



Muslim-Christian Trusteeship of the Earth: What Jesus Can Contribute

by *David Johnston*

University of Pennsylvania and St. Joseph's University, USA
jodavid@sas.upenn.edu

In this task, I begin with two assumptions. The first deals with the environmental dimension of the challenge facing our two communities. This human trusteeship of creation is about faithful management of the earth's resources, so as to guarantee that human activities do not jeopardize the wellbeing of future generations, nor derail the integrity of the earth itself. Second, this divine mandate imposes an ethic of solidarity upon the human race as a whole. From the Christian perspective we shall begin by exploring the genesis of human creation in God's image and the imperative to rule over all creation as God's trustee; whilst we explore the Islamic approach with the notion of *tawhid* – stating that the oneness of God as Creator calls for both the unity of humankind and of creation in its entirety – followed by the Qur'anic teaching on the *khilafat al-insan* (trusteeship of humanity).¹ Following these key Islamic concepts, one can point to a myriad of passages in both the Qur'an, and Sunna (the perfect

example of the Prophet, as distilled by an authoritative collection of sayings, or 'hadiths', about his words and deeds) that impel humans to deal with one another with respect, justice and compassion. The discussion will move on to emphasize the need to care for the poor, especially in the light of today's shocking inequalities around the globe, which takes us into the realm of social justice and in particular the inequality that manifests in sociopolitical and economic structures, taking away the poor's rights and imprisoning them in suffering.

Yet, having spelled out those two assumptions, environmental concern and social justice, I will concentrate here on a third area – that of peace-building. All three areas are essential and intimately connected, for in the same way that humanity can only flourish with clean air, pure water, healthy food and the basic necessities of shelter, education and employment opportunities, none of this can be experienced in a society torn by violent

conflict. Peace, then, is a necessary condition for human wellbeing. The God-mandated trusteeship of humanity must focus on all three of these aspects of human life.

After a brief survey of some international efforts to highlight a “global ethic,” I will summarize a recent development in Islamic legal circles that brings ethics to the foreground, following which I will embark on my central argument about Jesus.

Trusteeship of Creation and a Global Ethic

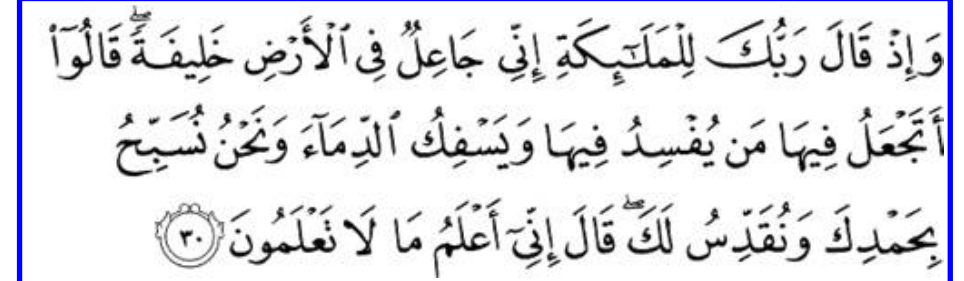
Nothing is more pressing in a time when the earth itself is reeling from the effects of man-made pollution, global warming, and the threat of nuclear warfare, than for people of faith to band together on the basis of shared values to promote answers and solutions for all to ponder.² A 1987 report for the World Commission on Environment and Development, entitled “Our Common Future,” sounded the alarm in these terms:

The Earth is one but the world is not. We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others. Some consume the Earth's resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Others, many more in number, consume far too little and live with the prospect of hunger, squalor, disease, and early death.³

The fundamental problem, then, is not just environmental degradation, but the grievous disparities between

the haves and have-nots of this world. According to a February 2012 report by the World Bank, twenty-two percent of the developing world live in extreme poverty (on less than \$1.25 a day) and another forty-three percent live on less than \$2 a day.⁴ That represents well over half of humanity that struggle to even feed its children. Happily, progress is being made and the UN Millennium Development Goals, at least in certain countries, seem to be on target to be reached by 2015.⁵ Yet much work remains to be done, and this is where religious people can be of great service - particularly the Muslim and Christian communities, which alone represent close to four billion people.

The Qur'an states in several places that God created humanity as his trustees – stewards or deputies – on earth. Both Adam and David are referred to as God's *khalifa* or trustee (Q. 2:30; 38:26). Adam, in his eminence as first man, represents the human race as a whole; so in this sense all people are called to care for one another and the earth as God's faithful stewards.⁶ In addition, we find seven instances of *khalifa* in the plural, such as in the following verse: “It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that he may try you in the gifts He hath given you” (Q. 6:165). The addressees in the context are not limited to any group in particular; most likely the “you” refers to humanity in general. In this translation by Yusuf Ali, the plural expression *khala'if al-ard* is rendered “agents, inheritors of the earth.”



We find an interesting parallel to this expression in the Beatitudes (or “Blessings”) of Jesus: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mat. 5: 5). The meek are those who are humble and who by faith entrust their fate to God, refusing to resort to violence in order to vindicate their cause. As I will argue later in this paper, this is also a statement about the end times when God's kingdom has fully vanquished the kingdom of Satan and the earth and all its creatures are fully redeemed from the curse placed on them caused by human rebellion (Rom. 8:18-23). Yet, even in the interim while we patiently await the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev. 21:1), humanity is still the crown of God's creation - God's trustees made in his image - mandated to “be fruitful and multiply,” and to “fill the earth and govern it” (Gen. 1: 28).

It is not just Muslims and Christians, however, but people of all faiths that share a common ethic of care for the earth, and its poorest and most vulnerable inhabitants. Renowned Catholic scholar Hans Küng was one of the organizers of the first Parliament of the World's Religions, held in 1993.⁷ He drafted a pre-conference declaration that was thoroughly discussed throughout the assembly and subsequently ratified at

the end by virtually all the participants, with only slight modifications. Building on the groundwork provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the document argues for an expansion of the human rights idea in the direction of an ethic, that is “the full realization of the intrinsic dignity of the human person, the inalienable freedom and equality of all humans, and the necessary solidarity and interdependence of all humans with each other.”⁸

Three years later, Küng followed up on this topic with a book of his own. These three points seem to best summarize his argument about the need for a global ethic:

1. Religious traditions all claim to affirm truth about the nature of the world and the deeper spiritual realities beyond it. Yet right belief must always be joined to righteous living, and here all traditions in practice have fallen short of their ideals. This interfaith conversation, says Küng, must begin with each community taking “a critical look at one's own history of past failure and guilt.”⁹

2. Long before Western Enlightenment philosophy posited the autonomous human being: each tradition proclaimed, in one form or

another, the inherent and inalienable worth of every human person.¹⁰

3. The “Golden Rule” is an ethical concept recognized universally:

“We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception. We must have patience and acceptance. We must be able to forgive, learning from the past by never allowing ourselves to be enslaved by memories of hate. Opening our hearts to one another, we must sink our narrow differences for the cause of world community, practicing a culture of solidarity and relatedness.”¹¹

Before turning to the teaching of Jesus on this issue, I will briefly comment on the centrality of this common ethic of respect for human life and its welfare in the Muslim tradition.

Khilafa, Maslaha and the Objectives of Shari’a

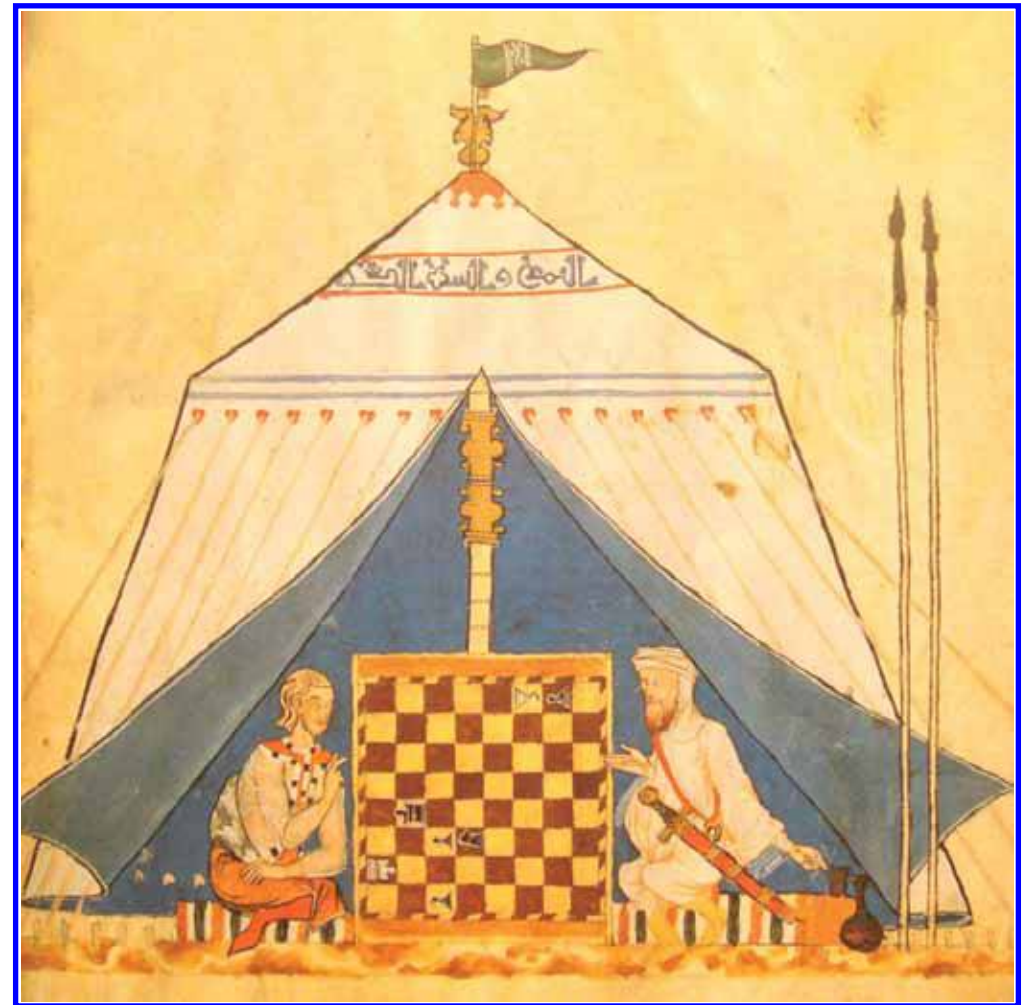
In the previous section I quoted from the Qur’an regarding the trusteeship of humanity (*khilafat al-insan*). Although a widespread concept in contemporary Muslim discourse, it still lacks the full weight of Islamic authority and authenticity because it is somehow not tied to Islam’s legal tradition. At the core of Islamic belief is the conviction that God has provided a blueprint for humanity’s successful living in this world, and a bridge to Paradise in the next. The path leading to life and happiness writ large is summarized by one word, Shari’a.

In the words of American Shi’i scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

“To speak of Islam on the level of individual practice and social norms is to speak of the *shari’ah*, which has provided over the centuries guidelines for those who have wanted or wish today to live according to God’s Will in its Islamic form. When we hear in the Lord’s Prayer uttered by Christ “Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” for the Muslim His Will is expressed in the *shari’ah*, and to live according to this Will on earth, first of all, is to practice the injunctions of the Divine Law.”¹²

The comparison Nasr makes with the prayer Jesus taught his disciples is an apt one. No practicing Muslim of any school of thought would question the centrality of the Shari’a in his or her life – whether as a source for the central rituals of the faith (the “Five Pillars”), or as injunctions regulating family and social life more widely. Though the study of ethics as a philosophical discipline had its devotees in the classical period, it remained the province of elite intellectuals. There is no doubt important theological literature in classical Islam (*‘ilm al-kalam, usul al-din*), but all the “theologians” were first and foremost legal scholars. The scholars of the Islamic sciences (*ulama*) were primarily jurists, who also had to be well versed in Qur’anic interpretation and in Hadith (prophetic narratives) studies.

What I have found fascinating in my own research is how law and ethics have dramatically converged in the last thirty years or so, with widespread



attention paid to the “Objectives of Shari’a” (*maqasid al-shari’a*) in Muslim legal circles and beyond.¹³ Early on in the discipline of Islamic legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*), it was the Maliki school of jurisprudence that went beyond the accepted four sources of the law (Qur’an, Sunna, *qiyas*, or analogy, and *ijma’*, or consensus) and made use of *istislah*, or the search for public benefit (*maslaha*). However, this was controversial because jurists feared that resorting to such “rational” legal

tools would be a betrayal of God’s will as revealed in the Qur’an. This led to a theological and philosophical argument about the relative validity of reason and revelation. The consensus as expressed in the dominant Sunni school (Ash’arism) was that human beings cannot truly know right from wrong apart from God’s revealed Word, the Qur’an, and to a slightly lesser extent, the Sunna (the example of the prophet).

Still, beginning with al-Ghazali in the 12th century C.E. who laid out the five main purposes of God's Shari'a (preservation of religion, life, reason, progeny and property), we witness a growing confidence among Muslim scholars in humanity's God-given ability to discern the common good (*maslaha*). Al-Shatibi, the Maliki jurist from Granada in the 14th century C.E., gave this purpose-based legal approach its classical expression in a four-volume work, "The Areas of Agreement on the Roots of Shari'a" (*al-Muwafaqat fi usul al-Shari'a*). Today there is a flourishing literature on this approach and at least one institute has been established around this idea – the Center for the Study of the Purposes of the Islamic Shari'a in Cairo.

I have argued elsewhere that this focus on the Shari'a's objectives means a widening of legal interest, from strictly the words of the sacred texts to the ethical values God placed behind them for people to discover and pursue in new and evolving contexts.¹⁴ The global reality of the twenty-first century is vastly different from the world that emerged at the end of World War II, let alone the world of al-Shatibi some six centuries ago.

Despite these differences, if you put together the renewed interest in the purpose of Shari'a, the abundant Islamic interest in the human person as God's trustee on earth (regardless of race or creed), and the Qur'anic teachings about Isa bin Maryam,¹⁵ or Jesus son of Mary, then you have some fascinating convergences that I wish to highlight for the rest of this essay.

What Jesus Can Contribute to a Muslim-Christian Trusteeship of Peace

According to the Christian sources, a few days before his crucifixion, Jesus rode toward Jerusalem on a donkey with the crowds hailing him as "the king who comes in the name of the Lord" and praising God, shouting "Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!" This is the occasion Christians celebrate as Palm Sunday. In Luke's gospel, Jesus, now approaching the city's gate, begins to weep. He laments, "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls . . . Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation" (Luke 19:42-4 NLT).¹⁶

Peacebuilding, as a practice, is at the core of both Christian and Islamic teaching.¹⁷ In the Christian tradition, Jesus weeps over his people's rejection of him, the "Prince of Peace" (one of the messianic titles in the book of Isaiah, verse 9:6). Glen H. Stassen, a noted Christian ethicist and activist, authored the groundbreaking book, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*.¹⁸ Six years later, his seven steps of "just peacemaking" became "ten practices for abolishing war" in a book he edited as the product of a cooperative work among thirty scholars, including Christian ethicists, conflict resolution

practitioners, experts in economics and international relations.¹⁹

Stassen's main contention has been that the two traditional ethical paradigms for handling war and peace – the just war theory and pacifism – end up in a stalemate when scholars/practitioners tackle specific conflicts. What is needed, he argues, is "to define and implement practices that prevent violent conflict and create peace."²⁰ Each of those ten practices, though grounded from a Christian perspective in the teaching of Jesus, are also concrete practices that have been implemented in recent history and have led to effective conflict resolution and a reduction of violence.²¹ It is precisely this notion of "transforming initiative" that Stassen finds in Jesus' teaching and practice.

The traditional interpretation was that the Sermon on the Mount²² should be read in dyads – that is, two-part structures such as: "you heard it was taught . . .," followed by, "but I tell you . . ." This leads to an overall impression that Jesus taught impossibly high ideals, toward which we should aim, of course; but which are not entirely achievable in practice. Stassen and his former student, David P. Gushee, in their collaborative work, *Kingdom Ethics*, show that the Sermon on the Mount is in fact composed of fourteen triads. These triads are formed by the concept of "traditional righteousness," followed by the "vicious cycle" (human moral efforts that usually lead to an impasse), which leads to a "transforming initiative" that Jesus offers to lead people out of their moral quandary and failure.²³



The passage I chose to examine here is one that is misunderstood by many Christians and Muslims. Yet it represents the heart of what Jesus teaches about conflict resolution. Here is the triad, as set out by Stassen and Gushee:

Traditional Righteousness:

Mat. 5:38: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'"

Vicious Cycle:

Mat. 5:39: "But I say to you, do not retaliate revengefully by evil means."²⁴

Transforming Initiative:

Mat. 5:40-42: "But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, give your coat as well;²⁵ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse one who would borrow from you."

The vicious cycle naturally occurs when the law of the talion ("eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth") is applied. This proportional meting out of justice, originally articulated in Babylonian law, is fair on one level, but can easily lead to resentment, growing tension between parties, and eventually to retaliatory strikes.²⁶ Blood feuds, as is well known, can last for generations. For that reason Islamic law provided the option for the aggrieved party to receive a money payment in compensation for the death. Yet Jesus goes beyond this.²⁷

In the above, Jesus offers four examples of "transformative initia-



tives". This type of initiative is the obvious source for Martin Luther King's "nonviolent direct action." As Stassen and Gushee put it, these initiatives are all nonviolent and activist, that is they initiate actions that oppose injustice, "to stand up for human dignity and to invite to reconciliation."²⁸ This is the meaning of "turning the other cheek":

"Turning the other cheek has been misunderstood in Western culture that thought there were only two alternatives – violence or passivity. But since Gandhi and King, we can appreciate Jesus' teaching better. In Jesus' culture, 'to be struck on the right cheek was to be given a hostile, back-handed insult' with the back of the right hand. In that culture, it was forbidden to touch or strike anyone with the left hand; the left hand was for dirty things.²⁹ To turn the other cheek was to surprise the insulter, saying, nonviolently, 'you are treating me as an unequal, but I need to be treated as an equal.' Jesus is saying: if you are slapped on the cheek of inferiority, turn the cheek of equal dignity."³⁰

So the individual turning the other cheek is resisting evil, but doing so in a nonviolent way. The same goes for

the giving of the coat, in the previous verses, when Jesus tells the crowd that the person sued by an opponent had better come to terms with him or her on the way to court (v. 40). Listen to your opponent's perspective and see if there's a way you can find a compromise. So listening, conversing, and seeking to reconcile are at the heart of conflict resolution.

Yet more is at stake here. For the Jewish hearer of the time, who was most likely poor and battered by the oppressive practices of the rich, this is an issue of justice. According to the Law of Moses (Exodus 22:25-27; Deut. 24:10-13), a rich man lending something to a poor man may take his coat as a guarantee, but must give it back before sundown in case he needs it to keep warm at night. But here the creditor sees a loophole: since he has to give back the coat at sundown, better to ask for his shirt until he is paid back, maybe days later. The initiative Jesus is proposing here is funny and radical at the same time: to give one's coat after giving one's shirt means standing naked in court. In a theatrical gesture bound to shock the public, the poor man seizes the initiative. By offering his coat he exposes the rich man's greed and pours ridicule upon him, while giving him the opportunity to change his mind, and, hopefully to repent from his wicked ways.

Jesus' next initiative brings up a thorny political issue. Offering to escort a Roman soldier for a second mile would mean for a Jew to initiate kindness toward a hated symbol of the Roman occupation. Leaving politics aside – the

individual soldier is just a pawn in an imperial chess game anyway – it is to treat the soldier as a fellow human being, and even more than that: to offer him something he does not deserve. So the disciple of Jesus is called to surprise him, catch him "off guard," so that while walking together a second mile a conversation might develop and – who knows? – a friendship might begin.

The fourth initiative, giving to the one who begs, has two contexts that must be brought into view. First, there is the economic context of Jesus' teaching. Most of Jesus' three years of ministry were in Galilee, where the population had become severely impoverished at the time. Unjust taxes had been ascribed on to a mostly rural population that barely survived at a subsistence level. They had to pay Roman taxes – note how often tax collectors appear in the gospels – and Jewish taxes imposed by the rich aristocracy of Jerusalem, who by then had been able to repossess most of the land in Galilee, leaving much of the population tenant farmers or even day laborers.³¹ The only possible welfare system here is almsgiving – so give to beggars, Jesus commands, as it is a means of justice.

The second context is Jesus' teaching as a whole, which is focused on the coming of God's kingdom in his person. The very first message that Jesus preaches is, "The time promised by God has come at last! The Kingdom of God is near! Repent your sins and believe in the Good News!" (Mark 1:15). Then, as I said earlier, in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount

we read the eight “Beatitudes,” or the blessings God bestows upon the “poor in spirit,” those who mourn, who are humble, merciful and pure in heart; and upon those who thirst for justice, who work for peace, and who are persecuted for doing what is right (Mat. 5:3-10). Just like bookends holding precious books on a shelf, the first and last Beatitude promise the greatest reward for this category of people: “... for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”

What is the Kingdom of God? Jesus clearly saw himself as fulfilling what the previous prophets all announced – the coming of Messiah, the promised king, and with him the age of justice, peace and righteousness. In his preaching Jesus quoted above all from the prophet Isaiah. Hence, at the beginning of his ministry, while visiting his home village of Nazareth on the Sabbath, a Rabbi hands him the scroll of Isaiah from which Jesus chooses to read this passage:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
For he has anointed me to preach
Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that
captives will be released,
That the blind will see,
That the oppressed will be free,
And that the time of the Lord has
come” (Luke 4:18-19).

Then we read, “He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them, ‘The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!’ This passage only makes sense

when seen through the double lens of the coming of the messianic age (when the Messiah returns to usher in the Kingdom of God). Most commentators believe that the Biblical phrase “the time of the Lord has come” refers to the fiftieth year in the Jewish calendar, which follows seven cycles of seven years. Every seventh year the Jews, the majority of whom were farmers and shepherders, were to let the land fallow (Leviticus 25:1-7). That next year the land should rest, just as God at Creation rested the seventh day, and just as his people are to rest the seventh day of each week, the Sabbath. That seventh year too all debts incurred in the previous years had to be forgiven (Deuteronomy 15:1-11). Both of those rules applied to the forty-ninth year, the Year of Jubilee, when the land must rest and all debts be cancelled. In addition, any land acquired since the previous Year of Jubilee must revert to the previous owner (Leviticus 25:8-22).

The intent of these laws – or the objective of this Hebrew Shari’a, one might say – was God’s desire to promote and preserve social justice. It was to insure that no poor “underclass” would develop and with it a vicious cycle of poverty for a growing number of people. Rather, the remission of debts and the return of properties to the original owner every fifty years guaranteed that those impoverished by some adverse circumstances could begin to climb back up to prosperity once again. Such rules also showcase God’s concern for social equality and his initiative to prevent the forming of oppressive monopolies.

From the Christian perspective, as we have seen from Jesus’ preaching about the coming of God’s Kingdom in his person, social justice and peace making are signs of the in-breaking of this Kingdom. One of the Beatitudes reads, “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God” (Mat. 5:9). Therefore, since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we are living in the time in between – that is, the interim period between the first coming of Jesus when his reign was inaugurated, and his second coming, which will usher in his everlasting Kingdom of peace and righteousness.

The difference in worldviews between Muslims and Christians need not deter them from working together to make a more just and peaceful world. Representing as they do more than half of the world’s population, their cooperation represents a dramatic rejection of a long history of animosity and bitterness. It could also reenergize interfaith cooperation on a wider scale – a movement that has been gathering momentum of late. The recent highlighting of the Shari’a’s objectives in the Muslim community also has the potential of galvanizing a much broader sweep of Muslims and schools of thought, to embrace on their own terms what others are calling a “global ethic.” If the Arab Spring has succeeded in bringing to power new political elites who care both about their faith and social justice, we might be entering a new phase in which Arab Muslims engage more seriously in issues that concern all of humanity – curbing

global warming, finding sustainable ways to grow their economies, while finding ways to empower the poor in the process and investing more creative energy in working for peace.

This is where I propose that Jesus’ teaching on transforming initiatives is so relevant to such an alliance between Christians and Muslims. For the most part, the 2011 protests in the Arab world were acts of “nonviolent direct action” aimed at changing the oppressive status quo. The fact that they ultimately led to violence in Libya, Syria, and Yemen only shows that each context is different and that strong leadership is hard to find. What is more, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative for peace with Israel was a bold and visionary step that can still make a difference today. One can also witness much interfaith activity in North America involving Muslims and Christians, like Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Core³² and many other such projects.

Beyond this list of initiatives, I have already underscored the crucial work done by Glen Stassen and his colleagues who developed the model of “just peacemaking.” What was initially a Christian/secular initiative is now an interfaith one as well. In 2008, the United States Institute of Peace published the Special Report, “Abrahamic Alternatives to War: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives on Just Peacemaking”³³, edited by Susan Thistlethwaite and Glen Stassen. The conversation continued with the production of book-length project, *Interfaith Just Peacemaking*.³⁴

The nonviolent principles of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr, took their inspiration from Jesus.³⁵ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, in his book on nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam, references Martin Luther King's seminal article in 1957, "Nonviolence and Racial Justice,"³⁶ and the work of Gandhi to define nonviolence:

"Nonviolence is a set of attitudes, perceptions, and actions intended to persuade people on the other side to change their opinions, perceptions, and actions. Nonviolence uses peaceful means to achieve peaceful outcomes. Nonviolence means that actors do not violently retaliate against the actions of their opponents. Instead, they absorb anger and damage while sending a steadfast message of patience and an insistence on overcoming injustice."³⁷

Abu-Nimer then summarizes the five principles of nonviolence:

1. "It is non-aggressive physical, but dynamically aggressive spirituality."
2. "It does not seek to humiliate the opponent" but to persuade the opponent to change through new understanding and awareness of moral

shame so as to reconstruct the other's "beloved communities."

3. "It is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who are caught in these forces."

4. Nonviolence seeks to avoid not only "external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit."

5. Nonviolence is "based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice."³⁸

If Christians and Muslims are to take seriously their God-given calling to be his trustees on earth, then they will have to find nonviolent, yet bold and courageous ways to confront the forces of evil that stir up violence and conflict. They must be agents of peace in a conflict-ridden world. Even the other great challenges that confront humanity today - such as global warming, pollution and the scandalous gap between rich and poor - cannot be faced without some creative transforming initiatives at the grassroots. As they work together, Muslims and Christians will learn from each other, drawing from the Qur'an, Sunna and Christian Sources.

Notes

- 1 Among many possible sources, see Mawil Izzi Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (Cambridge: Lutherworth, 2000). See also the forthcoming issue of *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture and Ecology* 11:2 (2012) entirely devoted to Islam and ecology. Anna M. Gade and David L. Johnston are guest co-editors. Johnston's contribution is entitled, "Intra-Muslim Debates on Ecology: Is Shari'a Still Relevant?"
- 2 For this author's views on religion and ecology, specifically the role Muslims and Christians can play in order to mitigate global warming, see this section of his website: <http://www.humantrustees.org/blogs/faith-and-ecology>.
- 3 This report is also known as the Brundtland Report after Gro Harlem Brundtland who chaired the commission during the four years it took to draft this report. Brundtland is a Norwegian woman, physician and scientist, who for ten years was also Norway's Prime Minister. Available in pdf form at: <http://www.earthsummit2012.org/>

[historical-documents/the-brundtland-report-our-common-future](http://www.earthsummit2012.org/historical-documents/the-brundtland-report-our-common-future).

- 4 For this, see on the World Bank's website, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23130032~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>.
- 5 For more information, see the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) website, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html>.
- 6 Much has been written about this in recent years, but for the most complete survey of Qur'anic commentary on this from the classical period to today, see the author's *Earth, Empire and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation* (London: Equinox, 2010), chapters 6-9.
- 7 This assembly was actually the second Parliament of the World Religions, as the first took place in 1893. The originators this time wanted to capitalize on the hundredth anniversary of the first gathering, also in Chicago. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions was formed in 1988 and has organized four more global events every five years since then. Brussels will host the next session in 2014. For more details, see online at <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/>.
- 8 Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds. *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York and London: Continuum, 1993), p. 20.
- 9 *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York and London: Continuum, 1996), p. 81.
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 90.
- 11 Küng and Kuschel, *A Global Ethic*, p. 15.
- 12 *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), p. 119.
- 13 For more details, see two of the author's articles, "A Turn in the Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Twentieth Century *Usul al-Fiqh*" in *Islamic Law and Society* 11, 2 (2004), pp. 233-82; and "*Maqasid al-Shari'a*: Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Muslim Theologies of Human Rights," *Die Welt des Islams* 47, 2 (2007), pp. 1-39.
- 14 See note 14.
- 15 There is too much material to mention here – 93 verses in all that mention Jesus. In summary form, the Qur'an affirms that Jesus was born of Mary (Sura 19 is named after her); she gave birth to Jesus a virgin (3:47; 19:20-21); he was given "clear signs" and God "strengthened him with the Holy Spirit" (2:87); by God's leave he cured the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind and raised the dead (5:110); he is a "word" God "cast upon Mary, and a spirit from him" (4:171); eleven times he is given the title "Messiah"; he is a prophet of God, the one directly preceding Muhammad (33:7; 57:26, and elsewhere). All this and more is in parallel to the biblical gospels.
- 16 I usually use the New Living Translation (NLT), as it reflects the best of recent scholarship while attempting to reproduce as much as possible the original impact the text would have made on its hearers. This is called a "dynamic equivalent" translation. It is still a "translation," not a "paraphrase."
- 17 The best book on peace and nonviolence from a Muslim perspective is still Mohammed Abu-Nimer's *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003). See also Mary Saad Assel, *25 Icons of Peace in the Qur'an* (New York and Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, Inc., 2009).
- 18 Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- 19 *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998). On his [justpeacemaking.org](http://www.justpeacemaking.org) website Stassen lists the

ten practices under three headings: a) peacemaking initiatives (support nonviolent direct action; take independent initiative to reduce threat; use cooperative conflict resolution; acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness); b) justice (advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty; foster just and sustainable economic development); c) love and community (work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system; strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights; reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade; encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations).

20 *Ibid.*

21 "A practice is neither an ideal nor a rule, but a human activity that regularly takes place and that a sociologist could observe. We have judged some practices to be ethically normative because they embody love, justice, and peacemaking initiatives and because they do, in fact, spread peace. But we have not simply derived our ten practices on peacemaking deductively from love, justice, and peacemaking initiatives; we have observed them inductively as actually happening in our history and then have judged them to be ethically normative" (*Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, p. 23).

22 This is the single longest teaching of Jesus in the four gospels. It is found in Matthew 5-7.

23 *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 125-45).

24 Literally, the Greek reads, "do not resist evil." Stassen and Gushee note that the Greek word for "evil" can mean either "by evil means" or "an evil person." So the context is key. They continue, "The context is that Jesus repeatedly confronts evil, but never by evil means, and never by means of revengeful violence" (*Ibid.*, p. 138). His only physical attack on evil is when he overturned the tables of the money changers in the Temple and chased them out with a whip, telling them that God had intended the Temple as a house of prayer, not a "den of thieves." As is often the case, it is the poor who suffer most from oppressive systems like this – hence, Jesus' righteous anger.

25 Though they write "coat" and "cloak," they also explain that the contrast is between the garment that covers the skin and the outside one to ward off cold weather. So I prefer "shirt" and "coat," as in the New Living Translation.

26 One parallel in the Qur'an is this: "If you do good, openly or in secret, or if you forgive a bad deed, then God is most forgiving and powerful" (Q. 4:149). Forgiveness opens the way for a person to change the dynamic of conflict.

27 The apostle Paul offers similar advice: "Do not repay evil for evil. . . . Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God. . . . If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink. . . . Do not overcome evil by evil means, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21). These are all transformative initiatives.

28 *Ibid.*

29 They reference Stassen's book, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*, pp. 64-65, 68-69).

30 Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp. 138-39.

31 This is reflected in many of Jesus' parables, and in particular the one about the day laborers who join in the harvest of a vineyard at different times of the day and yet who all get the same pay (.....).

32 Read about the IFYC online, <http://www.ifyc.org/about-movement>. Also, see Eboo



Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

33 Available online in pdf form, <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr214.html>. The title page adds, "With contributions by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Jamal Badawi, Robert Eisen, and Reuven Kimelman."

34 Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, ed., *Interfaith Just Peacemaking: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

35 True, Gandhi drew on the Hindu concept of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) to build the profile of the *Satyagraha* ("holding truth firmly") as social change agent. But he was strongly influenced early on by the Sermon on the Mount and often expressed his admiration for Jesus as well.

36 Published in *The Christian Century*, 6 Feb., pp. 165-67.

37 Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*, p. 14.

38 *Ibid.* The quotations are from Martin Luther King's article, "Nonviolence and Racial Justice."