the ecumenist

a journal of theology, culture, and society

Vol. 41 No. 3 ▪ Summer 2004

Western Islam According to Tariq Ramadan

In today's world studying Islam has become important. The "Islam in Europe Committee," set up by the European Council of Churches, has recommended that, in order to foster a co-operative climate in society, Christians should acquaint themselves with the religion of Islam. Among the several books I have read, I was most impressed by Tariq Ramadan's *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2004),[1] which offers an understanding of Islam from the perspective of a learned Muslim, faithful to his tradition, who was born in Switzerland and received a Western education. The author later studied Islam in Egypt and became a recognized Muslim scholar. Over the last decade, he has become an important intellectual and spiritual leader among Muslims in France and, quite recently, accepted an appointment at University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

In this article, I wish to present the central theme of *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* and, because of my admiration for his work, defend him against the storm of criticism, and especially charges of anti-Semitism, to which he has been exposed in France.

Being Muslim in the West

Tariq Ramadan has a profound knowledge of the classical Islamic texts and the history of their interpretation. He is also able to explain the "theology" of Islam – the doctrine of God, of human beings and the universe – in terms understandable to persons educated in Western thought. While Christians had to wrestle for centuries to formulate the relation of Jesus to the God who sent him, Muslims had from the beginning a simpler doctrine of God and the universe that was, without debate, acknowledged by the faithful throughout the ages. Muslim debates are not about the universal divine message, but about the practical application of God's will in particular historical contexts.

The author makes a clear distinction between the revealed truth that has universal validity and the contingent elements of the Islamic tradition produced by the creativity of faith in a particular culture. A certain fear of Western modernity and a lack of spiritual boldness have

Contents

Western Islam According to Tariq Ramadan
Gregory Baum *1*

Islam in Quebec
Gregory Baum *6*

Theology, Ethics, and Deep Ecology
Don Schweitzer *10*

Fighting Racial and Religious Discrimination in Canada
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops *16*

Book Notes *20*

made Muslims in many parts of the world adopt a defensive stance and cling to the inherited form of Islam. Yet Muslims living in the West cannot afford this attitude. As believers they have to deal intelligently with the culture in which they live and discover the way of life demanded by the sacred Islamic texts in their own context. In this process, Ramadan argues, they will uncover the rich, as yet unexplored, meaning of the Muslim tradition and the contribution it can make to the well-being of society as a whole.

This is an issue familiar to me since I often attend the meetings of a Montreal association called *Présence musulmane* where Muslims discuss the practice of their faith in present-day Quebec society. Most of the participants are highly educated men and women. An interesting conversation ensues when recent immigrant intellectuals contrast the culture of East and West, evaluate the West in negative terms and then find themselves challenged by Muslims born and educated in the West who are faithful believers – as Westerners.

Tariq Ramadan dealt with this issue in his 1999 book entitled *To Be a European Muslim*.[2] Christian theologians find it easy to understand this debate since they too wrestle to clarify the relevance of Christian dogma to the self-understanding of Christians in a particular historical context. They too want to be both faithful to their sacred texts and yet critically open to the society in which they live.

Unfortunately, Ramadan's proposal has been gravely misunderstood by many critics. He has been denounced by Muslims who think he is betraying their religious tradition; he has been praised by some secular thinkers who think he has gone over to the Enlightenment; and he has been denounced by other secular thinkers who accuse him of disguising his uncompromising attachment to Islam by the use of a modern vocabulary. Yet young Muslim men and women struggling to define their Muslim identity in Western societies are turning to Ramadan as leader, thinker, and spiritual guide.

The Future of Islam and the West

In the first chapter of *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, the author deals with the universal principles of Islam. Revealed in the Qur'an is that God is the creator of the universe and, furthermore, that God's unity is mirrored in the striving for unity in the whole of creation. Human beings are created by the breath of God, and since this breath remains with them, they are enabled to discover their need of God and to surrender to God as a return to their beginning and the entry into full communion with the Divine. As creatures of God, human beings are summoned by the divine breath and by their intelligence reflecting on the universe, to recognize, worship, and obey their God. God's unity is reflected in humanity's striving for unity. This doctrine will allow Ramadan to demonstrate that Islam has respect for all human beings, whatever their religion, since all are bearers of this high vocation.

However, people easily lose themselves in their daily activities and go astray, and so the merciful God has revealed in the Qur'an the virtues, the laws, and the way of life that lead people back to their beginning and to full communion with their God. God's special revelation touches all aspects of people's lives, their personal as well as their institutional existence. *Sharia*, the way of faithfulness, is the topic of the book's second chapter. Consisting of the rules for the good life that express God's will through the witness of the Prophet, *Sharia* must be read in the light of what the rules want to achieve. This means that they must not be followed blindly in new situations but give rise to a life of fidelity in unprecedented circumstances.

The third chapter and, in practical detail, the rest of the book explore the meaning of the sacred Islamic texts for Western Muslims. The author argues that the customary distinction between *dar al-islam* (the abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) represented the Muslim perspective on the world at a period of history when the Islamic civilization was surrounded by hostile forces. During that time the few Muslims who lived outside the world of Islam understood themselves as isolated strangers whose real home was their region of origin. Yet the Qur'an does not know this distinction. In fact, Ramadan argues, this distinction has become meaningless today. Thanks to massive waves of immigration, millions of Muslims have settled in Western countries, founded their families in these countries, and become citizens responsibly engaged in their society. More than that, the old Muslim world, despite the public rhetoric, has become affected by the capitalist and cultural insti-

tutions of the West. Furthermore, the oppressive conditions existing in several Muslim countries are in contradiction with the tradition of Islam. In this new historical situation, Ramadan argues, Western Muslims can no longer rely on teachers from the old Muslim world; instead they must reread their sacred texts, think for themselves, and discover what *Sharia* means for them in the Western context.

The rhetoric that repudiates the West altogether, used by radical Islamists, is unacceptable for Western Muslims who appreciate many Western values and want to practise their faith in the society to which they belong. Ramadan is quite outspoken in his criticism of Muslim opinion-makers in many parts of the Islamic world who denounce the West and put the blame for the problems of their society on America and Israel. These critics of the West remain silent about the inequalities in their own country, the poverty and illiteracy of the masses, and the absence of free discussion about justice in the light of Muslim principles.

Ramadan argues that Western Muslims must relate themselves to Western society in dialectical fashion. They want to welcome the values and institutions of their society that are in keeping with their Muslim faith, and stand against the values and institutions at odds with their beliefs. What *Sharia*, the way of faithfulness, demands of them is to become responsible citizens of their country, obey its laws, and strive to make society more just. The book offers chapters on Muslim spirituality in the West, the needed reform of Islamic education, the struggle for social justice, the resistance to neo-liberal capitalism, and the importance of inter-religious dialogue.

Ramadan is passionately Muslim, in love with the wisdom of the Qur'an, and confident that Islam will make an important contribution to Western societies. He does not regard his proposal as an attempt to relativize absolute truth and give in to secular values. Far from belittling Islam, the learned scholar believes in its creative power and originality and rejoices in his faith as the certain path revealed by God. This path gives praise to the divine unity and aims at uniting the human family in communion with God.

As Christians currently wrestle with the question whether their faith allows them to respect otherness and honour members of other religions, so does Ramadan from the perspective of his Islamic faith. He honestly faces the harsh texts of the Qur'an, locating them in their historical contexts and showing that they do not invalidate the universal Islamic teaching that God is creator and spiritual presence to all human beings, establishing their dignity that demands universal respect. Ramadan wants believers of all religions to stand together for justice and peace and work for the rescue of the poverty-stricken populations of the South.

Misunderstood and Slandered

In France, Ramadan has become a controversial figure.[3] As a man of faith, Ramadan tries to strengthen the Muslim identity among believers living in France and assure them that they constitute a creative community capable of making great contributions to the wider society. While such an effort would be welcome in Britain, the United States, or Canada, it goes against the self-understanding of the French Republic. Ever since the Revolution and the introduction of the Rights of Man, France respects all citizens of whatever religion or ethnic origin, yet refuses to recognize a public status for their respective religious or ethnic communities. In France, Christians and Jews have got used to this understanding of the *laïcité* or secular nature of the state. Creating religious or ethnic communities that address the wider society and demand public recognition is designated in France by the pejorative term of "communitarianism." France defends the religious liberty of its citizens, and yet refuses to assign any rights to their religious communities. Ramadam is therefore denounced as a communitarian.

Since the message of Islam is simultaneously spiritual and social, Ramadan has, in the name of his faith, offered a critique of unregulated capitalism, denounced the present culture of consumerism, and expressed his solidarity with the indigent peoples of the South. He has thus been designated as *un tiersmondiste* (literally, "a Third-World-ist"), which has pejorative meaning in France's conservative press. Is Ramadan a dangerous theocrat in disguise, as some commentators have suggested?

Ramadan has also been attacked, in my judgment unjustly, for being an anti-Semite. On October 3, 2003, he published an article on a French Muslim Web site (www.oumma.com), entitled "Critique des (nouveaux) intellectuels communautaires."[4] In this article, he criticized a certain trend in the public media to designate critiques of the State of Israel as an expression of the new anti-Semitism, supposedly fostered by immigrants of Arab origin. Ramadan expressed his surprise that several French Jewish intellectuals, known for their defence of universal values, have, after the Second Intifada, offered one-sided support for the State of Israel, thus relativizing the universal values of justice and equality. This partiality was dramatically revealed, he wrote, when these intellectuals supported the American war against Iraq. As Ramadan demands of Muslim intellectuals to criticize dictatorship in Arab countries, he also demands that Jewish intellectuals adopt a critical stance in regard to the policies of Israel.

Unfortunately, this article did not give rise to a civilized debate. Was Ramadan right or wrong about the authors he mentioned? In his article, Ramadan recognizes that there actually exists in France a lively political debate among Jewish thinkers. In fact on the same date (October 3, 2003) that Ramadan's article appeared, *Le Point* published a conversation between two Jewish intellectuals, Rony Brauman and Alain Finkielkraut, the former arguing that criticizing the State of Israel was increasingly denounced as anti-Semitic, and the latter making a case for the emergence of a new anti-Semitism hiding behind hostility towards Israel.

Unfortunately, no serious debate with Ramadan took place. What happened instead was a major attack on him in the public media denouncing him as an anti-Semite, a propagandist, a pseudo-intellectual, and a friend of radical Islam. When he received an appointment as the Henry Luce Professor at Notre Dame's Joan B. Kroc Center for International Peace Studies, a number of Jewish personalities in America who were aware of the controversy in France expressed their concern. Notre Dame University replied, correctly in my judgment, that the accusations of anti-Semitism levelled against Ramadan in France were unfounded.

What upset many readers in France was not only his critique of an unqualified, one-sided support for the State of Israel but also, and more especially, his singling out of Jewish intellectuals. In the fascism of the 1930s, reference to "Jewish intellectuals" was a rhetoric employed to discredit the ideas of Jews in the academy and the public media and to warn people against their influence. Remembering this usage, some well-known French personalities, especially of the Left, were very angry with Ramadan. They misunderstood the context of his message. Ramadan constantly addresses Muslim intellectuals, reminding them that their solidarity with the Muslim community must not make them forget that Islamic values are truly universal, that they apply across the board, and that therefore the demand of justice must include a critique of their own community. Invoking the universality of Islamic values, Ramadan has written devastating critiques of Arab governments and public opinion in Arab countries.[5] In his article of October 3, 2003, Ramadan made the same appeal to a number of Jewish intellectuals, famous for defending universal values in the past, who, it seemed to him, were now turning to an unjustified partiality. It is regrettable that his article did not give rise to a civilized debate.

Ramadan Condemns Anti-Semitism

Articles that defended Ramadan against the vehement attacks were able to demonstrate that his commitment to universal Islamic values had made him condemn anti-Semitism not only in his learned books but also and especially in his public speeches addressed to large crowds. A well-researched article by Laura Secor in the *Boston Globe* (November 30, 2003)[6] reports that at a public meeting a listener asked Ramadan how people can accuse Arabs of being anti-Semitic when they themselves are Semites. "That's just deflective word play," Ramadan replied. "We know very well that there are Muslims who hate Jews, and we must stand against them." Laura Secor writes, "I saw Ramadan exhort hundreds and even thousands of Muslims against anti-Semitism in Rennes, Lille and elsewhere. 'There is no Islamic legitimacy for anti-Semitism,' he told a crowd in Corbeil." While he was being attacked in the pages of *Le Monde*, she writes, he was combating anti-Semitism where it really counted – in the poor ethnic suburbs.

In the recent debate in France about females wearing the *hijab* or Islamic veil in schools, Tariq Ramadan, faithful to his principles, has taken an enlightened stand that has not made him popular in France. In a letter of May 7, 2003 addressed to the Minister of the Interior and Minister of National Education,[7] he argued that *la laïcité* of the State defined by the law of 1905 is quite acceptable to Muslims. They recognize with Christians and Jews that this legislation assures them that they are free to practise their religion and organize their religious communities. What Muslims suffer from in France is not the neutrality of the State, but the negative image which Islam has among the population. Anti-Islamic prejudice is rampant. Muslim women want to make up their own mind before God how to respond to the ancient Islamic custom, without being pressured by Islamic leaders who demand conformity or by secular institutions that demand assimilation. That the planned government legislation forbidding the wearing of the veil in schools limits the freedom of these women is a minor issue. (The government eventually decided to legislate a ban on clearly visible religious symbols in schools and other public spaces.) The major issue is that such legislation would reconfirm the prejudice against Muslims and intensify the divisions among French citizens, instead of healing them. In any case, the real danger for France, Ramadam writes, is not religious communitarianism (the ghettoization of religious communities), but economic communitarianism (the ghettoization of the poor and excluded) largely affecting recent immigrants.

Secular France cannot decide whether Tariq Ramadan is a foe or a friend of society. As a committed Muslim he holds that Islam provides a spiritual as well as socio-political vision for human life on this earth. This sounds disquieting. Yet when he interprets what this means in the present historical context, he arrives at something that looks like social democracy and religious pluralism, grounded not in secular values, but on Islamic revelation. This sounds reassuring. Catholics committed to the social teaching of their Church will have spontaneous sympathy for Ramadan's religious project.

Gregory Baum

Gregory Baum is emeritus Professor of Theology at the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University in Montreal. His latest book, *The Amazing Church,* is to be published by Novalis in Spring 2005.

---

1 This is the English translation of Ramadan's *Les musulmans d'occident et l'avenir de l'Islam* (Paris: Sindbad; Arles, France: Actes sud, 2002).

2 *To Be a European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1999).

3 I have been able to follow the public debate because Bernard Tremblay, a White Father in Montreal, a man with great respect for Islam, sends me by e-mail the relevant articles published in France.

4 (Critique of the (new) communitarian intellectuals). http://oumma.com/article.php3?id_article=719 (accessed June 10, 2004).

5 See "Le monde arabe et les musulmans face à leurs contradictions" (The Arab World and Muslims in face of their contradictions), http://oumma.com/article.php3?id_article=681 (accessed June 14, 2004).

6 The article is reprinted at http://www.guerrillanews.com/forum/showflat.pl?Cat=&Board=quote&Number=296231&page=3&view=collapsed&sb=5&o=0&part= (accessed June 10, 2004).

7 "Lettre ouverte à MM. Sarkozy et Ferry" (Open letter to Messieurs Sarkozy and Ferry) http://islamlaicite.org/article39.html (accessed June 14, 2004).

Islam in Quebec

On Saturday, May 8, 2004, the Muslim association *Présence musulmane* held a day-long public colloquium at Montreal, attended by five hundred participants, most of whom were Muslim men and women concerned with the role of Islam in modern Western society. The colloquium was a remarkable event marked by an intense spiritual quest. The program distributed to the participants outlined the questions to be examined: What does it mean for Muslims to be citizens of Quebec and Canada? How should the universal values taught by Islam influence the actions of Muslims in a secular society? What contribution should Islam and other religions make to the well-being of a society as a whole? How should Muslims relate themselves to Canada's multiculturalism and Quebec's interculturalism? How should they react to local and global phenomena such as islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism?

Since North Americans tend to look upon Muslims through stories reported in the mass media and therefore easily assimilate a distorted image of Islam, I wish to report the concerns and aspirations of Muslims in Quebec expressed at this remarkable colloquium. Muslims want to be faithful to their sacred scriptures, yet they express this fidelity – inevitably – in a particular culture. Islam practised in Arab societies and Islam practised in Indonesia constitute the identical religion, albeit with distinctive faces. Muslims living in the West therefore ask themselves what fidelity to the Qur'an means in their present situation. Since this a relatively new question, a lively debate is taking place among Muslims about the practice of their faith as citizens of a Western society.

In Canada this debate is encouraged by the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC). Many voices are heard on its Web site (www.canadianislamiccongress.com). Prior to the federal election of June 2004, the CIC published a document that presented the social ethics implicit in Islam, stressing the universal values such as justice, equality, tolerance, and social support for people in need at home and abroad. The CIC asked Canadian Muslims to evaluate the programs of the political parties in the light of their ethical tradition.

The principal speaker at the colloquium of May 8, 2004 was the religious philosopher Tariq Ramadan, one of the principal interpreters of Western Islam, a brilliant thinker and persuasive lecturer, an Islamic Paul Tillich who is faithful to the tradition and at the same time critically modern in the best sense. (See front-page article in this issue of *The Ecumenist.*) His public lecture on Friday evening, May 7, 2004 attracted more than 900 people, many of whom were turned away at the door. Ramadan's ideas provoked interesting debates throughout the colloquium.

Muslims in a Secular Society

The central question raised by Ramadan was how Muslims should react to the secular public space that is characteristic of Western societies. On the one hand, the Muslim minority profits greatly from the religious liberty guaranteed by the secular state. On the other hand, since their faith includes a commitment to a social order, Muslims ask themselves how they can be faithful to their tradition in a secular, pluralistic society. Ramadan raised the rhetorical question whether Muslims should profit from the neutral state as long as they are a minority and cherish the hope that after becoming a majority, they will abolish religious liberty and create an Islamic State. Roman Catholics remember that, prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Church's official teaching recommended that Catholics living as minorities in their country should demand religious liberty, while Catholics living as majorities in their country should ask the state to suppress religious liberty and promote the one true religion. In today's ethical climate such a position appears opportunistic and unacceptable. Western Muslims want to be ethically consistent: they honour religious liberty which allows them to survive as a value applicable in all situations.

How then can Muslims be faithful to their religious commitment to a social order? How can they avoid the separation of religion and society that is widely practised in Western countries? Christians have often interpreted the words of Jesus, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God," as demanding

the separation of the political and religious spheres. Yet this interpretation does not fully represent the Christian attitude toward society and it is completely at odds with Muslim faith. How then can Muslims be faithful in a secular society?

With many Muslim thinkers, Ramadan insists that the Qur'an offers, in addition to rules intended for a Muslim society, ethical principles such as justice and equality that are truly universal. According to Islam, divine revelation in the Qur'an envisages a humanity of many cultures and traditions united in peace and justice and offers ethical principles that, if put into practice, are capable of achieving this work of reconciliation. Islam has a divine mission to contribute wisdom and virtue to the development and pacification of the plural humanity. Since Muslim faith includes a commitment to a social order, Muslims in Western societies will want to be politically active in promoting universal values: social and economic justice, equality of opportunity, tolerance and respect for otherness, and solidarity with the poor and excluded at home and in the less developed world. Catholics are surprised how close this contemporary Muslim discourse is to Catholic social teaching.

Muslim Self-criticism

The Muslim faith in the unity of God makes them yearn and work for the unity of the human family in and under God. This is the ideal. Tariq Ramadan had no hesitation in denouncing what is in fact happening among many Muslims in the West. While they insist on the unity of the *umma*, Muslims in Western countries are in fact divided among themselves according to their national or ethnic origins. The mosques tend to serve communities belonging to the same cultural tradition. Frequently, the several Muslim communities in the same city hardly know one another. According to Ramadan, Muslims often create their own ghetto, remain among themselves, and show little concern for the well-being of society as a whole. The bold theologian also complained that Muslim immigrants who join the middle class as professionals or successful merchants tend to adopt bourgeois values of success and material expansion and bracket the social implications of their faith. At such moments, Ramadan's lectures become sermons calling Muslims to greater fidelity to God's revelation.

Because the mass media have a tendency to distort Islam, especially after September 11, 2001, some Muslims feel that they should defend their religious tradition and refrain from criticizing Muslim practices in public. This was not the mood at the colloquium of *Présence musulmane*. Tariq Ramadam confronted dangerous cultural currents of great concern to Muslims living in the West, such as xenophobia, racism, islamophobia, and anti-Semitism. They are all unqualified evils that must be resisted, he said. It would be an internal contradiction for Muslims to struggle against islamophobia and indulge in anti-Semitic discourse. Opposition to the political project of Muslim states should never give rise to contempt for Muslims, nor should opposition to the political project of the State of Israel legitimate anti-Semitic feelings and attitudes. Because Muslims experience discrimination in Western societies and therefore know the many ways in which prejudice damages the people exposed to it, they should stand against all forms of racism and social exclusion.

One member of the audience asked Ramadan how Muslims can be reconciled to a society that permits gay marriage. Is not discrimination against homosexuals justified? In reply Ramadan offered two remarks. First, Muslims live in a society that allows certain practices of which they disapprove and with which they have nothing to do, such as the practice of gay love or the drinking of alcohol, but as Muslims they have the freedom to stay away from them. Second, homosexuals are human beings created by God, whose human rights are protected in Canadian society, and hence while Muslims disapprove of their practices, they honour their right to be different.

A talk given by Rachad Antonius, a respected professor in Montreal, dealt with the question why many people in Western society are afraid of Muslims. Is this simply an expression of xenophobia and racism? Or, he asked, are there also deeper reasons? People become afraid when they see the religious mobilization of Muslims in their own country because they believe, quite falsely for the most part, that these Muslims agree with the politics of repression and the violation of human rights, especially of women's rights, practised in a number of Muslim countries. Unfortunately many people in Quebec and Canada suspect that the Muslims living in their midst do not respect Quebec's and Canada's charters of rights and

freedoms. It is therefore imperative, he argued, that Western Muslims openly express their disapproval of the oppressive conditions existing in Muslims countries.

According to Professor Antonius, Muslims have to admit that the strict conformity to custom, discrimination against non-Muslims, subservience imposed upon women and cruel punishments inflicted upon transgressors of the law, practised in some Muslim countries, correspond to a certain reading of Islam. These practices are not a distortion of Islam; they are rather an interpretation of Islam honoured in certain parts of the Muslim world. Yet this is not the only reading of Islam. It differs in fact from the classical interpretation of the Muslim faith. Reading the sacred texts in modern, Western societies gives rise to an interpretation of Islam that emphasizes the universal values revealed in the Qur'an and urges Muslims to glorify God by their prayer, their virtues, and their commitment to justice, equality, and peace. Rachad Antonius' speech was received with great applause.

Multiculturalism

How much of their cultural identity can immigrants preserve and protect as they become citizens of Quebec and Canada? This is a question of great importance for Muslims since their faith is always incarnate in particular cultural practices. At the colloquium, representatives of the Quebec government explained that Canada and Quebec follow slightly different policies in regard to cultural pluralism. The federal government promotes "multiculturalism," i.e., a vision of Canada as a cultural mosaic. Canada is here seen as embracing many cultures, none of which has official status, even if the government recognizes two official languages, English and French. Quebec has not accepted this vision. Since Quebec is the only francophone space in North America, its survival and flourishing are in need of protection by law. Quebec refers to its internal pluralism as "interculturalism," which distinguishes between the inherited francophone culture and the other cultural communities and advocates lively interaction between them. Intercultural dialogue and co-operation in French, Quebec's official language, modify the inherited francophone culture as well as the cultural communities, producing a certain convergence among them, while protecting the identity of each. The Quebec government emphasizes common citizenship and encourages people's co-responsibility for society as a whole, thus taking for granted a certain public consensus around democratic values and respect for difference.

Since the participants of the colloquium were for the most part French-speaking Muslims, they appreciated the law that defines Quebec as a francophone society. Many of them came to Quebec precisely because French is its public language. Over 80 per cent of Quebecers are in fact francophone, about 10 per cent are anglophone, and another 10 per cent allophone (whose mother tongue is neither French nor English). Immigrants coming to Quebec from former British colonies, such as India and Pakistan, find this situation difficult. While their families speak English fluently, they have to send their children to French schools. The English schools in Quebec can be attended only by children whose parents received an English-language education in Canada. Even with all these safeguards, in the opinion of many, the cultural pressure of English in North America is so strong that Quebec's linguistic laws may not be able to assure the survival of a French society in North America.

Francophone Muslim immigrants support the French-speaking society. What they regret is that the difference in language makes communication between them and Muslims from Pakistan and other former British colonies difficult. Needless to say, all Muslim immigrants, whether French- or English-speaking, recognize that the beautiful discourse on cultural pluralism adopted by the governments in Ottawa and Quebec City does not hide the ugly reality that racism and xenophobia continue to thrive in Canada and Quebec.

The multicultural or intercultural policies of the government do not settle the difficult question of how much of their inherited culture immigrants are able to protect in their new country. How should they define their identity? Since Muslims bring their beloved Islam dressed in a particular culture, they have to decide how much of that culture they want to keep. At the colloquium people expressed quite different opinions on this topic. Some Muslims lamented that the individualism and materialism of modern, secular society were undermining the cultural values of their young people and recommended therefore that they be educated in strict Muslim schools. Other Muslims wanted to leave behind many practices of their culture of origin. They believed that their Muslim faith could flourish in Quebec and Canada because here Muslims were able to explore the rich meaning of Islam for the well-being of humanity. Between these positions lay a wide spectrum of opinions.

At this time Christians have no such problem of identity. They can be wholly Christian and wholly Canadian. Their relation to Canada will be influenced by their Christian faith, and their Christian practice will be affected by their participation in Canadian society. The same is true for contemporary Jews. They have no identity problem: they can be wholly Jewish and wholly Canadian. There are only a few small Christian and Jewish communities that prefer to live apart, follow traditional customs, refuse to wear modern dress, and look upon the world around them as made up of unbelievers.

Immigrants and immigrant communities have an identity question which they must solve in one way or another. How much of their inherited culture should they preserve? Immigration inevitably implies some loss. You are separated from the creativity of your culture in its own location, and the effort to preserve it in another country often transforms it into a static inheritance deprived of its full vitality. In what culture can you dream and respond creatively to new challenges? In the culture brought from the old country, in the culture of your adopted country, or in an original mixture of the two, a creative *métissage*? Naïm Kattan, a Quebec thinker and poet of Arab Jewish origin, said so well that "immigration is either an exile or a new birth." The new birth is the creation of something that did not exist before, that is inspired by the memory of the past and the possibilities of the present, and that enriches the immigrant community as well as society as a whole.

The members of *Présence musulmane* are convinced that the Islam they have inherited and that they love is capable of making an important contribution to Quebec and Canadian society, and they reach out for an original *métissage* that will allow them to be fully Muslim and fully responsible members of their new society.

Afterword: Being Osama

The debate among Muslims about their place in Quebec society was continued in the documentary *Being Osama*, made by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (in an English and French version) and shown for the first time on May 31, 2004 at Montreal's Concordia University, three weeks after the colloquium *Présence musulmane.* The film opens a window on the lives of five Montrealers named Osama, willing to speak of their experiences after September 11, 2001 and express how they feel about integrating into Canadian society. The documentary reveals the problems, the dilemmas, and the creative responses of Arab Quebecers who desire to be truly themselves, faithful to their convictions, and at the same time thrive in a society that has some hesitations about them. One Osama wants to remain a conservative Muslim visibly distinct from the wider society; a second Osama sees himself as a free and responsible person in society without attaching importance to people's religious inheritance; a third Osama is angry with the government which has harassed him in a number of ways; and two Osamas are inventing a creative *métissage* that allows them to celebrate Arab memories in cultural forms understood in the wider community. The film reveals the existence of racism in Montreal, and yet it also shows noisy demonstrations in support of refugees and immigrants, in opposition to restrictive government policies. Despite their difficulties, all the Osamas feel that life in Montreal is better than life in the place where they came from. The film is a tribute to Arab Canadians and, without disguising the ugly reality, it is also a tribute to the flexibility of Quebec and Canadian culture.

Gregory Baum

Theology, Ethics, and Deep Ecology

The course followed by Western civilization to date has created an ecological crisis of unprecedented proportions. Altering this requires, among other things, replacing the callousness towards nature that currently exists in the minds and hearts of too many Westerners with a moral perspective sensitive to and concerned for the well-being of the natural environment.[1] A foundation needs to be found for a moral framework in which the natural environment is seen as having intrinsic value apart from its possible utility for meeting human needs. This kind of moral stance, where the natural environment is seen to make moral claims upon people, is known as deep ecology. In what follows I will argue that a renewed understanding of God as internally related to creation can provide a foundation for deep ecology without falling into some of the weaknesses that plague other ways of grounding this kind of ethical stance.

This need for a foundation for a stance of deep ecology coincides with a change that has taken place in the way some Christian theologians seek to ground ethics in theology. Christian ethics have often been grounded in a) the will of God expressed in law or gospel, or b) the relationship of God to the person, who is created and called to love, justified by grace, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. However, in recent decades some Christian theologians have sought to ground ethics in the relationality of God's being, particularly in God's relationship to creation. This also coincides with the attempt on the part of some Christian theologians to develop an understanding of God that combines a radical notion of divine transcendence with a genuine sense of God being internally related to creation. Developing such an understanding as basis for an environmentally sensitive ethic is one way of working to address the callousness towards nature that has helped create the ecological crisis. This involves a far-reaching reformation in the Christian doctrine of God. In order to achieve this, we need to return to the formation of the Christian doctrine of the triune God in the patristic era and trace the shortcomings of the notion of divine transcendence that emerged there, before looking at the reasons for seeking an alternative and a way of formulating it.

Classical Theism and Its Discontents

As the early church went from being a movement within Judaism to being a Gentile religion, an encounter took place between the Christian gospel and the culture of Hellenism that profoundly affected the Christian understanding of God. One result of this was the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, which affirms that God is able to enter into history and to do new things. Instead of understanding the divine as part of the structure of reality and the seemingly permanent structures of reality and culture as divine, the doctrine of the Trinity affirmed the radical transcendence of God, the freedom and power of God's love in relation to it as a basis for hope of salvation, the radical immanence of God in creation in the second person of the Trinity, and the continuing creative and redemptive presence of God within history in the Holy Spirit.

At the same time a second development took place in the understanding of God's freedom and power that in some respects contradicted the first. It was a deep-seated axiom of Hellenistic philosophy and culture at that time that the perfect is unchanging. If that which was perfect, it was assumed, changed in any way, it could only become imperfect, less than it formerly was. The divine, as the highest and perfect good, was considered to be immutable, unchanging, absolute, and impassible. This was accepted as a fundamental axiom for thinking about God by virtually all Christian theologians of the patristic era,[2] even though it sharply contradicted the affirmations of the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation, that in Jesus God had entered history in a new way, shared the human condition, and died in order to overcome sin and death.

This understanding of God as immutable, unchanging, absolute, and impassible is frequently referred to as classical theism. Christian theologians of the patristic era and since have understood God in this way in order to express God's radical transcendence. God is not one element in creation. Instead, God is wholly other to it. Finite creatures and things are subject to change. The infinite God is not.

The Critique of Classical Theism

However, this way of understanding God's transcendence bequeathed to the church a conflicted understanding of God as impassible and unchanging on the one hand, and as having experienced suffering and death in Jesus, that is, as dynamic, responsive, and capable of doing new things on the other.

The notion of God as unchanging created a problem for Christian ethics. If God is unaffected by what happens in the world, why should people strive to do justice, to love one another, to live their faith? Ethical actions make no real difference to an immutable and impassible God. Classical theism's understanding of God also undermines the value of creation and created life. Though creation is affirmed as good, in classical theism, its very existence, let alone what happens to it, makes no difference to God.

In the twentieth century, the Christian gospel encountered a very different set of cultural assumptions, which led to a sharp critique of classical theism. The process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead suggested that notions of God as impassible and unrelated to the world had lost touch with the image of God that we find in the teachings of Jesus and the Johannine traditions. Joining his voice to those who have argued that classical theism had given rise to modern atheism, Whitehead argued that if the modern West was to find its way back to God, it must be by way of an understanding of God as love, as internally related to the world and affected by what happens in it.[3] Charles Hartshorne developed some of Whitehead's ideas further, arguing that if God was perfect, then God must be capable of enhancement in some respects.[4] Ethical action and human joy must bring an increase of some kind to God's being. In this school of thought, God's relation to the world was conceived as analogous to that of the soul to the body. Ethical action increased God's joy by adding something of value to the world that was experienced and remembered by God.

Sallie McFague took up these ideas in light of the ecological crisis and made them foundational to her environmental ethic,[5] arguing that the world and the natural environment should be understood as God's body. Her hope was that by seeing the world in this way, Christians would lose some of their moral callousness towards the natural order and begin to care for it more deeply. Here ethics is grounded in God's being internally related to creation. The motive for ethical action is that caring for creation makes a difference to God.

Understanding God as internally related to creation in these and other ways brings to expression a profound intuition running through Jewish and Christian traditions, that there is an importance to the moral dimension of human life and history that extends to human relationships to nature and that is rooted in the nature of God. The commandments to seek justice and love righteousness arise ultimately from the nature of God's being, which is affected by what happens in the world and to it. Injustice, oppression, and environmental degradation do not leave God untouched. Sin and evil offend God and call forth a divine response of judgment and saving creative initiative. God is involved with the world, hears the cries of the oppressed, and is moved by them. Calvin expressed this by speaking of injustice and oppression as wounding God.[6] People not only sin against one another when they fail to do what is good and act in evil ways. They also sin against and wound God.

This sense of the importance of ethical action in the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament is expressed in the teaching that ethical action brings benefits not only to the recipient, but also to the doer and to God. The doctrine of the two ways, classically expressed in Psalm 1, teaches that the moral act is always essentially self-integrative. It brings a person closer to their divine destiny, even though it may bring them great suffering. As moral acts on the part of people bring joy to God, and thus a certain increase to God's being,[7] one must say that God is internally related to the world. From this perspective, the theological basis of ethics lies ultimately in the nature of God's being. The giving of the law, the call to seek justice and forgive others, all flow from the goodness of God, that is, from God's nature as love, through which God is internally related to the world. As Sallie McFague noted, this way of understanding God's relationship to the world takes on a special importance amidst the current ecological crisis. Seeing God as internally related to the world can provide a much-needed moral horizon for a stance of deep ecology, in which the natural world has a high moral standing apart from its worth as a resource for human life.

Classical theism, with its understanding of God as unaffected by the pain or joy of creation and command-

ing righteousness but remaining untouched by it, has been charged with being rationally incoherent. Because it occludes how God is internally related to creation, it robs the world of a moral horizon, a framework for human life and decision-making that can provide an understanding of the good and a motive for striving to achieve it.[8] Classical theism in its incoherency is thus not just an academic error or intellectual mistake. It is also a mode of "self-stultification"[9] that tends to undermine the ethical vision of those who hold and promote it.

God's Immanence and Transcendence

The idea that God is internally related to the world has spread widely in recent decades, almost becoming a new orthodoxy in Western Christian thought. Recently, however, feminist theologians and others have begun to reach beyond it in order to retrieve a radical notion of God's transcendence without sacrificing the idea of God being internally related to creation. In emphasizing God's relatedness to creation, process philosophy and theologies drawing upon it tended to lose sight of the radical transcendence of God. As they did so, they tended to domesticate God within various conceptual systems, most predicated upon a progressive and ultimately imperialist view of history.[10] This domesticated God no longer provided hope or a sense of meaning in the face of radical evil. Moreover, where the transcendence of God is forgotten, the scandalous nature of the evils of the present, as well as the sinful nature of our own societies and selves, also tends to be obscured. As a result, some feminist theologians and others have argued that it is not enough to say that God shares the pain of the victims and is with them in their suffering. If God is to be a source of the courage to love in the face of evil, then God must also be understood as being radically transcendent, a source of hope for the ultimate overcoming of evil.[11] In the past, a number of theologians spoke of God as both radically transcendent to and internally related to creation. For example, Paul Tillich noted that the doctrine of the Trinity is an affirmation of God as living and that the being of God includes "both rest and becoming."[12] Hans Urs von Balthasar spoke of how God's being is enriched by creation even while emphasizing God's radical transcendence.[13]

This radical transcendence of God in relation to creation is also an important moral source for Christian ethics. The infinite nature of God's love, the irruptive power of God's creativity testified to in the story of Exodus, the proclamation of the coming reign of God, and the accounts of Jesus' resurrection are grounds for ultimate hope and a powerful motivation in the struggle for peace and justice.[14] Protest movements frequently denounce radical evils and call for decisive action to resist them. The question is, how is this possible, if the evil that is to be resisted and overcome is truly radical,[15] for by definition, radical evil is a presence that people cannot overcome on their own. At this point it becomes necessary to look again at the radical transcendence attributed to God by classical theism. In describing God as immutable and completely self-sufficient, classical theists were trying to express the infinite nature of God's power of being, the radical transcendence of God. They saw this as a source of hope. As God is radically transcendent, God is ultimately able to overcome any evil that occurs within it. This affirms God as a source of comfort and hope in the face of deep-seated injustice that seems insurmountable. In many of Martin Luther King Jr.'s sermons, it was this sense of the radical transcendence of God's love that functioned as his final principle of expectation that deeply entrenched racism, poverty, and violence could be overcome. Without such a principle of expectation, seeking social change in a situation of profound oppression is in danger of seeming irrational, for without the hope provided by divine transcendence, the call to participate in such a movement may only be urging senseless sacrifice.

Radical Orthodoxy and God's Transcendence

Recently classical theism has been revived on different ethical grounds. John Milbank has argued that a humane life is only possible if grounded in faith in a radically transcendent God who is not internally related to creation.[16] Only such a God is able to provide people with a non-violent sense of purpose and identity that enables them to live at peace with themselves and others. Kathryn Tanner has argued that if God is to be understood in a coherent way, the divine nature must be understood as radically transcendent, as existing on another plane of

being from creation, so that God and created reality are not seen as being in any way in competition.[17] For Tanner, the radical transcendence of God means that human notions of justice and morality cannot be identified with divine truth, and so are open to critique and reformulation. This stimulates critical thinking in regards to what justice is and how it can be established, checks self-aggrandizement, and grounds respect for human rights.[18]

Both these authors stress the human propensity for evil and the need for divine judgment and forgiveness in a way reminiscent of Reinhold Niebuhr. However, as Gregory Vlastos argued in response to Niebuhr, human capacities, through which the inclination to evil operates, are also capacities for doing good.[19] The proposals of Milbank and Tanner are one-sided in their understanding of God's relationship to the world in that they do not consider what the good that people do might mean for God. In failing to do so, they ignore those biblical traditions that recognize that God receives from creation and human acts of faithfulness. In discussing what God means for creation, Tanner and Milbank fail to ask what creation means for God. However, the biblical witness speaks of God as living, as experiencing creation, and as involved in it to a degree that neither of these positions envisions. God not only gives to creation and creatures. God also receives from them. This important moral source should not be obscured. In the Johannine tradition, the divine/human relationship is not simply one of people sinning and God judging and forgiving them. It is also one of people being able to do the good that makes a difference even to God.[20] While God is not one thing among other created things,[21] God is also not "no-thing." God is not dead. The living God experiences creation, reacts to it,[22] realizes some potentialities in relation to it, and receives from it. The relationship between God and creation is not symmetrical, but it does have an element of reciprocity[23] that helps to explain the 'why' of creation. This is an important moral source that these recent returns to classical theism neglect.

An ability to articulate what creation means for God is also important for affirming the goodness of creation, as that which is good makes a difference – even to God. Descriptions of God's transcendence that state that creation does not make any difference to God undercut affirmations of the goodness of creation. This is particularly injurious in a time of environmental crisis, when sustainable human communities require a world view that accords "the full sweep of nature" an inherent moral value.[24] In order to do justice to the Biblical witness, Christian theology needs to find a way to express both God's transcendence and immanence in a coherent fashion. Doing this requires a reformulation of the Christian doctrine of God that goes beyond both classical theism and its recent restatement by Milbanks and others.

A Thin Tradition

There is a thin tradition in Christian theology, a way of understanding God that has not been constant or dominant in Christian thought, but that has "appeared only here and there, now and then,"[25] running from Pseudo-Dionysius[26] in the sixth century to Bonaventure in the thirteenth century, which provides a basis for talking about both God's transcendence and immanence through its understanding of God's goodness as inherently self-diffusive. For Bonaventure (1217–1274 CE), God's goodness is necessarily self-diffusive, for the goodness that reproduces itself is greater than that which does not. God's goodness as self-diffusive has an inherent tendency to express itself. This happens first within the Trinity and then in the creation of the world. The self-diffusive nature of God's goodness does not compromise divine transcendence by making creation necessary for the realization of God's being because God's goodness finds infinite and eternal expression in the inner-trinitarian relations of the Godhead.[27] The self-diffusive nature of God's goodness provides the motive, impetus, pattern, and rationale for creation,[28] without making creation necessary to God.

The New England Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) took these ideas further by creatively re-conceiving reality in terms of a "dispositional ontology."[29] According to Edwards, God's being is char-

acterized by a disposition to express or communicate God's beauty and goodness. This is fully actualized in eternity in God's trinitarian being *ad intra*, but receives further expression *ad extra* through creation and the history of redemption. God does not need this further expression *ad extra* and so still remains radically transcendent. Yet through creation and redemption God's disposition to beauty finds further expression, which evokes appreciation in people's response of love and praise. This rhythm of gift and response brings a quantitative increase to God's being. As God's beauty is expressed *ad extra* in time and space, evoking praise from people, the bond of love within the Trinity amongst God the Creator-Redeemer, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is increased, as the joy and delight in each other that is shared within the Trinity is further shared and repeated in people's love and praise of God. By means of this dynamic conception of God's relationship to the world, Edwards combined a radical conception of God's transcendence with a notion of God being internally related to creation. By doing so, he developed a powerful basis for Christian ethics that had a socially transformative impetus.[30] This way of understanding God's being and relation to the world also lays the basis for a Christian definition of deep ecology without surrendering the radical transcendence of God.

Deep Ecology and God-talk

"Deep ecology" is one name for a moral stance where the natural environment is seen as having an intrinsic value apart from its productive potential as raw material for human labour. This kind of moral outlook is demanded by the environmental crisis, and yet it harbours the danger of falling into anti-humanism, where the consequences of ethical decisions about nature on human lives are given little or no weight,[31] or where the differences between men and women, rich and poor are erased[32] and the injustices and oppressions connected to these differences ignored. In Edwards' understanding of God's relationship to the world, though, nature has an intrinsic value in two ways, both of which involve human beings. For Edwards, nature is an expression of God's disposition to beauty. When nature is perceived as such and people give thanks to God for it, there is a repetition in time and space of God's own inner-trinitarian joy in the beauty of God's goodness. This brings an increase to God's being. However, nature has an intrinsic value as an expression of God's goodness as it brings joy to God even before it stimulates people to praise God ("And God saw that it was good" Genesis 1:25). Furthermore, nature as an expression of God's beauty can help people to realize their own purpose within creation of knowing and loving God. Here "the mutuality of nature and humanity is part of the mutuality God has with the world; and through this mutuality, God, nature, and humanity are united and thereby enlarged."[33] In this way Edwards' understanding of God's relationship to the world provides a stance of deep ecology that includes recognition of the intrinsic value of human life and avoids the contradictions of a primitivism that calls for a return to an earlier state of human existence while using technologies that have surpassed it.[34] In this perspective, human beings remain the "measurers of all things,"[35] but the measure is the being and purpose of creation as an expression of God's disposition to beauty, not the utility of nature for human purposes.

Edwards' re-formulation of the doctrine of God and God's relationship to the world has not played a major role in recent debates about the nature of God or in contemporary ecological theology. Certainly Edwards' understanding of God's relationship to the world as a theological basis for a perspective of deep ecology needs to be enriched by the preferential option for the poor, in order to give concrete guidance to the ways a very diverse and often conflicted human population should understand the natural environment and interact with it.[36] Yet the dialectical model of God's relationship to creation which he advances, as opposed to the analogical model that has dominated much of Christian thought, can provide the basis for a stance of deep ecology that retains a radical sense of divine transcendence while guarding against anti-humanism.

Don Schweitzer

Don Schweitzer is Professor of Theology at St. Andrew's College in Saskatchewan. His most recent publication, a co-edited work (with Derek Simon), is *Intersecting Voices: Critical Theology in a Land of Diversity* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004).

---

[1] Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 344-345.

[2] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 229.

[3] Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 74-76.

[4] Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 18-22.

[5] Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 140-150.

[6] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Wounds of God: Calvin's Theology of Social Injustice," *The Reformed Journal* Vol. 37 No. 6 (1987): 20.

[7] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets, Vol. I* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 198.

[8] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 232-236.

[9] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 504.

[10] David Tracy, *On Naming the Present* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 41-43.

[11] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 268.

[12] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 247, 228.

[13] Gerard O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28.

[14] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches Volume 2* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 1005-1006.

[15] Paul Tillich, *Political Expectation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 171.

[16] John Milbank, "Forgiveness and Incarnation," in *Questioning God*, ed. John Caputo, Mark Dooley and Michael Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 120. See also John Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," *Modern Theology* 11:1 (January 1995): 134, 152-154.

[17] Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 79-80; *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 2-5.

[18] Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 78-79, 217.

[19] Gregory Vlastos, "Sin and Anxiety in Niebuhr's Religion," *The Christian Century* 58, no. 4 (October 1, 1941): 1202-1204.

[20] Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John*, (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 555.

[21] Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, 4.

[22] Michael Welker, *Creation and Reality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 10-13.

[23] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 228-236.

[24] Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, 345.

[25] Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 114.

[26] For Pseudo-Dionysius see Bernard McGinn, "God as Eros: Metaphysical Foundations of Christian Mysticism," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 199-202.

[27] Bonaventure, *The Works of St. Bonaventure Vol. V: Collations on the Six Days* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony's Guild Press, 1970), 163.

[28] Kevin Keane, "Why Creation? Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas on God as Creative Good," in *Downside Review* Vol. 93 (1975): 117.

[29] For this, see Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[30] Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 14-15.

[31] A chilling example of this is Martin Heidegger, whose insightful analysis of the impact of modern technology on Western culture remains important for a stance of deep ecology. In his concern for the great questions of 'Being,' there was no room for considering the pain of other people, particularly the Jews. For this lack in Heidegger's thought, see Richard Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 134. For Heidegger's thought as a resource for deep ecology, see Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 100-126.

[32] Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminists in the Greens," in *Ecofeminism and Globalization*, ed. Heather Eaton and Lois Ann Lorentzen (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 209-210.

[33] Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards on God and Nature: Resources for Contemporary Theology," in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 36.

[34] Gaard, "Ecofeminists in the Greens," 211.

[35] Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, 345.

[36] For a discussion of some of the ways the preferential option for the poor nuances a vision of deep ecology, see Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 123-129.

Fighting Racial and Religious Discrimination in Canada

On March 21, 2004 the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs and the Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops produced a pastoral message entitled "Eliminate Racial and Religious Discrimination: See Every Person as My Sister or Brother." Given the increase in number of acts of religiously motivated discrimination in the last year, this excellent message is reprinted here in its entirety.

Eliminate Racial and Religious Discrimination: See Every Person as My Sister or Brother

> *We love because God first loved us...those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*[1]

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

1 The 21st day of March 2004 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This International Day was established in order to acknowledge that racism exists, and to deepen our understanding of how racial and religious discrimination militates against the fullness of life for all our sisters and brothers. We as Catholic bishops also wish to take advantage of this opportunity to recognize how deeply our communities are enriched by different religious and cultural practices and to promote harmony, respect and acceptance among all.

2 People have come to Canada from all over the globe, bringing with them their talents, hopes, dreams and aspirations. To them we say: "Welcome! Our lives and our history are blessed by your presence, and our common future dawns brighter with the promise of even fuller interaction among us." Scripture tells us that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and is thus deserving of profound respect and dignity.[2]

3 As Canadian bishops we reject all forms of racism and all discrimination on the basis of race or religion. From police and media reports and from our friends in the Aboriginal, Black, Jewish, Muslim and other communities we have been made aware of incidents of racism, racial profiling and discrimination of various kinds. Some of these situations have occurred as a result of new tensions arising from "the war on terrorism."[3] Other situations are not new, but may arise from entrenched inequalities from Canada's past.

4 Racism is not new to Canada. The experience of Blacks and Asians (among others) who arrived here generations ago clearly demonstrates this sad fact. There were and continue to be elements of racism in the damaged relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our country. We have recognized, for example, the role that Church organizations have played in the operation of the former Indian Residential Schools and that, though many served with great devotion, "...the system was dangerously flawed by the policy underlying it."[4] For members of the Church and for other Canadians to be able to confront racial and religious discrimination today, an authentic knowledge of the failings as well as the healing efforts of our past history is required.

5 Catholics believe that entertaining attitudes or acting in a manner that reflects racial or religious discrimination is a sin against the specific message of Christ for whom one's neighbour is every person.[5] Systemic racism is also a social sin,[6] thus demanding a societal response that can assume institutional or legislative forms. Similarly, religious discrimination is an offence against the dignity of the human person; a contradiction to the sincere respect which is owed to other faiths, and an offence against charity.[7] We have listened attentively to the concerns of our sisters and brothers who have experienced racial or religious discrimination and take this opportunity to say, "We hear you! With you, we will work for change."

6 Thus, there are several responsibilities for Catholic communities to assume in order to address racism and racial as well as religious discrimination in our country.

The Role of the Catholic Community in Eliminating Racial and Religious Discrimination

7 **In the Church:** As the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace reminded us in its document before the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (in Durban, South Africa), the Church wants first and foremost to change racist attitudes, including those within Christian communities. The Church appeals first of all to the moral and religious sense of people, asking God to change hearts. The Church offers a place for reconciliation, and promotes initiatives of welcome, exchange, and mutual assistance for men and women belonging to other ethnic and religious groups. Despite the sinful limitations of its members in every age, the Church is to be a sign and instrument of the unity of humankind. The message the Church proposes to everyone, and which Catholics have to live, is "Every person is my brother or sister."[8]

8 In this spirit, leaders within the Catholic Church have apologized for individual and collective actions that contributed to the injustice that Aboriginal people continue to bear.[9] Much of the activity of our Conference of Bishops (often in tandem with our ecumenical colleagues) is currently directed towards speaking out on issues of Aboriginal justice[10] and developing Aboriginal catechesis and formation programs that respect their profound spiritual, moral and cultural heritage.[11] The work of the Catholic Aboriginal Council, including the Fund for Reconciliation, Solidarity and Communion, is taking leadership in these important efforts. Today this Council is an active and visual expression of our partnership in the task of building the Reign of God.

9 Interfaith dialogue and respectful contact with people of other religions are privileged ways for Catholics to promote more just relationships.[12] This was emphasized at a meeting of eight world religions organized in 2003 by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, when it was stated: "The spiritual resources for peace include interreligious encounters which have helped many to come together to learn about each other's religious beliefs and shared values, and to discover the possibility of living and working together to build societies of justice and peace."[13] Not only does our Bishops' Conference continue to place a high priority on such encounters, but in recent months we have been pleased to participate in interreligious prayer services for peace that have been organized in many of our communities.

10 **In our communities:** We need to develop sensitivities enabling us to recognize racism and religious discrimination wherever these may occur, for example in the provision of social services or lodging. Through social involvement in our communities, such as the Multi-faith Housing Initiative or other social justice efforts like the World Council for Religion and Peace, we can make a positive difference, along with other people of good will. Basing our actions on the call to respect the dignity of each person, created in the image and likeness of God, we can defend the human rights of all persons.

11 **In our schools:** Catholic educational institutions also have a particular and crucial role to play in raising awareness of the situation, as well as to promote actions for societal and legislative change. We commend both school boards that have initiated anti-racism policies and those principals who have creatively endeavoured to have them implemented.[14] The Durban Conference appealed for special attention to the education of children and youth toward the values of solidarity, respect and appreciation of diversity.[15] Pope John Paul II referred to this when he said, "Often, solidarity does not come easily. It requires

training and a turning away from attitudes of closure, which in many societies today have become more subtle and penetrating. To deal with this phenomenon, the Church possesses vast educational and formative resources at all levels. I therefore appeal to parents and teachers to combat racism and xenophobia by inculcating positive attitudes based on Catholic social doctrine."[16] Here, we issue a special invitation to youth, as a result of the vibrant energy we all witnessed during World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto: live out Gospel values enthusiastically! Create "a civilization of love!"[17]

12 **In the media:** Rapid technological change has certainly enhanced the power of the mass media to "transmit implicit value-systems" today.[18] Especially meaningful to Canadian youth are the images, music, products and even lifestyles promoted by the media. Public authorities have the responsibility to ensure that racist messages and discriminatory stereotypes are not propagated. At the same time, new challenges are presented by the increased use of the Internet and the particular difficulty of proscribing the huge range of information available there. Nonetheless, work with media outlets to dispel racist and discriminatory messages, and to give voice to under-represented communities is crucial. We invite the Catholic media to be increasingly proactive by transmitting the viewpoints of visible minorities, thus enhancing knowledge of and familiarity with their concerns.

13 **In the policies of our governments**: In Canada today, governments should renew their efforts to defend and welcome refugees and migrants. Church communities can then enhance settlement activities.[19] Under the new Citizenship and Immigration law, it should not become more difficult for migrants to be accepted into our country. Refugees applying from U.S. ports of entry should not be prohibited from entering Canada due to the new Safe Third Country agreement.[20] Even more dramatic realities are encountered in the squalid situations which millions of persons, our sisters and brothers, are forced to endure in refugee camps throughout the world. Increased Canadian financial assistance needs to be directed to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and non-governmental groups such as the International Catholic Migration Commission.

14 **In the search for peace:** "Racism is a challenge to peace. Peace can only be constructed in a climate of mutual respect and understanding."[21] Thus the call to each of us to work for peace (Matthew 5,9) should find a greater echo in our attitudes and actions to promote harmony, respect, acceptance and justice. As Pope John Paul II said in his 2003 Message for the World Day of Peace, "Gestures of peace spring from the lives of people who foster peace first of all in their own hearts."[22] Praying and acting for peace throughout this troubled world is the vocation of every individual Christian, every family and every community. Efforts to end racial prejudice and religious discrimination are urgently required for peace to grow in our hearts, in our Church, in our communities and in our world. By the grace of Christ, may we all come to more deeply understand and love every person as our sister or our brother.

March 21, 2004

Members of the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs:

Most Rev. Blaise E. Morand, Bishop of Prince Albert, Chairman

Most Rev. Jean-Louis Plouffe, Bishop of Sault Ste-Marie

Most Rev. Roger Ébacher, Archbishop of Gatineau-Hull

Most Rev. Daniel Bohan, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto

Mary Durran, Montreal, Consultant

Elisabeth Garant, Montreal, Consultant

Members of the Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue:

Most Rev. François Lapierre, P.M.É., Bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe, Chairman

Most Rev. Claude Champagne, O.M.I., Auxiliary Bishop of Halifax

Most Rev. Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Edmonton

Most Rev. Marcel A.J. Gervais, Archbishop of Ottawa

[1] 1 John 4, 19-21.

[2] Genesis 1, 26.

[3] Ron Csillagl, "Canadian conference probes 'new' anti-Semitism," *Prairie Messenger,* February 26, 2003, p. 6; Michael Swan, "Newsroom culture defames Islam," *The Catholic Register,* March 2, 2003, p. 5; Paul Koring, "National country of origin key to new U.S. visa plan: Fingerprints, photographs to be required of certain Canadian landed immigrants," *Globe and Mail*, May 22, 2003, p. A4; Richard Cléroux, "Policing Ottawa's Bigots," *Ottawa City Magazine,* February/March 2002.

[4] Brief by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "Let justice flow like a mighty river," 1995. See: www.ohrc.on.ca/english/consultations/racial-profiling-terms.shtml.

[5] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society," November 1988, #24.

[6] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* #1869.

[7] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* # 2104.

[8] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society," November 1988, #33. Quoted in "Contribution of the Holy See to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa, August-September, 2001."

[9] See Oblate Conference of Canada, "An Apology to the First Nations of Canada," July 24, 1991; Bishops' Advisory Committee, "Pastoral Letter on Native Issues in Manitoba," January 20, 1993; Father Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, "Apology to Native Americans for Past Mistakes," Idaho, May 16, 1993.

[10] See www.cccb.ca, especially "Ecumenical Statement of Church Leaders on Aboriginal Rights," March 19, 2003.

[11] See CCCB Episcopal Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples, "Rediscovering, Recognizing and Celebrating the Spiritual Heritage of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples," May 1999.

[12] The CCCB supports and has representation on the Ecumenical Committee on Racism, the National Muslim/Christian Liaison Committee and the Canadian Jewish/Christian Consultation (CCJC). It encourages local initiatives, especially those which bring together Jewish/Christian/Muslim participants in dialogue.

[13] Final Declaration, "Spiritual Resources of the Religions for Peace," Rome, January 16-18, 2003.

[14] See for example the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board's Policy on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity, www.occdsb.on.ca. For examples of Multicultural education see: www.scarboromissions.ca/Mission_education/celebrating_multiculturalism.php#teachers.

[15] Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, "Racism: Educating Future Generations to a Different Vision of Human Relations" (March 25 speech to U.N. Commission on Human Rights), *Origins,* April 17, 2003, pp. 729-730.

[16] Message of Pope John Paul II for the 89th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2003).

[17] Pope Paul VI, Address for the Closing of the Holy Year, December 25, 1975; Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America,* January 22, 1999, #10.

[18] John Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace 2001, #11.

[19] See "A Prophetic Mission for the Church: Pastoral Message on the Acceptance and Integration of Immigrants and Refugees to Build a Community of Togetherness," CCCB Episcopal Commission for Theology, March 1993.

[20] Letter of Bishop Jean Gagnon, Chairman of the CCCB Episcopal Comnission for Social Affairs, to the Honourable Denis Coderre, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, March 7, 2003.

[21] Archbishop Diarmuid Martin to the 59th session of the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations, March 25, 2003, *l'Osservatore Romano*, #14, 2 April 2003, p. 6.

[22] Message for the World Day of Peace, 2003.

Book Notes

Karen Armstrong's Stairway to Heaven

Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb out of Darkness*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, 306 pp.

We most often consider the opposite of fear to be courage but Karen Armstrong's spiritual autobiography, *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb out of Darkness,* shows that the opposite of fear is compassion. Armstrong's insight is that fear locks us up in the cell of self and the only way out is by learning compassion, that is, losing one's self in living for others.

Armstrong's assessment of her early life is characteristically blunt: everything she touched – but especially those things she treasured most – turned to ashes. Halfway though the book, I take an inventory of the wreckage. Not even 30 years old, Armstrong had failed as a Roman Catholic nun, got an undergraduate degree at Oxford University but failed her PhD, developed a form of anorexia, had entered a psychiatric hospital three times, and tried to commit suicide once. Furthermore, fainting spells and episodes of total psychological disorientation undermined her confidence in the soundness of her mind. Later she would lose her job as a teacher, turn to television writing, and fail at that.

Then, through a series of coincidences, each one precipitated by some professional disaster, fiasco, or failure, she turns to writing. And writing saves her. It becomes her staircase out of chaos and despair. It is her amazing grace.

Armstrong is best known as the author of the successful 1993 book, *A History of God.* Since 1991, she has published a string of popular books on what Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share, including notions of God, the holy city Jerusalem, and the Book of Genesis. She also has written books on religious fundamentalism, holy wars, and crusades. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, governments, think-tanks, and universities have sought her out to speak on Islam and its relationship with the West.

Armstrong has also become an informal "spiritual director" to a good many readers who long for what she calls "a more intense existence shot through with transcendent meaning," but who are fed up with the dogmatism, chauvinism, and legalism of their churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Armstrong had written up her convent experiences in a 1981 book, *Through the Narrow Gate.* More than 20 years later, she notes – with some bemusement – that her life has come full circle. *The Spiral Staircase* begins with her entry into the convent to lead a life of solitary spirituality, celibacy, and service to others. She leaves the convent seven years later and loses her faith. Now, she finds herself living the solitary life of a religious scholar who teaches at a Jewish seminary. She is, like a nun, unmarried, unattached, and deeply committed to the spiritual life. And so her life, like a spiral staircase, turns and turns around its axis, God.

Despite the similarities, everything has changed. A spiral staircase goes round and round but it also goes up and Armstrong ascends from ego-centrism to compassion and from fear to love.

One need only look at Armstrong at the beginning of *The Spiral Staircase* as she enters the convent at the improbable age of 17. While she sees this as the beginning of a great spiritual adventure, her whole self is oriented toward meeting the rigorous standards set by the sisters who, according to monastic discipline, stand in for God. She fears that she is not lovable enough, good-looking enough, smart enough, strong enough, or holy enough. In sum, she fears that she herself is not enough.

Compounding her own problems is the fact that Armstrong is one of the last nuns to be trained in the old system just as the Second Vatican Council was turning Catholicism on its head. The rigorous discipline, really a program designed to break down the ego, actually makes Armstrong more self-centred and fearful. She complains that she simply cannot experience God. She cannot even pray.

Armstrong leaves the convent and crashes through a series of disasters as she tries to make a life for herself. When she does not fail, others fail her. The nuns impose pointless and cruel disciplines upon her. An external examiner for her PhD at Oxford peevishly vetoes her thesis because he disagrees with her question. In turn, Oxford, which approved her question in the first place, refuses to address the injustice lest the sanctity of its doctorate be called into question. Later, several psychiatrists misdiagnose the temporal lobe epilepsy responsible for her episodes of fainting and psychological disorientation as a psychosomatic illness.

Finally, she becomes a writer, and through writing she is released from fear. The turning point comes when, in 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini issues a *fatwa* condemning Salman Rushdie to death for his portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad in *The Satanic Verses.* With growing horror, Armstrong, who had just published a book on the Christian crusades against Islam, watched the rhetoric of the British intelligentsia move from a denunciation of fundamentalism to a condemnation of Islam itself. Some of the articles repeated the old crusading prejudices and Christian islamophobic myths of centuries past. Moved by compassion for the British Muslim community she wrote a biography of Muhammad. Armstrong claims that, unlike her earlier work of religious biography, which she now sees as self-centred and merely clever, *Muhammad* was written without ego. She learned to write for others.

In fact, religious writing became her prayer life. In scholarship and writing for others, she discovered that which she could not learn in the convent: one meets God only in transcending one's self by living for others. Compassion is the first religious act.

Armstrong concludes that compassion is the core of all religious traditions. Doctrines are secondary; behaviour is primary. Religion, she argues, is not about belief as much as it is about acting in ways that change us, that make us more than we were before. As she changes her behaviour, writing for the good of others instead of writing to fill the void that fear had carved in her soul, she learns to love. Through love, she is released from fear and self-centredness. The vicious circle of neurosis becomes the virtuous circle of spiritual growth, a spiral upwards.

Armstrong's attitude towards doctrine means that she can draw on the spiritual wisdom traditions of the West as well as Buddhism. Consequently, this book will appeal to spiritually minded seekers whether or not they are engaged in a religious community. In fact, non-believers can read this book and learn from its practical and psychological wisdom.

Readers of *The Ecumenist* and others interested in critical theology will certainly appreciate Armstrong's emphasis on praxis, compassion, and interfaith dialogue. However, they might also wish that Armstrong thought through the political and social implications of her religious insights. If Armstrong is right that spiritual development represents a journey from self-centredness to compassion (and I think she is), one can rightly ask what her response is to our dominant economic, political, and social structures founded on an obsessive individualism defined largely in terms of *homo oeconomicus,* the "rational" actor who seeks constantly to increase his or her material benefits. From this perspective, "others" are defined as essentially competitors, people to be feared, competed with, and ultimately, defeated. Rabbi Michael Lerner, of the journal *Tikkun,* frequently addresses this question (see www.tikkun.org) and finds the capitalist system as it is now defined as fundamentally incompatible with a spirituality of compassion and solidarity. Compassion, yes, he argues, but a preferential compassion for the poor first.

Armstrong herself understands this point. As director of the St. Jerome's Centre for Catholic Experience, I had the pleasure of dining with her before her public talk to some 400 people. As one would guess from her book, Armstrong is somewhat shy but very intelligent, gracious, and generous. While we discussed a number of issues, it was only the topic of Tony Blair's betrayal of Labour Party principles and his support of George W. Bush's war on Iraq that ignited her indignation and passion. Her arguments were passionate and, as one would guess, compassionate – especially towards the poor, those overlooked by the policies of the New Labour revolution, and the Iraqi people. However, this compassion for the victims of empire does not receive the treatment it deserves in the pages of *The Spiral Staircase.*

One senses that Armstrong has not completed her spiritual journey until she connects her profound insights on human nature to the broader issues of social injustice, the politics of empire, racism, and xenophobia, and gender inequality. Without that grounding, her work can slide into a bourgeois preoccupation with self. Many people will misread *The Spiral Staircase* as a spiritual self-help book that preaches compassion as "technique" of self-fulfillment. This interpretation does not do justice to the book, but Armstrong's refusal to address the question leaves her open to such a reading.

These themes, latent in *The Spiral Staircase*, deserve a rigorous and intelligent treatment. That Armstrong is capable of such a treatment, there is no doubt.

This is a book for those who believe that the opposite of fear can be compassion and that, to be authentically ourselves, we must live for others.

David Seljak

David Seljak is editor of *The Ecumenist.* He is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo, Ontario. He is also director of the St. Jerome's Centre for Catholic Experience. An abridged version of this review appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen.*

Peace and the Third Wave of Human Rights

Douglas Roche, *The Human Right to Peace*. Ottawa: Novalis, 2003, 271 pp. $24.95

Even though I had met Douglas Roche, Canada's renowned "peace and human security Senator," and had experienced him as an outspoken yet modest man, I will confess to being pleasantly surprised at the extent of the savvy and vision of this well-informed, lucid, and sagacious author. Senator Roche has spent over thirty years of his political life in various capacities, such as the Chair of the UN Disarmament Committee, Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, and Chair of Canadian Pugwash. This experience gives him a vantage point from which to describe the emergence of a "third-generation" human right to peace, and to explain its unparalleled significance.

At the heart of this instructive and inspiring little book is the argument that "peace" is a universal third-generation human right, the product of the achievements of prior waves of human rights achievements as well as the modern interconnectedness of all states. The right to peace is unlike first-generation rights such as "the right to liberty and equality," which are extracted from, or defined in relation to, the sovereign state alone. Second-generation rights like those to education and health services – what are more generally called "economic, cultural, and social rights" – are also devised in relation to the state, its agencies, and fellow citizens. Only globalization makes possible the universal right of peace.

This innovative conception of rights, according to Roche, "addresses a whole swath of new and interconnected challenges." It is an essential right because the horrendous atrocities of wars, genocide, environmental devastation, world-wide hunger, displacement, disease, water shortages, and the threat of nuclear annihilation make human living deplorable or near impossible for the vast majority in the modern global context. Without peace, it is now clear, the guarantee of past rights alone is a cruel parody of justice.

The value of Roche's book lies not just in its cogent argument for peace as a fundamental right. The book is also a succinct history of 20th-century imperialism, globalization, and war, with particular attention given to the events of September 11, 2001, the war in Afghanistan, and the Iraq conflict. Moreover, it is a careful documentation of the slow but steady work of the United Nations in addressing violence, providing a detailed chronology of UN declarations and achievements.

Those who support the attention to education and action for a world fit for children promoted by the Canadian Peace Initiative (see www.peace.ca) and the Hague Appeal for Peace (see www.hagueappeal.org) will find an exciting endorsement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "The Convention," Roche observes, "is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. It uniquely places children at the forefront in the quest for the universal application of human rights." Here we see a commitment by every country in the world – except the USA and Somalia – to ensure standards for children's health, education, and protection against abuse. Protocols developed in 2002 condemned such heinous practices as child soldiering, the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

Roche's chapters on religion and inter-faith dialogue, peace education, and civil society constitute a blueprint for concerted action and peaceful living. For those who care deeply about the values and commitments which grow from a considered faith position, Roche argues forcefully for a continuation of those dialogues that have highlighted agreement on human decency, justice, the rights of children, and freedom. Himself the recipient of a Papal Medal for his work in disarmament, Roche challenges religious institutions to take the first step in humility and service towards engaging the global secular culture. He argues that secular societies, and especially the United Nations, have often attempted to implement the visions of justice and co-operation that the world's faiths have held sacred. For Roche, reconciliation is the highest form of dialogue. The religious ethic that stresses the unity of the human family "has moved from being a kind of abstract, if vaguely interesting, idea to an issue of pressing daily political concern." Such issues as health, education, the environment, crime, terrorism, and corporate globalization now touch the life of every

human being. In this respect, the human family shares a single destiny.

In his concluding two chapters, Roche teaches us all that peace education arises in the context of peace as a universal human right. Peace education is a "weapon" to be employed by all citizens everywhere in the task of replacing a culture of violence and war – the culture which presumes violence and war are acceptable means of achieving security – with a culture of peace.

In his chapter on civil society, Roche documents the impressive growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their success stories in influencing sovereign states and the activities of the United Nations. Increasingly, NGOs are often more knowledgeable than government sources. They are capable of employing new technologies like the Internet and e-mail to establish worldwide constituencies for a culture of peace. They are capable of working with governments – as the "Ottawa Process" of the Land Mines Treaty and the work with governments to establish the International Criminal Court demonstrate. Moreover, they were able to work without, or around, sovereign states in amassing support in the Hague Appeal for Peace and for the protests against the recent war in Iraq.

In the new civil societies, consisting largely of NGOs, there is an increased understanding of what is required to abolish the irrationality of war and the insanity of weapons that can destroy all human life and culture. The new directions reinforce democratic experience and often enable end-runs around recalcitrant governments and their backward-looking policies. This civil society is made possible by the immediate availability of alternative information, made possible by the Internet, as well as the highly developed skills of citizens and NGOs in communicating a new set of values, fueled by the best of age-old religious visions.

Doug Roche's *The Human Right to Peace* is an illuminating and instructive book that I will add to the required reading list for my courses in peace and conflict studies, socio-economic development, and political change. His masterful collection of the important UN documents and his appendix of indispensable Web sites have opened up new priorities in my personal reading practices. We owe a debt of gratitude to Senator Douglas Roche for providing a notion of peace that motivates change in everyday living. It is a portrait with teeth.

Larry Fisk

Larry J. Fisk is a Professor Emeritus of Political Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. He now lives and teaches in Calgary, Alberta. His latest book is *Patterns of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, edited with John Schellenberg (Broadview Press, 2000).

The Ecumenist: A Journal of Theology, Culture, and Society is published quarterly by Novalis-Saint Paul University and is © Novalis 2004.

Editor: David Seljak – **Editor Emeritus:** Gregory Baum – **Contributing editors:** M. Shawn Copeland, Lee Cormie, Charles Curran, Virgilio Elizondo, Scott Kline, Marilyn Legge, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Harold Wells – **Design:** Gilles Lépine – **Layout:** Richard Proulx – **Copyeditor and Proofreader:** Nancy Keyes

Subscriptions: $15 (postage and taxes included). **To order:** Periodicals Dept., Novalis, 49 Front St. E., 2nd Floor, Toronto ON M5E 1B3

Tel: 1-800-387-7164 ext. 223 or (416) 363-3303 ext. 223 Fax: (416) 363-9409

ISSN: 0013-080X

Address editorial correspondence to: Novalis, Saint Paul University, 223 Main St., Ottawa ON K1S 1C4

Printed in Canada

NOVALIS

POSTES CANADA CANADA POST
Port payé Postage paid
Poste-publications Publications Mail
40063645