



INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES  
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Edited by  
DOUGLAS IRVIN-ERICKSON  
AND PETER C. PHAN

# VIOLENCE, RELIGION, PEACEMAKING

Contributions of Interreligious Dialogue



# Interreligious Studies in Theory and Practice

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Douglas Irvin-Erickson • Peter C. Phan  
Editors

# Violence, Religion, Peacemaking

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## FOREWORD

The field of religious peacebuilding reached a turning point in about 2000. Prior to that there were notable cases of religious peacebuilding, including the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa, the religiously motivated civil rights movement in the USA, and Gandhi's movement in India. But prior to 2000, the focus of the literature relating to religion and conflict focused on religion as a source of conflict. Scott Appleby's book *Ambivalence of the Sacred* published in 2000 helped mark and stimulate this shift in focus.

This shift was evident in the programming relating to religion at the US Institute of Peace (USIP). Prior to 2000, USIP organized study groups on religion as a source of conflict in places like Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Nigeria. USIP launched its Religion and Peacemaking Program in 2000. Since 2000, USIP has helped stimulate and provide financial support for religious peacebuilding efforts in Israel/Palestine that brought together top Jewish, Muslim, and Christians to advocate for peace. It provided encouragement and financial support for the peacemaking efforts of Rev. James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Ashafa of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Nigeria to undertake interfaith peacebuilding in places like Yelwa/Nshar, celebrated in the documentary the *Imam and Pastor*, which is mentioned in Chap. 10. This documentary has been widely shown and has had widespread impact in such far-flung places as Kenya, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Iraq. Training programs in Burma/Myanmar and Sri Lanka brought together Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian leaders to learn how to organize interfaith peacebuilding in those countries. In Indonesia, Philippines, and Pakistan, USIP has helped stimulate and finance the introduction of peace studies in the curricula of Islamic schools, to emphasize the peaceful teachings of Islam.

These efforts of USIP have their counterparts in the programs of many other organizations around the world, principally since 2000.

This book makes a contribution to the burgeoning literature on religious peacebuilding, which has blossomed since 2000. I want to lift up three chapters as making particular contributions. These are Chapter 2 by Peter Phan, Chapter

3 by Douglas Irvin-Erickson, and Chapter 10 by Ezekiel Abdullahi Babagario. In his chapter, Phan articulates the warrants for both violence and nonviolence in all the major world religions. Too often in contemporary discourse, Islam is held up as the religion of war and Christianity is praised for being a religion of peace. It is true that most of the contemporary violent extremism is committed in the name of Islam. But teachings about peace and nonviolence are very prominent in the Quran and the Hadith. This is an important lesson that should be promulgated.

In Chapter 10, Babagario makes the very important argument, exemplified in the case of the Middle Belt in Nigeria, that so-called religious conflict is usually not fundamentally religious in character. In the case of Nigeria, what is frequently characterized as conflict between Christians and Muslims is more fundamentally a conflict of identity that has more to do with ethnic, geographic, occupational, and class identities than it does with religion per se. Religious differentiation coincides with differentiation by these other identities and religion is too simply cited as the key difference. But conflicts in the Middle Belt are not about the validity of religious teachings and practices of Islam and Christianity. Conflict is over jobs, political power, scholarships, and land rather than religion. (The case of Boko Haram in the northeast of Nigeria underscores another set of variables that Babagario does not address.)

Because the conflicts in the Middle Belt are caused by these other variables, to resolve the conflicts these other issues need to be addressed. Peacemakers need to promote an equitable share of political power, access to land, a fair distribution of scholarships, and so on. Peace is not going to be achieved by Muslims convincing Christians to convert to Islam or vice versa. But it will be helpful for the peacemakers to lift up the warrants for peace and nonviolence in both of these faith traditions. Moreover, the fact that the conflicts are not fundamentally religious in character does not mean that religious leaders and institutions cannot make significant contributions to peace. Although Babagario does not cite them, religious leaders have engaged in productive peacebuilding efforts in the Middle Belt.

I lift up the case of Nigeria's Middle Belt not because of the intrinsic significance of this region of Nigeria, but because the dynamics underlying conflict and peacebuilding in the Middle Belt apply to conflicts in many parts of the world. Although the Islamic State has complicated the situation, the conflict between Sunnis and Shia in Iraq is not fundamentally a religious conflict, but a conflict over political power and competition for resources. It is not unlike the conflict between Iraqi Kurds and the Sunnis and Shia, even though the Kurdish identity is based on ethnicity rather than on religion. The Kurds are Sunnis, but they do not identify with the Arab Sunnis in Iraq. While there is a role for religious peacebuilding in Iraq, those promoting reconciliation need to base their efforts on a recognition that religion per se is not the fundamental source of conflict.

Similarly in places like Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar, Central Africa Republic, and Israel/Palestine, where the conflicts are often framed in terms of religion,

religion is not the fundamental issue. The conflicts in these countries are for resources and power, and the lines of division are more in terms of ethnicity than in terms of religion. Granting that, in all these places significant religious peacebuilding has been undertaken. Interfaith dialogue has focused on the more fundamental issues, but religious language has often been utilized to promote peace and reconciliation.

As illustrated in Chapter 3 by Douglas Irvin-Erickson, religious peacebuilding can be a powerful tool for peace in zones of conflict where religion is not a factor at all. Describing the peacebuilding efforts of Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia at the end of the civil war involving the Khmer Rouge, no mention is made of religion as a source of conflict or even as a secondary factor. Ghosananda engaged in transformative meditation to promote peace. He spoke in terms of religious idioms “allowing the political and social pursuit of peace in this world to be presented as if it were a cosmic pursuit, heroic, and worthy of tales of heaven and history.” He “engaged in religiously symbolic actions in order to bring the world order into line with the cosmic order provided by Buddhist beliefs in a good and just society.”

The religiously motivated struggle against apartheid in South Africa is another example of a case where religious peacebuilding was effective in a conflict that did not reflect religious divisions. That was also the case with the religious foundation of the civil rights movement in the USA

David Smock



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume developed out of the conference on “Nurturing Cultures of Peace in Context of Violence” held in May 2013 at the New York Theological Seminary. The conference brought together practitioners and scholars in the field of religious peacemaking, who were joined by leaders from faith communities around the world who were actively involved in conflict prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding in their own communities.

The goal of the conference was to strengthen relationships between religious leaders, peace practitioners, and scholars, and to create a forum for a free exchange of ideas at the nexus of theory, practice, and faith. The result was a transformative three-day event, complete with training workshops for religious leaders facilitated by scholar-practitioners and workshops facilitated by religious leaders for scholars and practitioners to better understand the religious potential for peace. The chapters in this volume are reflective of these interdisciplinary, interfaith, and international conference goals. The contributing authors in this volume are leading and emerging scholars in the field—all of whom have lived, taught, or worked in the areas of conflict they write about.

We are grateful to the many participants and audience members whose comments and contributions helped improve our ideas and thoughts. We extend special thanks to the Henry Luce Foundation for providing the resources that made this conference possible, and to the many co-sponsoring institutions whose delegations, students, scholars, and resources contributed to the success of the conference. The academic and university co-sponsors included:

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  - The Riverside Church in New York
  - The United States Institute of Peace
  - US Academics for Peace
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**Matthew Ridout** graduated from Hartford Seminary with an M.A. in religious studies. He has a BA from Roanoke College with a double major in political science and religion. At Hartford Seminary, his studies focused on Christian and Islamic political theology. Ridout is working for a local charity organization dedicated to fighting poverty, is a member of the US Navy Reserves, and veteran of the war in Afghanistan, having served a counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan in 2011–2012.

**Adeeb Yousif** has worked for 14 years with grassroots and social justice movements throughout Sudan. In April 2001, he co-founded the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO), a human rights, humanitarian relief, and development NGO. Yousif has worked in internal rural areas to empower local communities to demand their rights from the government. He helped develop the Darfur Emergency Response Operation, which runs programs for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities in Darfur, helped initiate the Rebel Letters Campaign, and worked with Never Again International. Due to his human rights activism, he was detained twice by the Sudanese government, for close to a year, and endured torture during this time. He is Executive Director of Darfur Reconciliation and Development Organization, and a PhD candidate at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

## Introduction: Interfaith Contributions to Nurturing Cultures of Peace

*Douglas Irvin-Erickson*

In 2005, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).<sup>1</sup> The warrants brought renewed notoriety to the LRA, which was founded in Uganda in 1986. Yet, most critics seemed more interested in Kony's interpretation of Catholic Christian doctrines and the superstitions of the LRA culture, rather than examining the long-standing struggle for peace and reconciliation in Uganda.<sup>2</sup> Kony was presented by journalists and scholars as a dark and mysterious force—a madman with a fundamentalist personality disorder who convinced a group of followers that he was a spirit medium—whose LRA was not pursuing rational ends and could not be dealt with diplomatically.<sup>3</sup> Kony became a spectacle, a savage figure, a heart of darkness. The work of peacemakers seemed pedestrian in comparison. Yet, if there was a tale of uncommon courage, it rested in the peacemakers such as Betty Oyella Bigombe or Archbishop John Baptist Odama, who made trips into Kony's strongholds to confront him and who risked their lives proclaiming peace.<sup>4</sup>

Outside of a circle of specialists, little progress has been made during the last decade in understanding the religious contributions to peacemaking—even after scholars around the world, and officials in the US government, proclaimed that world peace could only be won by engaging the world's religions and religious movements.<sup>5</sup> The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was one of the first global events to highlight the fact that academics, policymakers, and statespeople had vastly underestimated the role of religion in global politics in the twentieth century, and that religious peacemakers and conflict mediators were desperately needed.<sup>6</sup> It was not until the end of the Cold War brought a proliferation of intrastate conflicts that interreligious violence became an object

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of extensive scholarship and interreligious peacebuilding became a project for activists and practitioners.<sup>7</sup> After 2001, interfaith peacebuilding was once again championed in public by many governments. In practice, however, these same governments subordinated religious peacebuilding initiatives to counterterrorism initiatives, and supported top-down approaches to peace that privileged state institutions and treaties. In the meanwhile, religious peacemakers on the ground continued to do their work, bringing about real and lasting change in their own societies and among enemies.<sup>8</sup>

Why are religious contributions to cultures of peace overshadowed by the overwhelming focus on religious violence? One reason for this neglect is that peacemakers themselves often prefer that their work remains anonymous. A second reason is that violence carries a broad cultural and symbolic significance, as either traumatic or honorable, but nevertheless something that should be remembered. Peace, on the other hand, is mundane. The overwhelming majority of human beings never engage in deadly violence in their entire lives, while those who do engage in violence or experience violence spend most of their lives living peacefully.<sup>9</sup>

Violence is rare. Yet, it occupies a special place in our memories, our religion, our laws, and the stories we tell. Thus, we tell stories of how Agamemnon killed his daughter in sacrifice to the Gods before the Greeks could set sail to rape and pillage the Trojans. Burgundy in Shakespeare's *Henry V* speaks of "that the naked, poor and mangled Peace," while King Henry speaks of "the blast of war" that leads men to "imitate the action of the tiger."<sup>10</sup> And we celebrate when Russia is saved when Napoleon's armies freeze to death in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Social scientists and journalists also help perpetuate the assumption that violence is at the core of the human experience. Consider Edward Said's argument in *Covering Islam*, for example, and it is clear that journalists, scholars, and politicians have participated in a collective act of producing cultural narratives that reduce the condition of millions of human beings from the so-called Islamic world into a monolithic experience of violence and conflict.<sup>11</sup> The law is also guilty of spinning such narratives, too. As Walter Benjamin argued, the legitimization of violence stands at the core of the law, so that violence is seen as the source of peace in both the natural law and positive law traditions.<sup>12</sup>

This collective tendency to privilege violence in our stories and histories, and to place violence at the center of explanations of the human condition, shapes the way religion, violence, and peace are studied and conceptualized. Because religion is often thought about in reductionist terms as a closed-off belief system that explains the cosmos through circular logic, religious violence is usually presented as something that cannot be prevented through rational means. Interreligious peacemakers, moreover, are often presented as trying to unite what cannot be united, trying to resolve conflicts among groups of people who have incompatible belief sets that fate them toward violence. Yet there is no empirical or social scientific evidence to demonstrate that religion is no more or no less a source of violence than the law, or cultural narratives, or stories. And there is nothing inherent in religion and religious belief that fates

religion toward violence or peace. Religion is equally capable of serving as an underlying ideology for violent extremists, as well as a source of inspiration for those whom Scott Appleby has called militants for peace.<sup>13</sup>

What is interreligious peacemaking and how can religious leaders contribute to cultures of peace in the contemporary world?

The authors in this volume take up this question in various ways, with each presenting a case study on religious contributions to cultures of peace. The chapters in this book were originally written for a conference on *Nurturing Peace in Contexts of Global Violence* at the New York Theological Seminary in May 2013. The goal of the conference was to promote dialogue between religious leaders of different faiths, practitioners, theologians, and scholars, to help connect the theory and reflective practice of religious peacebuilding. The scope of the contributions to this volume is reflective of the conference goals, and deals with specific case studies from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. The chapters in the volume—which range from security studies, to sociology, ethics, and ecology, theology, and philosophy—were selected because they are interreligious, intercultural, and global in perspective.

In his contribution to this volume, Sungrae Kim presents a critical analysis of how the Neo-Confucian vision of harmony can be used as a source of interreligious peacebuilding in the contemporary world. Along similar lines, Hans Harmakaputra's chapter on religiously motivated violence and forgiveness in the case of one Indonesian church examines the theological and sociological basis of love and forgiveness, while charting a theology of reconciliation that can be used by peacemakers in the Indonesian context and beyond. Both authors work with an implicit definition of cultures of peace that underscored the conference theme, defining cultures of peace as social values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect and inspire social interaction based on the principles of justice, tolerance, and solidarity, that reject violence as a means of resolving conflicts and endeavor to resolve conflicts constructively through dialogue and negotiation.

Several authors take up the question of whether or not interreligious peace work could promote peace even in the context of war. Matthew Ridout, who served in a counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan with the US Navy, evaluates the US military's efforts to engage in dialogue with local religious leaders, providing a timely analysis of how religious leaders can be engaged in peacebuilding efforts that has implications for ongoing conflicts in Iraq and the Levant region and beyond, now and into the foreseeable future. Ezekiel Abdullahi Babagario's chapter likewise draws on his experience in Muslim-Christian interfaith dialogue—as well as his experience as a veteran of the Nigerian Air Force and a theologian—discussing the practical lessons of religious contributions to nurturing cultures of peace in Jos, Nigeria. Both chapters demonstrate that violent religious militants are members of movements that are, above all, social organizations with leaders who act in accordance with their own interests, and followers who are not impervious to calls for peace and justice on the grounds of the same religious traditions that motivated them toward violence.

Adeeb Yousif, in his chapter on religious violence and the interreligious potential for peace in Sudan, comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that “Political Islam” in Sudan is not a mass movement inspired by religious ideology, but rather operates very much like a political party that has seized control over state and civic institutions to solidify their single-party rule over the country, and perpetuate a divide-and-rule strategy toward maintaining power in Sudan.

Indeed, religious peacemaking often entails existential processes of coming to terms with worldly conflicts and suffering. But it can also involve matters of so-called “track two” diplomacy, where religious leaders and other citizens participate with representatives of states and armed groups to negotiate settlements that are very much a part of “this world.”<sup>14</sup> Or, it may involve faith-based third-party nonviolent intervention, and religiously motivated activism designed to support communities enduring and resisting violent conflict. As Sarah MacDonald points out in her chapter on short-term international peacemaking delegations, at their best, such educational group trips may exceed a tourism rubric to become expressions of global peacemaking solidarity. Offering insights from her experience with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia, MacDonald charts a path for peacebuilders that is built on an ethics of friendship, fostering hospitality and vulnerability between the visiting delegates and their hosts.

Religious peacemaking can also involve locally respected religious leaders who make moral and ethical appeals to actors in a wide range of conflicts, from appeals to violent members of a community to put down their guns, to neighbors quarreling verbally over which schools their children can attend. Yet, above all, religious peacemaking is about articulating a vision of what counts as peace, how to achieve it, and why. Jeff Benvenuto’s chapter in this volume deals with the United Church in Canada, the role the church played in facilitating genocide against Native Americans, and the legacy of this genocide. Evaluating the United Church’s approach to reconciliation, Benvenuto argues that reconciliation should be approached from the perspective of promoting ecological justice and promoting paths toward decolonization. Elizabeth Whiting Pierce likewise conceptualizes peacebuilding from an ecological perspective. She argues that building ecological and economic peace often requires a reconfiguration of a society’s collective memory. Pierce argues for three key elements in collective memory change—historical, gestural, and mythical memories—and highlights Roman Catholic Wangari Maathai’s reforestation work in Kenya as an example religious peacebuilders may follow in influencing their own society’s collective memories.

### WHAT IS PEACE?

Peace, when it is defined as the absence of violence of any kind, is usually referred to as negative peace. However, peace is commonly understood as more than simply the absence of violence, but the presence of conditions that make peace sustainable, ensure security from physical harm, and promote a common

respect for shared notions of basic inviolable human rights. This second definition of peace, often called positive peace, includes equal access to economic necessities and education, or the pursuit of more just social and political conditions. The concept of positive peace originates partly in Immanuel Kant's famous essay *Perpetual Peace*.<sup>15</sup> Neither Kant nor later theorist of positive peace used the term to signify a state of utopian harmony free of conflicts. Rather, for Kant, perpetual peace was defined not by the absence of war, but as the presence of certain social conditions—namely, a republican political system that respected universal individual rights and prevented governments from waging war, and a cosmopolitan and tolerant society that was welcoming of others and saw no need to resort to war and violence to solve conflicts and political problems. Following Kant, positive peace for these social theorists generally refers to the nonviolent and creative transformation of conflicts where, ideally, conflicting groups resolve disputes nonviolently, thereby allowing conflicts to form the basis of collaborative and supportive relationships.<sup>16</sup>

Studying positive peace from the perspective of individual societies, Johan Galtung created the concept of structural violence to describe and speak about the violent or unjust conditions in negative peace that prevent individuals from being able to live healthy lives or fulfill their human potential, and thereby prevent positive peace from being realized.<sup>17</sup> The Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff gave the concept of structural violence a theological form, which he termed originating violence. Originating violence, for Boff, signifies the structural violence that maintains systems of oppression without elites having to resort to the explicit use of organized violence and state terror. This violence has roots in elite institutions of power and established social systems, Boff writes, and is used to protect the interest of dominant groups, such as the extreme right in Latin America.<sup>18</sup> The pursuit of nonviolent struggle is therefore a moral imperative to Boff because nonviolent resistance to originating violence has the ability to create a just society by transforming social systems built around originating violence into systems of peaceful political contention. Galtung believed that religion is a social institution that—along with many other similar types of institutions—could shape normative expectations for both peace and/or violence within a society, or perpetuate either structural violence or more just social systems. For Boff, however, originating violence appears to people to be beyond the ability of humans to influence or change—as the source and foundation of the social and political world, and therefore intrinsic to the human condition and the very source of our social lives. Yet, for Boff, religion and religious belief offer activists an alternative vision of the human cosmos, allowing people imagine a human condition where an ethics of reciprocity and love is the source and foundation of human society, not structural violence. In such a way, Boff argues, religion provides people with the criteria necessary for judging social systems, the moral reference points necessary for denouncing originating violence and guiding appropriate actions to change such social systems, and a basic knowledge of how to act in order to prevent direct and structural violence.

In recent years, scholars have begun to argue that Kantian philosophy and, more generally, liberal theories of international relations are actually forms of “Judeo-Christian secularism.” This thesis holds that the values and norms of liberalism—which underpins the very foundation of the concept of perpetual peace—were grounded in religious traditions, just as much as they were grounded in the Enlightenment critique of the arbitrary use of power and tradition.<sup>19</sup> René Cassin, one of the main drafters of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, maintained that liberal human rights rested on the foundation of religious and natural law, while transcending religious and ideological differences.<sup>20</sup> “The concept of human rights comes from the Bible, from the Old Testament, from the Ten Commandments,” Cassin wrote: “Whether these principles were centered on the church, the mosque, or the *polis*, they were often phrased in terms of duties, which now presume rights.”<sup>21</sup> Thus “thou shall not murder” becomes the right to life, and “though shall not steal” becomes the right to own property. While “Judaism gave the world the concept of human rights,” human rights were not legitimized by their reference to Jewish particularism, for Cassin, but by their reference to universal principles. Like the ethical foundations of Judaism, Islam too presents peace as more than the absence of violence, but as the presences of just social conditions that demand the distribution of wealth and compassion so as to allow humans to fulfill their full potential in the world.<sup>22</sup>

Modern conceptions of ethics—and modern notions of what constitutes a peaceful and just society—cannot be located solely within European history or the Abrahamic traditions, however.<sup>23</sup> The drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly looked beyond liberalism and the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to the ten essential human freedoms and virtues of a good life in Hinduism, the Buddhist concepts of selflessness and the middle path, and the Confucian injunctions against the unrestrained desires of rulers who have heavenly duties to have compassion for their people.<sup>24</sup> The sanctity of human life, the virtues of proportionate justice, tolerance, social and economic well-being, and mandates to accept people of other traditions as part of a common brotherhood are all beliefs that can be found in both modern secular traditions and ancient traditions.<sup>25</sup>

That is not to say that there are no differences between traditions. Whereas Western theorists tend to look toward the past for the sources of conflict and toward the future for solutions, for example, Buddhist social theory views conflicts as impermanent and commands the peacemaker to “treat the present causative patterns as the basic reality.”<sup>26</sup> The Cambodian peacemaker Maha Ghosananda described the Cambodian peace process after the Khmer Rouge genocide as a matter of *here, now*, and *this*.<sup>27</sup> This particular Theravada Buddhist interpretation of peace strikes to a universal point, however: cultures of peace require institutions of reciprocity, and the willingness to talk about current interests over transcendent beliefs. In Ghosananda’s terms, this commitment to focusing on the interests of the “here, now, this” was structured through an immediate focus on the present conditions of the world, as it is constructed by

and for the individuals who are in conflict. When seeking peace, “there is no need to worry about the past or the future,” the monk implored, employing Buddhist idioms: “The secret of happiness is to be entirely with what is in front of you, to live fully at the present moment ... This is the only moment we can control ... Take care of the present, and the future will be well.”<sup>28</sup> This interpretation of Buddhist perspectives establishes a spiritual mandate for people in conflict to focus on the present factors of a conflict over considerations about the past. In addition to providing a way for parties in conflict to discuss the interests that propel conflict over religious beliefs, this approach also provides a way for peacemakers to prevent parties in conflict from allowing contested memories of the past, and past cycles of violence and revenge, from standing in the way of peace.

Galtung has written that Buddhist-inspired epistemology offers theorists of peace and peace workers distinct advantages because, at first, it conceives of empirical reality as not final, but created and recreated all the time.<sup>29</sup> And, second, the social world according to Buddhist epistemology is the product of the mental state of human beings. Because peace and conflict are not distinct states of being in Buddhist cosmology, but interrelated processes rooted in the minds of conflicting individuals, Buddhist thought sees conflicts as grounded in the consciousness of the present.<sup>30</sup> Where Western social scientists have tended to look to long-standing competitions and eternal hatreds as the basis of violent conflict, an approach based on Buddhist philosophy recognizes that the cause of violent conflict is not long-standing animosities, but the belief that the animosities are real. The Buddha’s teaching of the *paticca-samuppāda* seeks to show people how the mind builds meaning and establishes social reality.<sup>31</sup> When conflict is seen as essentially a mental process, then “peace acquires a new meaning: it is the transformation of that process.”<sup>32</sup> Buddhism, of course, has a long history of inspiring violence. Galtung’s point, however, is that in Buddhist cosmology there is always the potential for a new reality, unforeseen by present empirical reality, which makes little room for dogmatisms such as “peace can never be achieved because violence is inherent in human nature.”<sup>33</sup>

As Sungrae Kim points out in his chapter, so-called Eastern religions are often romanticized as providing ancient wisdoms that can mystically inform modern conflicts. Rather than romanticizing Buddhism in such a way, it is important to point out that human history is filled with examples of religiously motivated efforts to resist violence and structural violence and promote peaceful and just societies.<sup>34</sup> In the history of European colonialism in Latin America, for instance, indigenous communities employed nonviolent methods and mass noncooperation to resist forced assimilation and subordination for centuries that drew on indigenous religious traditions and, later, Christian traditions.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, religious beliefs, symbols, rituals, and practices—from traditional religious and Christianity, or a fusion of both—became primary idioms of resistance across Latin America because they provided communities with a sense of social and cultural cohesiveness, as well as a discourse of resistance that could provide a baseline from which