

need to relate through their writing. I have seen it work successfully more than once. It requires patience. Results are not achieved overnight

In the universities, there are tasks there for social and political scientists. Although an explosively sensitive area, there are also probably tasks for psychologists. Especially in Europe and North America, the social and political sciences have until recently tended to ignore religion as a dying ember of the past. The secular sciences were present, par excellence. As a result they were often taken completely by surprise when religion suddenly returned to the forefront of some political event. Thus, they have had great difficulty in coming to terms, for example, with the political resurgence of Islam. The situation is changing. Increasingly, scholars in these disciplines are beginning to seriously take religion as a factor. UNESCO is encouraging the academic network on religion and society. My center and the university are looking forward to working with colleagues here in Kryghyzstan. These will be a significant contribution to this change.

The second track is a long-term vision. Among the Abrahamic faiths, as well as among Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam, we have accumulated centuries of baggage where we tend to remember the bad times and use them as ammunition against one another in subsequent conflicts. In good times this negative baggage is stored away. But it does not take much to recall it, so that a 1389 battle in the Balkans again becomes a live landmine in modern Yugoslavia. The 1689 battle in Ireland became the central symbol of conflicting communal identities three centuries later. I am sure we can all identify similar past events that refuse to remain safely in the history books. The long-term project must be to change that baggage. We cannot discard it. The human need for a sense of identity rooted in shared symbols and experiences needs baggage. We can, however, make conscious efforts

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to change it, or rather, to change its meanings, just as in the past they have been changed.

Here we are speaking of an initial instance of an academic activity involving first and foremost the historians and theologians. The historians have to rediscover and reinterpret our various histories and the histories of their interaction. Very few historians would any longer make von Ranke's claim that it is possible to rediscover the past as it really was, and most would admit that they cannot isolate themselves from their own times and its perspectives, assumptions and preoccupations.

Through their emphasis on real and imagined differences among different entities in Europe, historians were major contributors to the growth of nations and nationalism. The requirements of the nation in turn set the research agendas of the historians. The 20th century interest in the Crusades in the Middle East can be directly attributed to 20th century preoccupations that have influenced the choice of research subjects, their interpretations, and other projects. I would claim that, in contrast, there is a shared history across the Mediterranean that is much stronger than the separate ones to which we have been accustomed. As a historian, I see nothing wrong in encouraging research into that shared history for reasons of present-day needs, so long as one does not surrender critical norms for the sake of partiality.

Similar comments can be made about theologians and religious thinkers. One can look at the tenets and foundational texts of most religions and discover aspects that have been subjected to highly developed scholarship over generations, while others hardly moved beyond the original bare statements of belief, injunction or advice. The topics that have been elaborated, and the ways in which they have been elaborated, can usually be shown a response to particular needs of the religious community at a particular time. So, other aspects, other dimensions,

have, in a sense, lain dormant, held in reserve until such time as they might be needed.

At this point we need to recruit the educationalists into the project. It is they, their teaching—especially in the primary and early secondary level—and their textbooks that have in the past handed down ideas set in one generation to the next generation. They must now be persuaded and trained to pass on interpretations and approaches which are more appropriate for the 21st century. This is a particular problem in terms of politics, logistics and resources. We know how long it takes for the results of academic research, especially in the arts and humanities, to filter across into the school curriculum, the training of teachers, and the production of teaching resources. Where politicians may find it safe to leave academics to get on with their work, it is much less safe to let their ideas take over among the teaching profession. This would give us direct access to the future majority of the population and often upset the parents in the process. And if the State determines that a new approach in a subject is required, it takes an enormous amount of investment and time before the change has been reasonably, successfully achieved. In Britain it took two decades of teacher-training and curriculum development before a

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multi-faith religious education curriculum eventually became accepted as the norm.

One might also draw special attention here to the impact of the training of the religious professionals—priests, imams, religious teachers, etc.—a particularly sensitive field because few States relish the risk involved in trying to interfere on this point. Clearly, this is an arena where patient persuasion and dialogue is required, where an overlap between universities and the religious training conducted in seminaries creates a direct link which can have a greater chance of success.

On both these two tracks—the short-term and the long-term—the dialogue is the end as well as the means. All such projects have to be shared between people from the faiths concerned. This is obviously the case in the practical, academic and educational projects indicated.

I would argue that it must extend also to the theological task by which scholars and thinkers from the various religions work together not only on their mutual views, but also in the involvement of the outsider, in their own internal theological rethinking. Only by thus internalizing the other, can a religion firmly and permanently become a full actor in a culture for peace.

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