

Tackling
RADICALIZATION
In Faiths



Abstracts of Proceedings
35th World Religions Conference

Held November 1, 2015
River Run Centre, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Representatives of
Humanism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity,
Aboriginal Spirituality, Judaism and Hinduism.

Organized by the
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of Canada



Acknowledgments

Our gratitude to the speakers representing various faiths and philosophical traditions, for participating and providing an abstract of their speech on the theme “Tackling Radicalization in Faiths” for the 35th World Religions Conference. These abstracts are compiled in this booklet for easy future reference.

In the staging of this conference, we have received support and help from numerous organizations and individuals. In addition to the speakers and guests that attended the event, we acknowledge the contributions of all our partner organizations; The City of Guelph, The City of Kitchener, The City of Cambridge, Sikh Students Association of UW, Ahmadiyya Muslim Students’s Association, Aboriginal Community of K-W, Brahmārishi Mission of Canada, K-W Council of Churches, Church of Saint Michael, St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, The Church of Our Lady Immaculate Guelph, Guelph Sikh Society, Aboriginal Resource Centre at the University of Guelph, Multi-Faith Resource Team Ecumenical Campus Minister of the University of Guelph, Duff’s Presbyterian Church of Guelph, The Society of Ontario Freethinkers, The Sacred Secular Sanctuary, The Waterloo Record and Guelph Mercury, CTV, CBC Radio, Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA), 570 News Talk Radio, Callture and the Cross Cultures magazine.

Moreover, we recognize the cooperation and volunteer services of the Conference moderator - Craig Norris, and the volunteer services of the entire WRC team, WRC Organizing Committee and approximately 75 other volunteers who worked with great enthusiasm for the organization of this conference.

Nabeel A. Rana
Chief Planning and Coordinating Officer
World Religions Conference,
Guelph, Ontario, Canada
November 1, 2015

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Introductory Remarks - 35th World Religions Conference

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at Canada and all our partner organizations welcome you all to this wonderful celebration of mutual respect and harmony.

Radicalization of men and women of all faiths – both in the west and east has become one of the most significant threats of international terrorism in the world today. We feel it is the responsibility of faith groups and faiths leaders to address this growing global crisis. This year's conference theme is therefore selected to explore how radicalization of followers of faiths is tackled and what might be its underlying causes.

This conference further hopes that such mutual exploration will encourage better understanding and promote a harmonious co-existence among the members of Canada's diverse religious community. Buoyed by contributions from the many faith communities that thrive in Canada, WRC has enriched our society by promoting peace, understanding, and tolerance in Canada for 35 years and has become Canada's largest Multifaith event and an enduring tradition in the region without any doubt.

From humble beginnings in Brantford and moving to Waterloo, Kitchener and since last few years in the City of Guelph, the World Religions Conference continues to sow the seed of love, understanding and respect among the follower of all religions and philosophies that participate. Through teaching, dialogue and social interaction, I am confident that this year's event will lead us all to develop a stronger understanding of Canada's diverse faith communities and a more peaceful future, in Canada and around the world.

The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, envisioned such interfaith interaction over a century ago. Describing the basis of respect for others' faiths and respect for the founders of all religions he wrote:

“.....One of the principles upon which I have been established is the following: God has informed me that of the religions, which have spread and are firmly established in the world through Prophets, holding sway over a part of the world and achieving survival and long life, none was false in its origin. Nor was any of those Prophets false Therefore, this principle lays down the foundation of love, peace and harmony, and supports moral values, in that we consider all those prophets true who appeared in the world..... In light of this principle, we honour all religious founders.....”

Tohfa Qaisariyyah (A Gift for the Queen) page 4

The World Head and Fifth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, while delivering a keynote address at a similar World Religions Conference in London UK said:

“... all the major religions of the world taught the worship of God and love and compassion for mankind in their original form. If these original teachings were upheld today it would lead to a harmonious society, free from conflict and war...”

Keynote address, Conference of World Religions, London UK, February 11, 2014

Congratulations to all the speakers, participants, partner organizations and guests, who are participating in today's event.

I wish you all a wonderful and meaningful conference.

Sincerely,

Lal Khan Malik
National President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada
November 1, 2015, Guelph, Ontario, Canada



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On behalf of the City of Guelph and its citizens, I'm pleased to offer a warm welcome to everyone in attendance at the 35th World Religions Conference. We are thrilled to be hosting you at the River Run Centre.

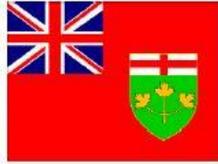
I regret that I'm unable to be with you in person for the conference because of a prior commitment. I wanted to express my appreciation and support for this remarkable multi-faith event, which I understand is the largest in Canada.

Faith communities and their members make countless contributions to this city, and to cities and towns across Canada. The World Religions Conference provides a unique opportunity for members of different faith communities to come together for respectful discussion, leading to greater mutual understanding.

Congratulations on the 35th year of this conference. Once again, welcome to Guelph!

Sincerely,

Cam Guthrie
Mayor



**FROM THE ONTARIO
MINISTER OF CITIZENSHIP,
IMMIGRATION AND
INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

NOVEMBER 1, 2015

*Ahmaddiya Muslim Jama'at
35th World Religions Conference*

I would like to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the 35th World Religions Conference, organized by Ahmaddiya Muslim Jama'at.

This event is an important opportunity for members of the many faith communities in Ontario to discuss issues of mutual concern, and to promote the shared values of peace and tolerance.

Diversity is one of Ontario's greatest strengths and is at the heart of who we are. We are fortunate to live in such a vibrant and welcoming province where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to our society.

I commend Ahmaddiya Muslim Jama'at for sponsoring this laudable event and for its ongoing contributions to promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. Please accept my very best wishes to all for a successful and memorable conference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "Michael Chan".

Michael Chan
Minister



Guelph Police Service

15 Wyndham Street S., Guelph, Ontario N1H 4C6
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October 27, 2015

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada
Nabeel A. Rana, Chief Planning and Coordinating Officer
5 Elliot Street
Cambridge, Ontario
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Reference: Invitation to World Religions Conference on November 1st, 2015

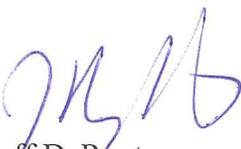
Dear Nabeel,

On behalf of the Guelph Police Service, welcome to our city. Thank you for the invitation to the conference, but regrettable I am unable to attend. It is evidently going to be a rich and meaningful day.

As the host city to this event, we are most fortunate to live in a safe community and one which is increasingly diverse. This diversity is one of the reasons why our city is an excellent place to live, work and play. Our diversity also presents a tremendous opportunity to learn from each other and to develop mutual respect and healthy communities. Through our partnerships, relationships, interaction and dialogue, we can better address community and world issues such as radicalization.

Thank you for attending this conference and sharing your thoughts, ideas and experiences as together we promote peace and harmony. Enjoy the day.

Sincerely,


Jeff DeRuyter,
Chief of Police

Tackling Radicalization in Humanists

Doug Thomas, Elmira
President, Secular Connexion Séculière

[An extensive writer, Doug is a life-long agnostic and an active Secular Humanist since 2002. As Past President of The Society of Ontario Freethinkers, and President of Secular Connexion Séculière, he advocates consistently for humanist rights and separation of church and state. He also works advocates for the inclusion and equitable treatment of atheist students in local schools. In 2013, he was nominated, for the J.S. Woodsworth Award for Human Rights and Equity.]

Radicalization, from the humanist perspective is the act of convincing someone that an extreme attitude regarding an issue is correct and that extreme action is appropriate.

Radicalization is not a major problem among humanists because we focus on reason to govern our response to radical statements by examining the evidence that the promoters claim makes extreme action appropriate.

Honestly, when last did you read a headline about a humanist suicide bomber?

Critical thinking is the centre of humanist resistance to radicalization.

We humanists encourage our young people to think critically when approached by people with radicalizing ideas.

Dr. Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics for figuring out how economists think, says there are two types of thinking: fast thinking which requires little energy, but tends to accept ideas as true too readily, and slow thinking that requires more time and energy—literally in terms of calories burned by the brain—but reduces the effect of radicalizing statements (Thinking, Fast and Slow. Kahneman, Daniel. Anchor Canada. 2013).

Radicalization is more likely if the individual acts on fast thinking without really using slow thinking to properly analyze the information. This seems to work even if there are several elements to be considered and none of them is actually analyzed.

Humanism actively promotes slow thinking in the form of critical thinking as a way to evaluate the appropriateness and truth of claims. Properly exercised, this practice reduces the possibility of radicalization dramatically.

That is the reason that humanists like Dr. Chris di Carlo are working with the Ontario Ministry of Education on pilot projects to bring robust Critical Thinking courses into Ontario's school system. This is alongside the efforts of the Society of Ontario Freethinkers to include Secular humanism in the curriculum of the World Religions courses in high schools.

We feel that robust courses such as this will reduce the vulnerability of young Canadians to radicalization.

Critical thinking does have a complexity beyond the scope of this presentation. For a much more

thorough understanding of the complexities of the process, one should visit criticalthinking.org to see an introduction to the work of Dr. Linda Elder and the late Dr. Richard Paul.

A basic operative definition, however, is that critical thinking is a way of applying reason to determine if a statement or series of statements is true. The major basic tool for this is inductive logic.

The first step in applying inductive logic is to regard every statement as a hypothesis; that is, an idea that has some possibility of being true, but that requires the examination of supporting evidence to demonstrate that truth.

Empirical evidence is used to test the hypothesis. Scientific empirical evidence is the result of experimentation, observation and analysis. Historical empirical evidence requires primary sources of information (e.g. original documents, eye witness accounts) and requires secondary evidence (e.g. news reports or information about the context in which the event was supposed to have occurred).

In examining the evidence, one must be aware of the art of persuasion and of logical fallacies.

The art of persuasion uses such tools as false dichotomies such as the one used by a Muslim speaker a year or so ago when he proposed that one must accept Mohammed as the final prophet or call Mohammed a liar. That is very strong stuff. I share your belief in Mohammed as the prophet or I don't. Assuming that I have some kind of negative opinion about Mohammed just because I don't share his belief was egregiously wrong on the part of that speaker.

Hyperbole is another tactic. For example, the use of the word oppression is entirely too popular, especially among Christian extremists, who use it to claim that our assertion that we have the right to freedom from religion – i.e. prayer – in public places is an oppression of their rights. Of course, they are incorrectly assuming that they have the right to force their religion on the rest of us.

A third tactic, that seems devastatingly silent and effective, convinced a majority of UBC students surveyed to think atheists are less trustworthy than rapists. There is no evidence for this idea in the representation of the atheist population—approximately 25% of Canada's population—in the prison population. The persuasive tactic involved is persistent and consistent misinformation or stereotypical statements often presented with the guise of authority by leaders.

The idea that some people are authorities and are not to be challenged is foreign to the humanist philosophy. While we look to the great humanists of the past, like Epicurus, Huxley and Russell for guiding ideas, we have no hesitation in discussing and challenging their ideas. Epicurus, for example, listed three sources of pleasure to be used in moderation—learning, knowing, and the senses. In my opinion, he forgot a fourth—charity and I have no qualms about saying so.

Again, critical thinking courses will help young people to ward off the art of persuasion by giving them the radar tools to detect it.

In inductive logic, examination of the evidence presented leads one to a conclusion; i.e., the hypothesis is proven true or false. It is extremely important to realize that the goal of inductive reasoning is not to prove a point, but to determine whether the hypothesis is true or false

The key starting point is to treat every statement as if it is a hypothesis.

Regarding radical statements, one must ask, “Is the radical statement encountered in conversation or on the Internet true because it is supportable with empirical evidence or false because it is not?”

Obviously, risk assessment plays a part in deciding how strongly to challenge a statement. If you and I are in a room, when someone yells fire and you say, “I beg your pardon?” you will be talking to yourself.

The next step, risk assessment aside, is to ask for empirical evidence and then evaluate whether or not the evidence offered demonstrates that the hypothesis is true.

If the evidence offered is weak or does not support the hypothesis, then that hypothesis is false.

Radical statements that could lead to radicalization rarely survive this kind of slow, analytical thinking and rarely cause problems for humanists.

People, then, are not the authorities no matter how experienced they seem to be. As a senior member of the humanist community, I know my ideas require the support of empirical evidence regardless of my having been there, having done that, and having T-shirts that no longer fit my waistline. In fact, in humanism, the danger of radicalization is minimized because evidence is the only authority.

So, have you an answer to my question, “When was the last time you read about a humanist suicide bomber?”

Tackling Radicalization in Sikhism

Simerneet Singh, Chicago
President, Secular Connexion Séculière

[Brilliant Orator. Born and raised in Chicago, Simer studied and learned the practical and spiritual applications of Sat Sri Guru Granth Sahib under Sikh elders through the practice of meditation, known as Simran. Travels extensively throughout North America teaching English-speaking audiences (both Sikh and non-Sikhs), about Simran through the teachings in Sat Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Works full-time as President of Jojo Modern Pets, an ecommerce and manufacturing company.]

Radicalism is not a new phenomenon. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, faced it in the 1500's and in the 500 years since then, little has changed.

Radicalism is a form of control. Control over others is sought by those in our society who want power, and they achieve it by preying on the beliefs, fears, weaknesses, and superstitions of individuals. The power hungry have co-opted spirituality and religion into a system of radicals. They incite duality and division by diverting focus from the spiritual journey toward a political agenda. The methodology of radicalism is cunning. So cunning, that to the individual, the spiritual and the political goals become one and the same. Caught up in rituals, pilgrimages, and all other sorts of systemic control, they become like a rat in a maze and completely separated from real spiritual growth.

The most radical idea is Truth. The Truth is, God is inside you. Part of our duty is to find God, to take

the journey inside where we are not subject to the control of others. The other part of our duty is to share that knowledge with others.

God is not found through extremism of the body as in pilgrimages, fasting, austerities, or physical suffering but instead by finding the temple of the mind within the body. Sikhism teaches that we can find God through focused meditation performed through the practical application of the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is meant for anyone on the path to God, irrespective of their religion. It can be used as a supplement to help interpret the scriptures of other faiths in an effort to overcome fear, weakness, and superstition so that we can be in control of our own destiny.

Tackling Radicalization in Muslims

Imam Farhan Iqbal – Toronto
Missionary Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at Vaughan
Imam Bai'tul Islam Mosque, Toronto

[Articulate and powerful. Farhan is the Imam of Bai'tul Islam, one of the largest Mosques in Canada. Graduated in Islamic Theology and Comparative Religions (2010) from the Ahmadiyya Institute of Islamic studies. Served as Missionary of Islam in USA and Ghana. Represented Islam in various interfaith events in Canada. Routinely hosts a live phone-in Islamic radio program, as well as hosted programs on Muslim Television Ahmadiyya International.]

It is important to state in the very beginning that the Islamic faith and radicalization are diametrically opposed to each other. Extremism and radicalization run parallel to faith, instead of because of faith. As far as Islam is concerned, the way to tackle the problem of radicalization is to promote and propagate the true, original teachings of Islam which are nothing but peace.

The corrupt state of Muslims that we see today was in fact prophesied by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) (*1) when he said that there will come a time upon the people when nothing will remain of Islam except its name and the Muslim clergy at that time will consist of the worst people under heaven. We see this prophecy being fulfilled today as extremist elements can be found within the Muslim clergy. Here in Canada, we have seen the influence of such extremist ideologies in the examples of some young converts who became radicalized and even travelled abroad to join terrorist groups. Unfortunately, because of this, there is a growing thought among some that perhaps there is something inherent within the religion of Islam which incites people to violence and extremism. This, however, is a misconception and it is absolutely wrong to think that the religion of Islam has anything to do with this violence and hatred.

The very word Islam – derived from the Arabic root-word salama – means peace. When we see those individuals who become radicalized, we can easily understand that they are unstable youth, dissatisfied with society and looking for a greater purpose. Hence, they do not represent the overwhelming majority of over 1 million peaceful Muslims living in Canada, who love Canada as their home and add to its harmony.

As Muslims, we are horrified at the havoc being wreaked in the name of our faith, by groups like ISIS, because everything they are doing is utterly un-Islamic, and we condemn it in the strongest possible words.

The religion of Islam is based on 2 sources: (1) the Holy Qur'an; and (2) the Sunnah (or practise of the Holy Prophet (sa). Anything above or beyond these two sources – such as the media or radical coverts – cannot be considered an authentic Islamic source. When we look at the Holy Qur'an and the life and character of the Prophet Muhammad (sa), it becomes clear that the early Muslims never initiated any war or violence which is in stark contrast to what the group ISIS or any other extremist group is doing.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) bears witness to the fact that during the early years of his prophet hood in his hometown of Mecca, he only sought to spread Islam's teachings through love and affection. Despite more than a decade of suffering and even migration from Mecca to Medina with the sole purpose and intention to live and preach his message in peace, he was not left alone and eventually, God gave permission to the Muslims to fight in order to defend themselves. This is mentioned in Chapter 22, verses 40-41, where Muslims are commanded to stand up for freedom of religion, and if they did not do so, the peace of the whole world would be at risk.

Similarly, after this migration to Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (sa) formulated the Pact of Medina or the Charter of Medina, which helped form the first ever society of multi-racial, multi-faith harmony in which all parties – Muslims, Jews, non-Muslim Arabs – lived in remarkable accord and peace that is well documented in history.

Therefore, today if ISIS or any Muslim government acts against these principles of true justice and equality, then they are doing so only to fulfill their own personal or political interests. Even if they claim to act in Islam's name, the truth is that their actions have no link with Islam, and no link to the teachings of the Holy Prophetsa whatsoever.

We, Ahmadi Muslims, believe that the solution to all this turmoil was also given by the Prophet Muhammad (sa) when he predicted the coming of a reformer whose mission would be the restoration of the real image of Islam. This reformer is the Messiah who has come in the person of Hazrat Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad (as) (*2) and he is the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at. He taught us that true Islam is one which promotes tolerance and freedom of conscience, as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

There is no compulsion whatsoever in religion [2:257]. The Qur'an also condemns murder in the strongest words possible when it says that whosoever kills a person, it is as if he has killed all mankind, and whoso gives life to a person, it is as if he has given life to all of mankind [5:33].

Hazrat Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad, the Promised Messiah(as), stated that one of his primary objectives, for which God has commissioned him, was to refute this ideology of extremism that crept in, and the un-Islamic notions of Jihad or so-called Holy War that are unfortunately being propagated by the clerics and Sheikhs of this era. He says, "It should be remembered that today's Islamic scholars (who are called maulavis) completely misunderstand jihad and misrepresent it to the general public..."(*3). He also writes, "The Promised Messiah has come into the world to refute the notion of using the sword [or fighting] in the name of religion, and to prove, with arguments and reasoning, that Islam is such a religion which does not need the support of the sword for its propagation" (*4).

In order to achieve these goals, the Promised Messiah (as) established the Ahmadiyya Muslim community who demonstrate with concrete actions the actual, true principles of Islam and bring its

philosophies back to life with their living example. Our community also has the distinction of being the only Muslim organization with a worldwide leader, whom we call the Khalifa or Caliph His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, who has made various efforts to spread this message of peace.

In conclusion, it must be understood that this battle against extremism and radicalization, ultimately, is a battle for the mind or a battle against an ideology, which cannot be defeated with war. What we need is a counter narrative that disarms these ideas before they can take root.

For this purpose, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community launched an awareness campaign about a year ago exposing how far-removed these radical jihadists are from the true teachings of Islam. As part of this initiative, and to remove misconceptions, we have held programs and campaigns such as Stop the CrISIS, Meet a Muslim Family, Fast with a Muslim, and so on, and our struggle will continue. You can also help us by talking about our campaigns, tweeting about them, helping remove the misconceptions, and helping spread the message of peace.

(*1) Abbreviation for Arabic salutation *sallallaahu alaihi wa-sallam*, meaning “peace and blessings of God be upon him”

(*2) Abbreviation for Arabic salutation *alaihis-salaam* meaning “on him be peace”.

(*3) The British Government and Jihad, pg. 8

(*4) *Malfoozaat*, Vol. 2, pg. 129; also, Review of Religions, March 2010, pg. 21

Tackling Radicalization in Christianity

Rev. John Buttars – Guelph
Minister at the United Church of Canada

[Cultured Raconteur. Minister (retired) of Harcourt United Church in Guelph with an academic background in history and theology as well as hospital chaplaincy. John served for over 30 years as a Minister where he sought to deepen spiritual and communal life within Harcourt and social justice in the wider community. After semiretirement since 2006, he continues along the same focus. His immediate family traces ancestry to Europe and India.]

Douglas John Hall, Professor Emeritus of Religion at McGill University, writes:

“RELIGION KILLS!”

These words were scrawled on the graffiti-inviting outer walls of the Presbyterian College of Montreal in the days immediately following the shattering events of September 11, 2001. They are words to which every religious person and institution in these perilous times ought to pay close and thoughtful attention. ...the question that is being put to all world religions today is whether they are, at base, life-affirming or agencies of death.(i)

Radicalization is an agent of death, an assertive, aggressive form of religion, a step inside the house of violence, not a step towards violence but a step right inside the house of violence. Radicalization of any religion is the opposite of opening one's arms to the neighbour whom we are called to love as ourselves or welcoming the stranger, teachings which are part of my Christian tradition. Radicalization involves the accusing finger against 'the Other:'

As a Christian I seek to follow Jesus whom we Christians claim as Prince of Peace. But just look at our Christian history. It is anything but peaceful. Too often the Christian church has been an agency of

death. Consider the recent report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that has just been released. I am a United Church minister and we in the United Church had a number of residential schools committed to 'civilizing the Indian,' 'taking the Indian out of the child.' Or consider the sometimes central role of Christian missionaries in the colonization by European nations of the Americas, Asia and Africa. It is not a pretty picture. My question is this: Is there anything within the foundational sacred traditions of Christianity (or within your sacred tradition), that contributes to radicalization, to distortion, to violence? Is there something that is totally intrinsic to Christianity that enables radicalization to actually occur?

Twenty years ago I began to read some books and articles that took me into a world I scarcely knew existed. The first book was *Constantine's Sword* by James Carroll (ii). It tracks the history of anti-Semitism and contempt for Judaism and all things Jewish. That was soon followed by an article (iii) by Christian theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether who argued that anti-Semitism is not something that was introduced into the religion at a later date. Rather it is right there in embryonic form within the Christian Bible particularly in the Gospels of Matthew and John. Thus the Christian faith that arose from the Prince of Peace, from Jesus who was a Torah faithful Jew, who taught to love our neighbour as ourselves, to pray for and forgive our enemies, to not judge others, to turn the other cheek, was radicalized into something totally different, something quite violent.

The Christian church today is riven by divisions and in this city there are three major groups of Christians: Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical Protestant. Years ago I initiated a group called the Three Solitudes with representatives from each of those groups. We met monthly to try to understand each other just as Christians but sometimes it felt as if we lived on different planets, our understanding of Christianity so different. Eventually the group foundered.

With considerable fear and trepidation let me take one example of difference within Christianity, a difference in interpretation of the Bible and with a national and international slant. Prime Minister Stephen Harper belongs to the evangelical Protestant part of Christianity, a member of East Gate Alliance Church in Ottawa, a congregation within the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. He has never been willing to discuss his Christian faith. The Christian denomination to which he belongs stresses that the end of the world is near and that Jesus Christ will soon return to earth (iv). Within those evangelical Christians who believe that the end of the world is coming very soon are a smaller group called Christian Zionists; most Protestant churches have rejected Christian Zionism. However, Christian Zionists believe that "In order for Jesus to return...certain biblical prophecies must be fulfilled. God will 'assemble the outcasts of Israel...from the four corners of the earth' (Isaiah 11:12); then the Lord will 'suddenly come to his temple' (Malachi 3: 1), and the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16: 16) will take place. One-third of the Jews will accept Jesus as Messiah and be saved; the others will reject him and be damned (Zechariah 13: 8-9). And so will history end. (v)" Is Stephen Harper a Christian Zionist? I have no idea. What I do know is that the foreign policy of the Harper government regarding Israel is the foreign policy that Christian Zionists support.

In western culture we say that religion is a private matter. Nothing could be further from the truth. Religion is personal just like what I plant in my front yard is personal but it is not private. We have confused the two. Anyone can see what I have planted in my front yard and anyone can see my religious faith in how I live my life. In addition, from the United States we have imported the idea of the separation of church and state and have misunderstood that it is talking about the separation of religious and state institutions, not separation of my personal faith from my personal political and social involvement.

Violence is always the easy way out. Eventually even enemies in a war have to sit down and talk, come to some kind of understanding. Many of us in this room are married and marriage therapists will tell you that there are five kinds of communication that destroy marriages and these five kinds of communication destroy the possibility of conversation within faith communities and between faith communities. We as faith people need, with all our power, to work against these five kinds of communication: Criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling or shutting down or not talking at all, and withdrawing as in leaving and refusing to participate even by being present (vi).

Talking, genuine conversation, is a major practice that works against radicalization. It takes time and energy. I failed with the Three Solitudes but I am still deeply committed to promoting genuine, heart-felt conversation within the Christian faith and between the faiths. May God the Holy One help us all in that task!

—

i. Hall, Douglas John, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World*, Fortress Press, 2003, pg. 1.

ii. James Carroll, *Constantine's sword: the church and the Jews; a history*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

iii. The article was contained in a series of background papers provided by Sabeel (www.sabell.org). Ruether has also written *Faith and Fratricide: the theological roots of anti-Semitism*, Seabury Press, 1974.

iv. Theyee.ca/Opinion/2012/03/26Harper-Evangelical-Mission.

v. Donald Grayston, "Unholy Allies," *The United Church Observer*, September 2015, pg. 20.

vi. <http://couplestraininginstitute.com/gottman-couples-and-marital-therapy/>

Tackling Radicalization in Aboriginal People

Walter Cooke – Hamilton

Elder/Counsellor Ojibway-Cree of the Bear Clan

Counsellor at Aboriginal Health Centre Hamilton

[Inspiring Speaker. Walter, an Elder/ Counsellor, Ojibway-Cree of the Bear Clan. He works for De dwa da dehs nyes Aboriginal Health Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. Has been doing traditional healing work for over 25 years. His teachings come from listening to elders and in large, from his own way of life and that of his parents. Facilitates a Healing Journey Program at the Aboriginal Health Centre. Addressed numerous interfaith events.]

- When in Rome do as the Romans do
- When in Canada do as the Ojibway/Cree do
- Let me quickly explain that idea to you
- Explain the circle to the people
- Explain the smudge bowl, that it is round like the earth
- Explain the nations that we made
- Explain the 4 medicines and what each does
- That is why we do not physically fight one another,
- From the beginning of time, there is much respect
- That is how we combat any radicalization in all aboriginal faiths
- Let us do what the First Nations do

Tackling Radicalization in Jewish People

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Any topic can be approached by a number of valid methodologies, each carrying with them a set of presuppositions that inform the response. Among the many helpful ways the topic of dealing with radicalization in the Jewish faith community can be considered, beginning with Jewish Ethics can prove informative and helpful. First, I will define Jewish ethics, both in its own rite as well as set against other ethical systems. Next, I will apply this ethic to the problem that this conference emphasizes. Finally, I will raise a series of questions that flow from the present investigation. It is believed that, by following this methodology, some practical ideas will be brought to light. My presentation will be informed by a two-volume publication written by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin entitled, *A Code of Jewish Ethics* in which the first volume is called “You Shall be Holy” and the second volume is titled, “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself” (Random House, New York; 2006 and 2009, respectively).

If I were to ask any number of people what ethical system or systems they followed or were aware of, I might hear them speak of any number of ethical systems including philosophical ethics or moral philosophy, situational ethics also known as relativistic ethics, public ethics, deontological ethics, and utilitarianism. These categories are sometimes classed in broader collections of normative ethics and applied ethics. Jewish ethics differs from each in several important ways, which will be highlighted in my presentation as I seek to apply a Jewish ethic to the very real and present challenge we all face in dealing with radicalization in our communities.

We live in interesting times. While this expression bases itself on the adage, “May you live in interesting times,” we now know that this is not an ancient Chinese curse – in fact it is neither Chinese nor ancient, and probably not even a curse. It is, in fact, a Western invention first published in the *Proceedings of the American Society of International Law* as reported by the honorary vice president, Frédéric Coudert, as a saying he attributed to an ancient Chinese curse. But *The Yale Book of Quotations*, edited by Fred R. Shapiro, says, “No authentic Chinese saying to this effect has ever been found.” Senator Robert F. Kennedy reinforced this misconception in a 1966 speech at the University of Cape Town to the National Union of South African Students, Kennedy said: “There is a Chinese curse which says 'May he live in interesting times.' Like it or not, we live in interesting times.” The closest expression in Chinese that scholars have found to date, “It's better to be a dog in a peaceful time than be a human being in a chaotic period,” is neither ancient nor a curse.

Yet it bears repeating: We live in interesting times. And it is precisely because we are living in interesting times that a conference that addresses radicalization in a plurality of religious communities has gained such highly valued currency today.

Admittedly, as a speaker representing Judaism, I must keep in mind that one of the Jewish ethical

principles of common sense is not to speak about that which I do not know. So much study, more conversation, and even more learning had to take place before I could even feel justified in accepting the challenge to address the topic at this conference. According to Telushkin another of the ten Jewish principles of common sense is, “Don't be a pious fool.” I will do my best.

In approaching this question, I can honestly say that the Jewish people have been dealing with radicalization from within and without for at least three millennia, as attested by our Scriptures, by Judaic Literature, and by writings of the Rabbis throughout history. I will look at these sources to bring forth the wisdom of the Rabbis, the Scriptures, and our religious Tradition known as Judaism.

Tackling Radicalization in Hindus

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Hindu Scholar and Professor University of Guelph

[Brilliant Presenter. Professor at the University of Guelph and the director of the Gosling Research Institute for Plant Preservation, which specializes in saving endangered plant species from extinction. Praveen also researches interconnections among nature, science and spirituality. As the Hindu representative of the Multi-Faith Resource Team of the University of Guelph and the Hindu Society of Guelph, he organizes interactive discussions on the philosophy and science of Hinduism.]

Radicalization is often associated with elements of social and political unrest coupled with violent acts against humanity. It should therefore be no surprise that many definitions of radicalization have recently emanated from law and order authorities. Of these many definitions, the one that befits the conference theme best comes from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), as it captures the essence of radicalization. It states that radicalization is “the process by which individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs toward extreme views.” When radical thoughts lead to violence, society is exposed to serious risks. The Hindu philosophy offers unique, effective, and viable strategies and practices, which when followed sincerely, may reduce negative radicalization. Interestingly, this approach requires a positive radical change in the way we live our lives. This leads to a rather compelling thought that radicalization is not always disruptive to the peace and quiet in our lives. On the contrary, a positive radicalization can lead to creative, innovative and productive ideas that may help us achieve unity and prosperity.

A search of the history of radicalization would reveal that it originates from many socio-economic causes, which are then exploited by groups of individuals driven by the quest for political power, economic supremacy, and superior social status. Studies on the roots of radicalization suggest that unemployment, corruption, economic disparity, and violations of rights of ethnic and religious minorities lead to religious radicalism, extremism and even terrorism. Thus, in most instances, radicalization results from an unfair and unethical use of religion, power, and the politics, to capitalize on social unrest in society. Unfortunately, religion is susceptible to such manipulations as it is dependent on the group identity of its followers and the intensity with which they defend their beliefs. Another aspect of religion that allows its manipulation is the embedded authoritarianism of religious leaders, which finds justification for preconceived biases of the group, by cherry-picking the teachings within the scriptures.

Hinduism is not immune to the above-mentioned aspects of radicalism, but Hindu philosophies may provide a mechanism to disconnect religion from factors that lead to radicalization. The analysis of the teachings of major Hindu scriptures including the *Ramayan* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the two most widely followed holy books of Hindus, reveal that the root cause of complex problems often lies in our fundamental attitude to life. According to the *Ramayan*, “*Moh Sakal Byadbinh Kar Moola, Tinb Tein Puni Upajabin Babusoola*”. Moh (desire or infatuation) is the root of all demonic tendencies and evil deeds. The *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the greatest Hindu doctrines on human psychology, also points out that the root of all turbulence in the journey of life is “desire”. The moment a desire is conceived by attachment to an object, we are well on our way to grief, regardless of the fate of the desire. An unfulfilled desire leads to a cascade of anger and disappointment, followed by increased efforts to make the desire come true, and even more anger as the failures accumulate. This results in a loss of the ability to think sensibly, and eventually, total despair. Interestingly, a fulfilled desire also does not lead to a different outcome. Not only is the human hunger for a “bit more” self-nourishing, but it is also destined to eventually set in motion a sequence of desire-driven delusion and the cycle of self-destruction. It goes without saying that the societies where the socio-economic, religious and political agendas are influenced by individuals and organizations infatuated with greed often show high incidences of radicalization.

Thus, considering that the tendencies of lust, greed and desires are the main cause, which drive humans to commit unworthy acts, their cessation may be the most effective strategy to address negative radicalization. One of the Hindu doctrines with great potential in overcoming infatuations is the awareness of the true meaning and role of religion and spirituality in our lives. Religion, in the context of Hinduism, is referred to as Dharma, a Sanskrit word for "the nature of things" or "the reality of life." In the Hindu Dharma the reality of our birth as humans is considered the greatest opportunity to attain the ultimate accomplishment - a sacred union with God. This union, the highest level of consciousness known as *Moksha*, can be achieved through knowledge, devotion, and yoga (meditation). These practices enhance our consciousness and enable us to become aware that desires are invasive and self-perpetuating and they grow endlessly, but remain unfulfilled. The ability to dissociate us from our minds and thoughts is the most effective method to let go of the desires fueled by insecurity, fear, and greed. In this context, a significant contribution of Hinduism is the art and science of meditation, which has proven to be very effective in controlling radical, disruptive, and socially unacceptable behaviors. The ever-increasing acceptance of meditation in stress management in business, medical, military, and neurological institutions is evidence of its potential in controlling the mind. In addition, the *Gita* further offers a simple prescription for our freedom from the cycle of desires and infatuation with uninterrupted happiness. The path of *Nishkam Karma (Karma Yoga)*, says the *Gita*, is the ultimate recourse and a definite way out of misery. Simply stated, Nishkam Karma is a “desire-less action”, a deed done without expectations, because to act is within our capacity, but the fate of the action is not. Dissociated from desires, the action with complete dedication reveals the path to eternal bliss. The journey then becomes the destination and the joy of doing the deed itself turns into reward. This theory is in sharp contrast to the conventional wisdom, which links action with reward. In sum, Hinduism emphasizes the importance of *Dharma* and spirituality in tackling radicalization. In addition this journey to discover our true identity may bless us with moral strength, humility, and more importantly, liberation from self-centeredness while re-kindling the passion of oneness.

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