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Religions and the Immorality of War

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Over the past fifty years, more and more young people were abandoning their respective religions to seek for something that is more enlightening and humane. For some reason, our major religions have become more political to the point that the traditional focus on love toward one another has become increasingly absent. Among others, this has been witnessed in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia where Christians killed thousands of other Christians.

Religions at War

Going back to the time of the crusades, Christians organized wars against Moslems that were viewed as infidels with countless of innocent people left dead as a result. On the other hand, the Moslems find pride in waging periodically a holy war commonly known as Jihad. This kind of war is waged in the name of God! In other words, Moslems try to please their heavenly Father, Allah, by literally destroying His other children whom He created and loves so dearly.

Besides, the Moslem religion has advocated the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth over the centuries, even though Jesus of Nazareth, who is highly revered by Moslems, has condemned in the open such a practice. In fact, He told

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the Pharisees on more than one occasion, that the God He knew was not the God they preached because, He said, the God He knew was a God of love and mercy. Even today, we do have Moslem nations where women are stoned to death because they become pregnant out of wedlock and several have their hand amputated for stealing something, no matter how much insignificant it may be.

In India, a nation of over one billion people, which is predominantly Hindu in religion, periodical persecutions are waged against other religions, Christianity in particular. Its traditional conflicts with neighboring Islamic Pakistan were mostly motivated by religion. Of all the principal religions in the world, Buddhism seems to have enjoyed longer periods of peace than any other major religion. This explains why so many today are turning to Buddhism for the practice of their spirituality.

Former US President John F. Kennedy described the United States as a conglomeration of nations by the very fact that it is composed of people coming from virtually every country from across every continent. In spite of this, this great nation is predominantly Christian. There is hardly an American who is not a member of a church, a mosque, or a temple. Yet, there is hardly a religious leader that dares to condemn the immorality of war when it takes place.

Need for Religious Guidance

In the United States, there is the constitutional separation between church and state. But this is only theoretical for all practical purposes. In practice, the various religious groups in the United States tend to support what the US government does almost blindly when it comes to the waging of wars. Religious leaders forget that they are obligated to provide spiritual guidance and leadership to their adherents each time the US government resorts to weapons of mass destruction to solve human problems.

To illustrate this by example, when the US government decided to attack Iraq independently of the United Nations, almost all of the religious leaders of the entire nation remained silent. The few religious leaders in the world that raised their voice saying that such a war was immoral were those of the caliber of Pope John Paul II and the Dalai Lama. Surprisingly, American TV evangelists justified the waging of such a war! Such preachers viewed the death of countless thousands of innocent Iraqis as collateral damage. They also viewed the total destruction of the infrastructure of the Iraqi nation as an act of heroism and put on trees a lot of yellow ribbons to honor American soldiers as heroes for having

enlisted in the military to perform such inhuman acts.

The major obstacle to peace seems to lie in the fact that those who occupy governmental positions in virtually all the major nations in the world were all born and raised in the culture of war. The underling philosophy of this culture is based on the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth approach. In one of his recent televised statements, President George W. Bush said: *The terrorists everywhere want wars and we will react by giving them wars.* This shows that this US President was eventually born and raised in the culture of war, where the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth is fundamental in its operation. If he were born and raised in a culture of peace, he would have said: *The terrorists want wars. This is strange to say the least and incomprehensible to say the most since in a war everyone is a loser and no one is a winner.*

The US President might have added: *We need to explore why do terrorists harbor wars in their mind so that we may help turning them around into decent human beings. In the meantime, of course, we will take precautions to defend the helpless and the innocent.* A statement of this nature would have been very positive and constructive. It would have demonstrated that the US President is a real statesman capable of understanding peace and of leading the entire world to peace. He would have shown that he is well versed in the culture of peace and he would really have secured the moral support of the entire world.

Disaster of Retaliation

At this stage of history, one of the most hopeless and helpless regions in the world is undoubtedly the Middle East, where the Moslems and Jews have been fighting each other for over half century. A careful study of both of these religions demonstrates that they are both founded on the culture of war, on the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth. In fact, there was never one single case when one side attacked the other side without bringing an immediate reaction with another attack from the other side by way of retaliation.

What is ironic is the fact that both the Israelis and the Arabs in the region have sought the intervention of nations that are, in turn, deeply entrenched in culture of war. This explains why both sides continue to be furnished with weapons of destruction by the same nations, above all the United States and the NATO countries. When NATO waged the war in Kosovo to "liberate" the people there from the "tyranny" of Milosevic, they killed thousands of innocent people in merely three months. This amounted to much more people that were killed in

the same region over the previous 60 years going back to the time of Marshal Tito, who later became president of Yugoslavia.

The problem with having so many wars with so many atrocities lies in the fact that the major nations of the world view war as financial profit. They also view war as a way of getting fast what they want by illegal means. As long as religions continue to show tacitly disregard for human life by the kind of actions they take or by the actions they deliberately avoid to take, the prospective of a permanent peace remains remote. This explains why the younger generation in particular is so dissatisfied with traditional religions because they do not find in them the kind of spiritual guidance that really fosters love, compassion, and peace. The young in particular want to create a future, which is characterized by brotherly concern that is revealed in mutual respect, love, tolerance, and mercy.