resistance including anti-conversion bills and violent attacks against proselytizing individuals and institutions. Governments, frequently enmeshed in these complex conflicts over freedom of religion, find it difficult to protect public safety and order as prescribed by law and ICCPR Article 18.

Aggression and violence towards proselytizers or any religious group must never be condoned. They must be subjected to justice and the rule of law. However, in seeking lasting solutions to growing religious conflicts, it is necessary to question simplistic assertions of primordial hatred or “majority on minority” violence. It is important to examine how the poverty and powerlessness engendered by corporate globalization has created the ground for unethical conversions. Neoliberal economic policies, such as structural adjustment advanced since the 1980s, led to the privatization of state social services. This in turn led to the entry of NGOs, especially faith-based groups, to fill the vacuum. Proselytizing sects, be it Christian, Islamic, or other, thrive in conditions of poverty and victimization. They help redirect mass anger and despair towards inner salvation and even martyrdom at the expense of efforts to challenge growing economic inequality and unsustainable globalization.

The freedom to maintain or adopt a religion is a fundamental human right. However, this freedom cannot be realized in the absence of other fundamental freedoms, such as the right to food, shelter, healthcare, education, and a decent livelihood. Political and religious conflicts are taking on more and more extremist and violent forms across the world: filmed beheadings, suicide bombings, surgical drone strikes, and assaults on synagogues, churches, temples, mosques, and Mother Earth herself. As naïve and difficult it may seem, it is essential to uphold a perspective that identifies the unity among all religions, people, and nature.

A “global ethic,” as agreed upon by over 200 leaders from over 40 faith traditions at the World Parliament of Religions in

1993, needs to be supported. It identifies the inherent equality of all human beings, genuine compassion, and generosity as the binding values and irrevocable standards for global society. The seriousness of ethnoreligious conflict, ecological collapse, and climate change call for the weakening of narrow sectarianism and the strengthening of a universal spirituality based on human conscience.

This piece originally appeared in the Huffington Post. It is re-posted on Cornerstone with the author’s permission.

Freedom to Proselytize Associated with Lower Religious Hostilities

Brian Grim, *President, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

A new analysis by the *Weekly Number* shows that religious hostilities are consistently more likely to occur in countries where governments restrict proselytizing than in countries without such restrictions. For instance, looking at Pew Research data, hostilities over proselytizing are five times more likely in countries with laws restricting proselytism than in countries with no such restrictions. Also, hostilities over conversions are more than four times as likely in countries with laws restricting proselytism as in countries without restrictions. (See data at the bottom of this post.)

These findings are notable because often the justification given for laws restricting proselytism is to prevent religious unrest.

Part of the unease with “proselytism” is that the term itself has taken on a negative connotation. In its neutral form, it simply means sharing one’s faith with others in an attempt to convince them to join your faith or belief. In this way, it is like any discussion where one person tries to get another to see the truth of his or her position.

But objections to proselytism sometimes stem from being associated in the minds of some with either unwelcome preaching or coercive

“In seeking lasting solutions to growing religious conflicts, it is necessary to question simplistic assertions of primordial hatred or “majority on minority” violence. It is important to examine how the poverty and powerlessness engendered by corporate globalization has created the ground for unethical conversions.”

Asoka Bandarage

argument. And in some cases, accusations of forced conversions or even purchased conversions are associated with the term proselytization.

Certainly, coercion in matters of religion should be resolutely rejected. But there are non-coercive missionary endeavors that people may still find objectionable. For some, proselytism is viewed as an intrusion into matters that are personal or cultural. In that way, it might be like an advertisement or argument from a company or political party one finds disagreeable. As long as you can change the station or turn the television off, then presumably no harm, no foul.

One of the most common faces of proselytism are the 75,000 young Mormon men and women volunteering as missionaries throughout the world with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). On the one hand, in conversations with many former Mormon missionaries, some point to experiencing negative reactions to their proselytizing mission espousing a restored Christianity. Certainly, many parents who send their children off on their two-year missions have a dose of apprehension for the reception their children might face. But overwhelmingly, LDS missionaries report positive experiences, and it's not uncommon for former missionaries to return to the places they served around the world later in life to do business



Brian Grim

or other forms of service. (For a Mormon perspective on their missionary work, see the last vignette of a missionary mom in the recent film, *Meet the Mormons*.)

While Mormons might be a visible missionary force, the two largest religions—Christianity and Islam in their various forms—are proselytizing faiths fielding hundreds of thousands of missionaries.

So, why might proselytizing be associated with lower religious hostilities? There are a number of plausible reasons, but I will name just three. First, religious hostilities tend to be highest when governments restrict religious freedom, which includes proselytism, as was established in my articles and book with Penn State professor Roger Finke. In *The Price of Freedom Denied*, we demonstrated that restrictions on religious freedom often accrue to the benefit of monopolistic religions and coercive governments. By contrast, when religious freedom is protected and people are free to persuade others of their beliefs, societies have a rich pluralism that gives space for moderate voices within religions.

Second, proselytism adds to this pluralism and moderation by taking religion from the shadows where violent extremism

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Brian Grim

tends to grow and putting it into the public spotlight. Indeed, as I have argued, it is important for people of various faiths to engage people at risk of extremist radicalization with other faith arguments. To the extent that violent extremism feeds on the lack of informed religious understanding, proselytizing is one mechanism through which diverse and arguably less violent forms of religion can be explored. To be clear, I'm not advocating proselytism as a strategy to counter violent extremism, but certainly few would disagree that people lured down that path of radical violence need to be converted to a more peaceful and productive perspective.

And third, research by political scientist Robert Woodberry demonstrates historically and statistically that proselytizing Protestants heavily influenced the rise and spread of stable democracy around the world. His recent article in the *American Political Science Review* shows that such missions were a crucial catalyst initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely. In a similar way, as proselytizing missionaries encounter human need, they are often the people on the ground calling for response. This ranges from Southern Baptists helping to bring in disaster relief, to Ismaili Muslim missionaries tied to the great humanitarian resources of the Aga Khan Development Network.

What about Catholics?

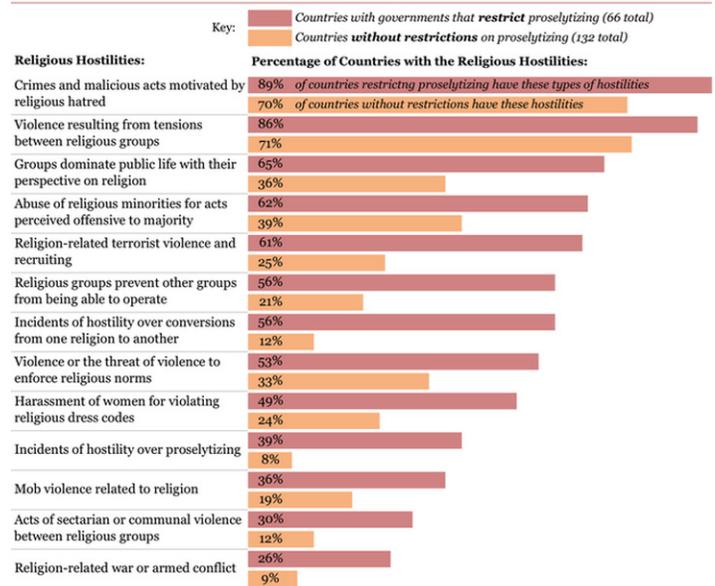
For Catholics, Pope Francis caused quite a stir when he said that the Lord “has invited us to preach, not to proselytize.” To some, they may seem the same. But in his mind, they are apparently quite distinct. Citing Benedict XVI, he said that “the Church grows not to proselytize, but to attract.” And this attraction, he said, comes from the testimony of “those who proclaim the gratuity of salvation.”

Pope Francis also said during a weekly Sunday Angelus, addressing the skeptical in the crowd, that “the Lord is calling you to be a part of His people and He does it with great respect and love. The Lord does not proselytize; He gives love. And this love seeks you and waits for you, you who at this moment do not believe or are far away. And this is the love of God.” Pope Francis prayed that “all the Church” may be steeped in “the joy of evangelizing,” invoking the aid of the Virgin Mary so that “we can all be disciple-missionaries, small stars that reflect His light.”

Various commentators have sought to explain his comments. Suffice it to say, with a term as potentially loaded as “proselytism,” Pope Francis seems to be adroitly pointing to the way many Catholics perceive as best to proselytize—through deeds and example, in addition to words.

Countries Restricting Proselytizing Have Higher Religious Hostilities

All 13 types of religious hostilities measured by the Pew Research Center's Social Hostilities Involving Religion Index are more likely to be present in countries with governments that restrict proselytizing* than in countries without such restrictions. In the chart below, the religious hostilities are ordered by their likelihood to occur in countries restricting proselytizing.



* The attempt to persuade or convert someone to one's own religious faith.

Religious Hostilities Data Source - Pew Research Center 2014: To assess the level of social hostilities involving religion around the world, the Pew Research Center selected some 13 questions for the Social Hostilities Index (SHI). Pew Research staff then combed through 18 published sources of information, including reports by the U.S. State Department, the United Nations and various nongovernmental organizations, to answer the questions on a country-by-country basis. For more information, see their 2014 report, *Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High*. The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) question numbers for the hostilities, as ordered above, are: SHI Q.1, 6, 7, 10, 4, 13, 8, 9, 11, 12, 2, 3 and 5.

Chart: The Weekly Number, Brian J. Grim, February 23, 2015

This piece originally appeared in the Weekly Number. It is re-posted here with the author's permission.

Nagging Tensions Around Development and Proselytizing

Katherine Marshall, *Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue*

In an eight-year review of the development work of faith-inspired actors in six world regions and of more than 10 priority sectors and topics, proselytizing came up again and again as a concern. It's time to reflect on why, and above all what, might be done to address both real concerns and myths. The questions come in various forms and from different directions. Some are quite readily answered while others look to deeper and more complex topics. In some areas the “rules of the game” are quite clear but elsewhere there are fuzzy boundaries.



Katherine Marshall

To summarize briefly, a central concern is that assistance provided by religiously motivated or connected entities comes with “strings” or conditions. It may be offered as an inducement to hear a religious message or to convert, or may favor one religious group over others. The often tacit assumption of significant groups within the international development field (bilateral and multilateral organizations, foundations, or nongovernmental organizations, just to name a few) is that faith-inspired entities often have conversion as an objective, even if they deny it or fail to appreciate the impact of their symbols and actions. This can be a significant impediment to breaking down barriers in understanding among secular and faith-inspired actors and thus to forging stronger partnerships (a central objective of our work).

A further set of questions touch on the impact of actual or perceived conditional assistance; some argue that proselytizing linked to various kinds of programs (education, health, humanitarian, child welfare, to take a few examples) can disrupt fragile social situations and even exacerbate tensions or contribute to violent incidents and spreading conflict.

First, it is important to distinguish the development and humanitarian linked concerns from broader issues of religious freedom and its role within human rights. The fundamental

question for development work turns on imbalances of power that reflect access to resources: financial, political, and knowledge. Admittedly, the lines can be fine ones: Religious liberty implies a freedom to practice and share. That might be construed as freedom to finance. Most observers, however, agree that the practical and ethical issues are different when one party holds the purse-strings or even has a large educational advantage.

That observation leads to humanitarian relief, defined here as support in emergency situations: after an earthquake or tsunami, for example. There is wide and almost (but not quite) universal agreement that conditioning aid to victims of disasters or favoring some groups over others in such situations is simply and baldly unethical. Principles of neutrality that cover religious aspects are part of humanitarian international law. Issues do arise in each emergency as to where the boundaries lie. Following the 2004 tsunami, for example, groups on the ground worked out explicit codes of conduct with respect to religion after tensions arose. These reportedly worked quite well.

The far broader development arena poses larger and more complex issues. Development involves a myriad of actors, working in many different settings, in virtually every sector of activity. Faith-inspired actors are involved in almost every domain. Rules of the game with respect to religion are nowhere spelled out explicitly. There are codes of conduct, but these are not enshrined in law nor are they accepted by all, much less adhered to. Thus the debates continue, sometimes overtly and acrimoniously, sometimes masked and simmering.

Examples of tensions include debates around orphanages and trafficking. In both cases faith-inspired actors provide remarkable service in many places. Some come with defined “theories of change” and ideas on solutions. Others approach complex situations more organically and pragmatically. International and national norms are shifting also, with new “expert” views on what is appropriate, and this generates lively debates. Both topics evoke strong emotional reactions, often tied to religious beliefs. These are just two examples. Equally complex issues arise with respect to education and social assistance programs. Health care can involve tensions, though generally these are more readily addressed. Rural water supplies may be uncontroversial but water policies raise ferociously complex issues.

The most complex situations arise in fragile and conflict situations where religious tensions are significant. There the most neutral, saintly, insightful development actors whose religious affiliations are obvious can encounter problems, including accusations of

hidden motives and unintended harm. In several situations, wise faith-inspired observers argue forcefully that development and evangelical activity must be totally separate. They argue this to ensure that there is no exacerbation of tensions. They also argue that the work of development can only succeed if it is grounded in real respect for those who are to benefit, and that means respecting, deeply and truly, their culture and religion.

There are some measures that could advance what is often a veiled set of debates. First, more facts would be helpful: Where are tensions and suspicions most pronounced, by region and sector? This calls for both surveys and case studies. Generally, both “religious literacy” and “development literacy” (both of which need to be defined better) would help. Second, what codes of conduct are proving most successful and which are not? Where are the gaps? Third, transparency in this area, as in so many others, is a vital tool. Often tensions arise when hidden agendas, real or perceived, spark conflict. Fourth, a robust analysis of links between development work and religious tensions (as well as the role of restrictions on religious freedom) is well overdue. Fifth, the role of finance, both as an inducement to those who benefit and in relation to funders who support development work (what are their expectations and assumptions?), deserves careful reflection.

Finally, it is important to recognize the complexities involved. At issue in many cases are both individual and institutional motivations: What leads an individual to move to a far-away

country to work with vulnerable children, for example? What leads a child to seek English or computer lessons offered by a church? Motivations and beliefs are almost always multi-layered. What we need to look to is behavior, and there is room there for far better knowledge and far clearer standards.

Ranking Rights: Does Protecting the Right to Proselytize Violate Religious Freedom?

Ani Sarkissian, *Associate Professor, Michigan State University*

One of the more complicated religious freedoms, the right to proselytize has both supporters and detractors. Proselytism can be defined as the attempt to persuade another individual to change his or her religion. According to data from the Pew Research Center, in 2013, 33 percent of countries limited proselytization by all or some religious groups. In the same year, 20 percent of countries limited religious conversion, 43 percent restricted foreign missionaries, and 47 percent limited religious literature and broadcasting, all activities related to spreading religion.

Support for the freedom to proselytize comes from human rights-oriented perspectives that see it as a necessary component of religious practice. This viewpoint, outlined most succinctly in Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Conceived in this way, the right to change one’s religion is an individual one, though the practice of religion often occurs in the context of groups. The language of the UDHR set the stage for future debates over the place of proselytization in the list of rights that fall under the banner of religious freedom.

Contemporary objections to the unfettered right to proselytize take four main forms. First are arguments that proselytization can be limited for the purpose of preserving social order. For instance, where competition between religious groups is hostile or there is a history of religious violence, restrictions on antagonistic groups being able to proselytize to each other help to maintain societal harmony and prevent further conflict.

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Katherine Marshall

Second is the argument that restricting proselytization may be necessary to protect indigenous or endangered minorities. For states with groups that have managed to hold onto ancient religious practices or with minorities that are at risk, restricting proselytization to these groups may help to maintain their cultural integrity and prevent their extinction.

A third argument is that proselytization can (and should) be restricted if it is aimed at vulnerable populations or employs coercive tactics. For example, proselytization should not be directed at schoolchildren or prisoners, who may not be able to opt out of it. Moreover, proselytizers should not be able to use force, intimidation, threats, or material incentives to coerce individuals to change their religion.

Fourth, some states enforce religious law (such as Islamic sharia), with interpretations that require them to place restrictions on conversion and proselytization.

Given these different, but related, justifications for limiting the right to proselytize, how do we reconcile the position of proselytism in the corpus of religious freedom? There is general agreement that the right to proselytize can be limited in the event that deceptive or coercive methods are used to attempt to trick, threaten, or force individuals to change their religion. Many countries thus frame their proselytization legislation in language intended to prohibit these methods. For example, in 2012, Belgium passed an amendment to its criminal code providing special protection for “vulnerable persons” against physical or psychological abuse of weakness, a provision that could be used against religious groups determined to be engaging in aggressive proselytization. Yet such laws require the state (or an empowered body) to determine when proselytization is “aggressive.”

There is less agreement on whether individual rights trump group rights with regard to the freedom to proselytize. On the one hand, the decision to follow a particular religion (or convert to a different one) is an individual one, necessitating protection of the



Ani Sarkissian

individual right to practice, talk about, and even try to convince others to follow a particular religious tradition. On the other hand, religious groups such as the titular Orthodox churches in post-communist Europe and Eurasia have made the claim that attempts by Western missionaries to convert their populations not only threaten their chances of survival after decades of harsh repression, but also constitute a belligerent attack on the traditional religions of the region. Referring to proselytization as “sheep stealing,” these churches point to the long tradition of Christianity in these regions and view conversion as a loss of cultural heritage and group identity. These claims are closely tied to nation-building efforts in the region and cannot be divorced from political considerations.

“If protecting a particular aspect of the religious freedom of one individual threatens the freedom of others to practice their religions, should it be protected? Responses will vary depending on whether one prioritizes individual or group rights, the majority or minorities, or secular or religious law.”

Ani Sarkissian

Finally, religious objections to proselytization raise the question of whether religious law trumps secular human rights law. One of the most common instances of this occurs with regard to Islam. Some Muslim objectors to proselytization argue that it violates the freedom of Muslims to follow the dictates of their religion, which prohibits apostasy. As a result, in 2013, at least 24 Muslim-majority states had laws or de facto prohibitions on proselytizing to Muslims and conversion away from Islam. While formally secular states also enforce restrictions on proselytization, religion tends to be the most prevalent justification for it in contemporary states.

The various arguments converge around the following question: If protecting a particular aspect of the religious freedom of one individual threatens the freedom of others to practice their religions, should it be protected? Responses will vary depending on whether one prioritizes individual or group rights, the majority or minorities, or secular or religious law. Social scientists tend to refrain from engaging in such normative debates and instead focus on examining the implications of restrictions on religious freedom. In my research, I have found evidence that restricting proselytization is associated with less competitive elections and lower levels of civil and political rights more generally. In another study, Brian Grim has shown that restrictions on proselytization tend to encourage rather than discourage religious hostilities. By focusing on the empirical outcomes of proselytization, perhaps we can forward new justifications for its limitation or protection.

How Religious Freedom Helps the Poor

Rebecca Samuel Shah, *Associate Scholar, Religious Freedom Project*

Much of the discussion about proselytism and development is based on a somewhat tired, adversarial narrative that pits proselytism against development. This narrative constructs a radical opposition between religious proselytism, which is assumed to be externally driven, and the economic and social development of the poor, who are cast as the vulnerable and indigenous “targets” of proselytism. The assumption that this binary picture generates is that there is a tension—probably insoluble—between the interests and agenda of the proselytizers, on one hand, and the development needs and interests of the vulnerable poor, on the other.

My own extensive field work in the Global South, particularly India, considerably complicates this received picture in several ways. First, almost all of the religious proselytism and intentional religious recruitment that goes on in the areas that I have studied

is not externally driven but indigenous. It involves small, indigenous, and usually poor religious leaders and religious groups sharing their faith with other poor members of their own communities. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, I have been consistently struck by the ways in which the enhanced religious competition and religious freedom that proselytizing religious communities bring to poor neighborhoods—such as the Bangalore slums I have studied closely for many years—frequently yield concrete developmental benefits for the poor themselves. In other words, the fluidity and dynamism brought about by religious proselytism and conversion do not merely serve the interests of religious proselytizers. They serve the interests of the vulnerable poor.

The reason that religious dynamism and religious freedom augment the economic position of the poor is simple. Religious proselytism and religious competition give the poor the opportunity to critique and escape culturally and religiously sanctioned patterns of exploitation, and exchange these for religious world-views and communities that support their true dignity, equality, and freedom. The concrete experience of religious choice and religious freedom engenders a powerfully heightened sense of agency and hopeful confidence, inspiring the poor to surmount despondence and to take action to change their economic situation.

A few minutes’ drive from Bangalore’s international airport live Shanu Munisa and her husband, Imtiaz. Shanu and Imtiaz are *dalits* (outcasts) who live in Razak Palaya, a predominantly Muslim village and one of the poorest communities in north Bangalore. Sitting in their half-finished hut, I asked Shanu, “Where do you think God is?” Looking up from the floor, Shanu replied, “He is here,” placing her hand on her chest. I asked her how she knew that God was with her. Shanu asked me to look outside and beyond the debris and towards a small shrine, or a *darga*, as it is called, which was situated about one hundred feet away from the village gate. “When I am sad, or when I worry about food, my home, or my children, I go to the *darga* to talk to God and I bring home a *gulab* [rose]. I know God is with me because just as the fragrance of the rose fills my hut, I can feel God’s presence with me.”

Religion is no panacea, but aspects of religion can activate certain practices and partnerships among its adherents that can motivate and encourage economic development. If modern economics continues to yield an understanding of human development that ignores the role of religion, governments and development institutions will persist in acting as “one-



Rebecca Samuel Shah

eyed giants” who “analyze, prescribe, and act as if man could live by bread alone, as if human destiny could be stripped to its material dimensions alone” (see “Development Experts: The One-Eyed Giants” in *World Development*). According to human development theorist Denis Goulet, development is more human and fuller when people are called to “*be* more” rather than simply to “*have* more.” There can be “authentic development” only when there is a “societal openness to the deepest levels of mystery and transcendence,” and when this yearning for mystery and transcendence is recognized and satisfied.

By ignoring religion, most development practitioners and academics fail to take into account that the lack of respect, social isolation, indignity, and stigma that the poor face are not a result of their economic deprivation, but are more likely to be a function of their religious identity, ethnic and minority identity, and in particular the ways in which these various identities are perceived by people around them. Muslims in India are labeled as “anti-national” or “terrorist” while Christians are regarded as secular and liberal “westerners” and as those who receive vast sums of foreign money.

Economist Glen Loury suggests that there is a tacit association in people’s minds of “laziness,” “dangerousness,”

or “untrustworthiness” as being intrinsic to certain religious or ethnic minority groups, when actually those disadvantages are a product of the ways in which people perceive, treat, and interact with the group. Because of the perception of Indian Muslims as disloyal and dangerous—deficiencies that are regarded as deeply cultural and which absolves society from any responsibility to do something for them—Muslims are less likely to reside in multi-community neighborhoods. This is more pronounced in communally sensitive towns and cities like Ahmedabad, Ayodhya, or parts of Bangalore. For the very poor *dalit* Muslims these ghettos often lack basic water and sanitation services, modern English-medium school, and access to good government or reasonably priced and good quality health facilities. Such deficiencies in basic services can perpetuate their underdevelopment and backward status. Moreover, in two Templeton Foundation and RIHA funded studies of poor micro entrepreneurs in Bangalore, India, we found that less than 30% of our Muslim clients owned a house in the urban and more developed section of north Bangalore, compared to 50% of Christian and 75% for Hindu clients.

The negative impact of religious repression on development can persist indefinitely through its influence on the ways in which people see themselves. A person’s identity is shaped by interacting with people within a community rather than an assertion of his/her own values and experience. People who are pessimistic about themselves and their circumstances and who see their social isolation as part of their negative collective identity, as part of what defines them as a people, are less willing or able to take risks to improve their lives and tend to participate in socially destructive and (often physically) harmful activities. Such behavior can sustain and reinforce the group’s isolation from the mainstream, which in turn feeds their abandonment and leads to further destructive behavior.

Freedom to practice one’s faith and be a person of faith can be instrumental in enabling the poor to achieve some modicum of social and economic freedom, but is also constitutive of their identities and sense of well-being. Religious faith can open a closed and hopeless situation of persistent poverty to a transcendent reality and transcendent resources. The poor are no longer alone in their situation, however desperate it might be. In cases where the poor are trapped in a cycle of poverty and where it might be easier to give up than to make an effort to try to change, religiously motivated hope might be what is needed to push people out of apathy and fear and to motivate them to transform their lives.

“The reason that religious dynamism and religious freedom augment the economic position of the poor is simple. Religious proselytism and religious competition give the poor the opportunity to critique and escape culturally and religiously sanctioned patterns of exploitation, and exchange these for religious world-views and communities that support their true dignity, equality, and freedom.”

Rebecca Samuel Shah

While material deprivations and social structures might limit what Shanu can achieve or who she can be, it is her beliefs—what she understands to be meaningful and what moves her at the deepest level—that will shape how she views herself and her circumstances and will ultimately determine her actions and behavior. Increasingly in India, there is growing social and clerical pressure to restrict Muslims from visiting *dargas* and shame or even coerce them into a far more “orthodox” Sunni form of Islam. For Shanu, the freedom to be able to walk out of her debris-ridden environment, to give her *zakat* during Ramadan, and to visit a *darga* and bring home a *gulab* fulfills a vital need for her to have communion with the transcendent. This transcendent dimension of Shanu is what she values most deeply and is what, more than anything else, defines her as a person.

But Shanu’s freedom to engage the transcendent depends on a particular social, cultural, and political context—a context in which religious fluidity, dynamism, and pluralism, including the freedom to proselytize, enjoys basic respect and protection. It depends on a context where Sufi clerics and practitioners can share their message, where they can invite people of all religious backgrounds to worship at their shrines, and where they can maintain their *dargas*. It also depends on a context in which even very poor women such as Shanu can choose to worship at particular *dargas*, and practice particular rituals, without interference by their husbands, fathers, or male religious leaders. This context of religious freedom and fluidity is not only *not* a threat to the development and interests of the very poor. It yields manifold, palpable, and direct benefits that greatly enhance their overall well-being.

You Cannot Redeem Proselytism

Hans Ucko, *President (retired), Religions for Peace International*

Religious freedom is a human right. We rightly quote from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” Although we think that the right to religious freedom is unquestioned, we know that there are countries (and we can name them) where religious freedom is set in brackets or not really affirmed.

Wednesday’s public dialogue is called “Proselytism and Development in Pluralistic Societies” and these concepts are contentious. What do we really mean by development? Our current dilemma is that we use a social development model when we state our intentions, but an economic growth model when we act.

And then there is proselytism. Too often, particularly in the West, discussions of religious freedom are oriented foremost toward the right to proselytize. Religious freedom, then, is turned into the right to persuade others to change religion! Proselytism was once only a term used to designate non-Jews who, inspired by Jewish teachings about God, chose to become Jews.

Today, as the ecumenical movement recognizes, “the term has acquired the negative connotation of the perversion of witness through secret or open improper persuasion such as bribery, intimidation or external coercion” (see page 829 of the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*). This is what makes proselytism



Hans Ucko

unredeemable. In the minds of people, it means targeting or reducing the other to an object for conversion. Your message becomes more important than the addressee.

You cannot separate proselytism from conversion. Someone converting to my faith confirms me in my religious tradition. Someone converting from my faith seems to reject what I stand for. Even those who want others to convert will not easily accept one of their own leaving their faith for another.

The topic of conversion is divisive. It risks putting not only people of different faiths against each other but also of creating frictions among Christians themselves. Everyone should have the right to change his/her religion, but should we be involved in making others change their religion? Why? As Pope Benedict XVI said, poignantly, on this topic: “The Church does not grow by proselytizing; she grows by attracting others.”

When I worked in the World Council of Churches (WCC), our constituencies repeatedly highlighted the topic of proselytism, particularly as it related to Hindus and Christians in India and

Christians and Muslims worldwide. We heard the same stories about unethical conversion, about aid evangelism, and we realized that our counterparts in dialogue or their constituencies were not always able to distinguish between Christians in dialogue and Christians involved in what was seen as coercive proselytism. Anti-proselytism efforts also had consequences for social, economic, and political development. Various “freedom of religion” bills in India seeking to prevent people from converting to Christianity left mainstream Indian church leaders worried whether running schools and hospitals could be judged as proselytism.

In an effort to address the issue, the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) initiated a project entitled “Interreligious Reflection on Conversion: From Controversy to a Shared Code of Conduct.” Although the project was to focus mainly on “intra-discussion” among Christians on conversion, it was initiated through a multi-religious hearing. What are the experiences and comments from our counterparts in other religious traditions on the issue of conversion? What do Muslims and Hindus say about conversion? How do we address the fears of people wanting to become Christians living in countries where another religion is dominant?

The report from the interreligious consultation on “Conversion – Assessing the Reality” stated the following, among other things:

- That freedom of religion is a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of every human being in every country in the world. Freedom of religion connotes the freedom, without any obstruction, to practice one’s own faith, freedom to propagate the teachings of one’s faith to people of one’s own and other faiths, and also the freedom to embrace another faith out of one’s own free choice.

- That while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by

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violating other's rights and religious sensibilities. At the same time, all should heal themselves from the obsession of converting others.

- That while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating other's rights and religious sensibilities. At the same time, all should heal themselves from the obsession of converting others.

- That conversion by "unethical" means is discouraged and rejected by one and all. There should be transparency in the practice of inviting others to one's faith.

- That humanitarian work by faith communities should be conducted without any ulterior motives. In the area of humanitarian service in times of need, what we can do together, we should not do separately.

- That no faith organization should take advantage of vulnerable sections of society, such as children and the disabled.

Social, political, and economic consequences of proselytism risk tearing apart social fibers in society. Focusing on the conversion of the individual may upset the cohesion of family and social relations. An example is the missionary endeavour to judge ancestor veneration as ancestor worship, where the convert was forbidden to continue maintaining the links of the whole family with the past and the present.



Robert Woodberry

We cannot discuss proselytism without referring to the reality of power-relations. Someone is the object for proselytism; someone is considered lacking something that needs to be corrected or addressed through proselytism and his or her conversion.

Proselytism cannot be redeemed. Faith-inspired development organizations should not need to share their faith to be involved in repairing the world (*tikkun olam*), which should be an affirmation of people of faith and of no faith.

How Missionaries Have Quietly Transformed the World

Robert Woodberry, *Associate Professor, National University of Singapore*

Despite the negative stereotypes about missionaries, they have effectively improved health, education, economic development, and political representation around the world—seemingly more effectively than government aid and secular NGOs.

On average, people from countries that had one more Protestant missionary per 10,000 inhabitants 90 years ago currently have 1.5 more years of education and 1.3 more years of life expectancy. Similarly, for each additional year of Protestant mission activity, countries have \$25.72 more GDP per capita on average. Even after rigorous attempts to account for competing explanations, the presence of Protestant missionaries explains about half the variation in democracy and 10 percent of the variation in GDP per capita in non-Western countries. On the negative side, Protestant missions are also associated with ethnic violence.

Of course, statistics can be misleading (and I will return to this problem later), but historical evidence enhances the statistics' plausibility. Since Protestant missionaries wanted everyone to read the Bible in their own language, they spread mass education and mass printing in languages ordinary people understood, often against great resistance. In Africa, missionaries provided over 90 percent of formal education prior to independence and printed the first books and newspapers in virtually every African language. Prior to Protestant missions, both secular and religious elites kept books and education in archaic languages which ordinary people could not understand, even in countries with ancient written languages like China, Korea, and India.

Because Protestants used mass education and printing to convert people, other religious groups copied them to minimize conversions. Thus, the Catholic Church created excellent

“Missionaries helped turn abolition into a mass movement, fought forced labor, supported indigenous land rights, and so on. Cumulatively, missionary education, printing, civil society, and colonial reform fostered democracy and economic development.”

Robert Woodberry

education systems in the United States, Ireland, and India (where it competed with Protestants), but not in Spain, Italy, or Mexico (where Protestants were restricted). Similarly, most societies in Asia and the Middle East knew how to print for hundreds of years, but never printed until Protestant missionaries printed tens of thousands of Bibles and tracts.

Moreover, wherever missionaries went, they were exposed to abuses by colonizers, settlers, and local leaders and often mobilized against them. Missionaries helped turn abolition into a mass movement, fought forced labor, supported indigenous land rights, and so on. Cumulatively, missionary education, printing, civil society, and colonial reform fostered democracy and economic development.

Few countries have had more Protestant mission influence than Botswana. To prevent white settlers from confiscating Tswana land, missionaries brought chiefs to England to bolster petition campaigns and meet Queen Victoria, forcing the government to create a protectorate. Missionaries repeatedly intervened to prevent the British from removing local chiefs and giving power to whites. Before independence, missionaries provided virtually all the education and medical work. After independence, the prime minister appointed missionaries as speaker of parliament and leaders in bureaucracy. Another was elected mayor of the capital city. Although many deserve credit, Botswana became the most stable democracy in Africa, with the fastest economic growth rate in the world.

Of course, anyone can cherry pick positive examples and ignore negative ones—for instance, some Afrikaans missionaries supported Apartheid. But if missionaries were primarily destructive, it is hard to explain the positive association between missions and health, wealth, education, and other factors, unless missionaries went to places that were *already* healthier, wealthier, and better educated.

Fortunately, in some countries we can measure conditions before and after missionaries arrived and this evidence suggests

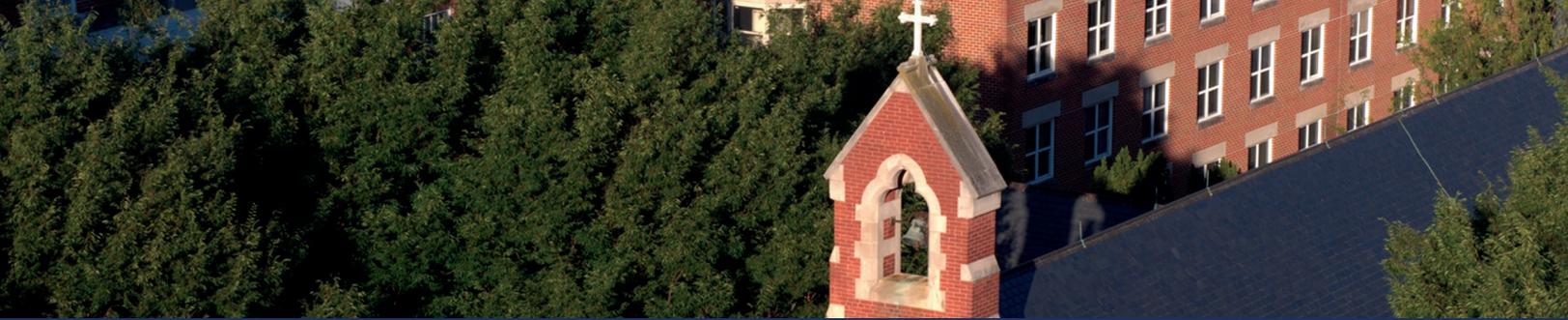
missionaries caused the improvements. For example, some countries had no Protestant mission stations in 1870, but gained them by 1890. On average, each Protestant mission station per 100,000 people in 1881-90 is associated with 3.5 fewer years of education in 1870, but 1.3 more years of education in 1900.

Economic growth also increased in places that gained Protestants missionaries. If two countries had identical GDP per capita in 1870, but one country had 10 Protestant mission stations per 100,000 population in 1881, while the other country had none, then by 1913 the “average person” in the country with Protestant missionaries would earn \$1,412 more per year than the “average person” in the country without missionaries (in 2014 US dollars).

We can also test missions’ impact via two natural experiments. First, in 1900 the British colonial government drew a straight line across Nigeria and banned missions north of it. Horacio Larreguy compared ethnic groups just north and south of the line. In 2009, people on the south side were more likely to have completed high school (56 percent more likely) and college (26 percent), and to own electric appliances (36 percent), a mobile phone (58 percent), and their own business (26 percent), among other advantages. Yet the line no longer exists and does not correspond either to a natural border or other differences in colonial policy.

Second, during World War I the British and French captured and divided Germany’s West African colony: Togoland. The British allowed missionaries in the south but not the north, and the French restricted missionaries everywhere. Denis Cogneau and Alexander Moradi show that people are currently more educated on the British side, but only in the south, where people born between 1930-1954 have three more years of education and are 26 percent more likely to complete elementary school. Natural experiments in China and India show similar results.

Given the weak and mixed evidence for the effectiveness of governmental and secular aid programs, it is worth further studying why missionaries seem to have been so effective.



Religious Freedom Project

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