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Three Global Spiritual Leaders in a Time of War and Violence

- *Rowan Williams–the compassionate Christian scholar in a time of violence and conflict*
- *Jonathan Sacks–The towering Rabbi who built bridges of peace*
- *Haris Silajdžić–The true ambassador of peace between Islam and the West*

Authors

Akbar Ahmed
Frankie Martin
Dr. Amineh Hoti

There are few things more important than promoting understanding and bridge-building between people of different religions and cultures. It is not as simple or easy a task as it seems. On the contrary, it is complex and subject to push-back from the different parties as too often some interfaith practitioners end up arguing that their point of view is better or more valid than that of their dialogue partners of other religions. Conversely, sometimes religious differences or the unique worldviews and perspectives of the "other" are glossed over or not adequately discussed—thus allowing questions and stereotypes to remain. Muslims in the early twenty-first-century in general are having a tough time in this environment. It is critical that they are involved in dialogue and promoting both the understanding of their faith and the faiths of others.

With this in mind, we the authors who are committed to building bridges and promoting understanding, are proud to present three towering spiritual leaders who have been vigorously promoting interfaith dialogue especially involving Muslims wherever they could. These three figures represent the three Abrahamic faiths and each one of them has reached the pinnacle of his society–Lord Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Christians, Lord Dr. Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the UK for Judaism, and Dr. Haris Silajdzic, the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for Muslims. All have seriously considered the major challenges facing interfaith and intercultural harmony in the twenty-first century and how they may be overcome. As such, they each have much to teach us about how to practically move forward with this essential and urgent task.

This paper is adapted from the authors' forthcoming study, *The Mingling of the Oceans: How Civilizations Can Live Together.* The book is about those people in history described as "Minglers," who have embraced those not of their group—their religion, race, ethnicity, nation, or tribe—and how they did so. A Mingler is someone who tries to bring people together, who points to the dangers of exclusivism and insists on seeing humanity in a single framework stressing human unity.

Rowan Williams–the compassionate Christian scholar in a time of violence and conflict

Akbar Ahmed, Frankie Martin, and Dr Amineh Hoti

To reach the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the world's Anglican faithful living in the historic Lambeth Palace, and then the Master of a Cambridge College, is about as high as you can ascend in British society. Dr. Lord Rowan Williams achieved both positions, all the while producing high-quality academic work. Besides, he entered the popular imagination when he conducted the marriage ceremony of Prince William and Kate Middleton which had an estimated television audience of one billion people. He now plays the role of a leading public intellectual: his debate with Professor Richard Dawkins, the formidable Oxford professor and widely seen as the leader of the New Atheists in the world, has acquired legendary status and should be studied for style and content.

Williams held an office that has been at the center of English history. The clashes between the reigning monarchs and the archbishops attempting to preserve the primacy of the church are legendary. In the twelfth century, Henry II prompted the murder of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral itself and Thomas Cranmer, who helped build a case for Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, was executed in the sixteenth century, but not before he compiled the English Book of Common Prayer. Balanced against this, however, have been the many occasions when the church has reached across sectarian lines to embrace those of other faiths. Williams has done just this, and with substantial intellectual authority—he was described by a biographer as the most intellectually distinguished Archbishop of Canterbury since Saint Anselm who served in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.[1] Furthermore, Williams' influence and profile extends well beyond the boundaries of his own Church of England to include Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.[2]

[1] Rupert Shortt, *Rowan's Rule: The Biography of the Archbishop of Canterbury* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 2008), p. 3.
[2] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule*, p. 3.

Williams' talents additionally include poetry, and he has published both books of his own poetry and a book of commentary on spiritual poems by Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists of different nationalities.[3] He is fluent in around ten languages and his diverse intellectual influences include religious scholars like Thomas Merton and Meister Eckhart and philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein. Williams is a formidable theologian whose prodigious scholarship also effortlessly ranges across the fields of literary criticism, philosophy, and political theory.

I have seen up close Williams' commitment to interfaith dialogue and embracing non-Christians over the years in my meetings with him. Dr. Amineh Hoti and I were invited to Lambeth Palace in 2012, for example, to attend one of Williams' final public events as archbishop—which notably focused on interfaith engagement—and I was asked to deliver the keynote address in the afternoon session. At this event, the lectures of the archbishop to Muslim audiences in Egypt, Libya and Pakistan, which had been compiled into a volume and translated into Urdu and Bengali, were presented to the archbishop along with glowing speeches made by Muslims recording the contributions of the archbishop in promoting interfaith dialogue. After the official events he still found time to meet Amineh and myself separately with his usual courtesy and kindness.

Williams has also been a great supporter of Amineh, coming to Cambridge to launch her book project *Valuing Diversity: Towards Mutual Understanding and Respect* at Michaelhouse, one of the oldest churches and educational centers in the UK. We returned to interview Williams a few years later during our fieldwork, this time at the Master's Lodge at Cambridge's Magdalene College. The image of Lord Rowan absorbed in a Rubik's Cube with four-year-old Anah Hoti, Amineh's daughter and my granddaughter, at this meeting reminds us of his human quality of compassion. He is known in the land as a champion of the less privileged and the voiceless. His Welsh background has helped him sharpen his empathy for the underdog—particularly minorities and those of different ethnicities and religions, and he has affirmed, "God is likeliest

[3] Rowan Williams, *A Century of Poetry: 100 Poems for Searching the Heart* (London: SPCK, 2022).

to be found among those we have…dismissed or shut out."[4] In action, in belief, and in thought Lord Rowan has practiced Mingling. At the heart of his work and advocacy has been an embrace of the "Other," which he argues creates the necessary space for mutual growth and enrichment based on encountering difference. His compassion lies close to the surface.

Williams' efforts in this regard have not been without controversy, particularly as far as the Muslim community was concerned after 9/11, an event that he witnessed up close while serving as Archbishop of Wales (he was only a few blocks from the World Trade Center on that morning). To him, the importance of interfaith dialogue and facilitating human coexistence based in the message and example of Jesus only grew in importance after that horrible day. When it became known that Williams might soon become Archbishop of Canterbury not long after 9/11, he was described in the *Wall Street Journal* as a "terror apologist" for calling on people to understand the terrorists' motives and making statements like "Bombast about evil individuals doesn't help in understanding anything."[5]

But this was nothing compared to the uproar that resulted from Williams' 2008 lecture on sharia law, in which he argued that British law must take seriously the presence of populations such as Muslims who had their own legal interpretations, and he hoped to open up a space for conversation which might lead to a more plural legal system. The tabloid headlines included "WHAT A BURKHA: Archbishop wants Muslim Law in UK"[6] and "a victory for al Qaeda."[7] There were calls for his resignation as British government officials complained that Williams was trying "to fundamentally change the rule of law."[8] There was also criticism within the church, for example from bishops in Nigeria.[9] Williams explained that he had only hoped to create "a helpful interaction between the courts and the practice of Muslim legal scholars in this country."[10] His commitment to serious interfaith dialogue, not just in the theological or

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[4] Rowan Williams, *Choose Life: Christmas and Easter Sermons in Canterbury Cathedral* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 187.
[5] Peter Mullen, "Tales of Canterbury's Future?," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2002.
[6] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule*, p. 396.
[7] Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), p. 63.
[8] Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, p. 63.
[9] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule*, p. 396.
[10] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 400.

educational realm but in the practical, nuts and bolts aspects of living together and what this means and looks like, was undiminished by the controversy.

Williams was born in 1950 in Swansea, Wales to a middle-class family. He was descended from Welsh miners and shepherds who were drawn into the Swansea valley at the beginning of the nineteenth century, hoping to find greater opportunities. His family was proud of their Welsh identity, and while Williams grew up speaking both Welsh and English, his grandfather had banned the use of English in their home.[11] As an infant Williams was stricken with meningitis, and he was unable to play sports or engage in physical activities in the way that most boys did.[12] Consequently he withdrew into the world of books, consuming works of literature, philosophy, and history.[13] He went on to attend the University of Cambridge and while he initially planned to attain a degree in English literature, he switched to theology. This was not, as he saw it, an alternative to literature but "as a way of exploring the deeper questions that he had stumbled upon in his reading of authors like Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden."[14]

Williams' reaching out to the "Other" was already visible during this period in his interest in Russian Orthodox Christianity. It was not an interest that would have necessarily been viewed with neutrality by others around him, as this was the height of the Cold War in the 1960s. As a teenager, Williams became aware of what he called "an alien cultural presence on the other side of Europe which had a hinterland of imagery both odd and seductive" and he wished to know more. He read Russian literature, listened to Slavic music, and watched Russian films.[15] After graduating from Cambridge, he moved to Oxford where he completed a PhD on the Russian theologian Vladimir Lossky.

Williams was ordained as a deacon and spent nearly a decade in parish work in Cambridge, all the while continuing his academic career. He then moved to Oxford to assume the post of Professor of Divinity and Canon of Christ Church, and subsequently ascended to the high church

[11] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 26.
[12] Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, pp. 13-14.
[13] Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, p. 14.
[14] Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, p. 22.
[15] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 65.

positions of Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop of Wales before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 2002. At his enthronement as archbishop, he gave an address which outlined his approach throughout his tenure at embracing the "Other": "Once we recognize God's great secret, that we are all made to be God's sons and daughters, we can't avoid the call to see one another differently. No one can be written off; no group, no nation, no minority can just be a scapegoat to receive our fears and uncertainties. We cannot assume that any human face we see has no divine secret to disclose," including "those who are culturally or religiously strange to us."[16]

In his writings and teachings, Williams has stressed both the inherent diversity of the world and our essential connections with this diversity. We should accept, he says, that the "diversity and mysteriousness of the world around is something precious in itself. To reduce this diversity and to try and empty out the mysteriousness is to fail to allow God to speak through the things of creation as he means to."[17] We are all intermeshed and should recognize "the complex interrelations that make us what we are as part of the whole web of existence on the planet."[18] Humanity itself is "unimaginable without all those other life forms which make it possible and which it in turn serves and conserves."[19] We should be aware that "we can't control the weather system or the succession of the seasons. The world turns, and the tides move at the drawing of the moon. Human force is incapable of changing any of this. What is before me is a network of relations and interconnections in which the relation to me, or even to us collectively as human beings, is very far from the whole story. I may ignore this, but only at the cost of disaster."[20]

And yet, we have a tendency to not recognize this interconnection, to think of ourselves as somehow meaningful or complete either on our own or as part of our own group. But this is to lack a perspective of the whole. "To *understand* the world," Williams contends, "is to sense a deep embrace, a mutuality or interpenetration that does not simply negate the reality of

[16] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* pp. 260-261.
[17] Williams, *Choose Life*, p. 55.
[18] Williams, Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 201.
[19] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 198.
[20] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 185.

individual subjects or individual moments, but forbids us from thinking of those moments as enclosed or absolute."[21]

A good example of Williams' thinking on this subject can be seen in his statements on nationalism. He is not against being proud of one's own ethnic identity—in his case being Welsh. But we must always keep in mind the link with the greater unity. Each group of "people living with this or that corporate history, common language and culture" such as the Welsh, he argues, should see their identity "as a thread in a larger tapestry."[22] This idea is firmly rooted in Christian theology and history, Williams argues, and "Any racial group or language group or sovereign state whose policy or programme it is to pursue its interest at the direct cost of others has no claim on the Christian's loyalty."[23]

This perspective comes out clearly in Williams' commentary on the Welsh poet Waldo Williams, whose verse, "*Cadw ty mewn cwmwl tystion*" ("Keeping house/ among a cloud of witnesses), Wiliams notes, "has become almost proverbial in Wales."[24] The line captures the Minglers' view of embracing local and universal simultaneously, as Lord Rowan explains, "Belonging to a tradition with deep local roots makes us heirs to not a possession that has to be violently defended but a security which allows us to seek mutual recognition between people, not opposition and rivalry."[25]

Our identities as a part of a group, then, should never be seen as closed but open—especially to the "Other." In our interview with Lord Rowan, he told us, "Identity is always something we have to work at. It's not something just given. We can't simply say, 'This is who I am. It's all in here. In me, or in us, and that's all we need to know.' The identity of Britain, or just England, of course, has always been diverse. And I'm speaking here as somebody who comes from a minority group in Britain, that is the Welsh, with their own language, their own cultural history. So I suppose I've been conscious from my childhood that it's more than one story. And that's the

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[21] Williams, *A Century of Poetry*, commentary on Jan Zwicky, "Grace Is Unmoved. It is the Light that Melts, excerpt from 'Philosophers' Stone.'"
[22] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 254.
[23] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 253.
[24] Williams, *A Century of Poetry*, commentary on Waldo Williams, "What is Man?"
[25] Williams, *A Century of Poetry*, commentary on Waldo Williams, "What is Man?"

second thing about identity. We find out who we are by telling stories about ourselves." In his case, "When I was at school, we were obliged to study Welsh history as well as English. So it was like having binoculars. Two things to look at."

The "Other" is crucial for Williams because they bring out something important in us—essentially we find out who we really are while meeting one another, learning about each other, and going on a journey together. As Williams says, "We shall none of us know who we are without each other."[26] While we may believe that our own experience is the correct one or only one that matters, "The individual reality or situation is like a single chord abstracted from a symphony: it can be looked at in itself, but only with rather boring results, since what it is there and then is determined by the symphony…there is no perspective outside plurality."[27] He calls for us to turn "away from an atomized, artificial notion of the self as simply setting its own agenda from inside towards that more fluid, more risky, but also more human discourse of the exchanges in relations in which we're involved."[28] He wants us to be "confident enough to *exchange* perspectives, truths, insights."[29] Of great importance is "listening" to others, which is needed "almost more than anything else…patience before each other, before the mysteriousness of each other."[30]

In reaching out to the "Other," we deemphasize the self and thus create a better world for all—including ourselves: What is important is "life for the other, which is the life that Christ embodies, in history as in preaching and sacrament."[31] Williams affirms that "What we need in order to live in a balanced, 'reasonable' way within creation is the well-being and flourishing of our neighbours, justice being done to and for them."[32] He explains, "Scripture is definitely clear that to be drawn near to God is always to be drawn near to each other, and there is no way of separating those two."[33] If we do the opposite, as so many do, if we "live untouched or uncaring

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[26] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 303.
[27] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 186-187
[28] Rowan Williams, *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), p. 47.
[29] Williams, *Being Human*, p. 40.
[30] Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another* (Boston: New Seeds, 2005), p. 84.
[31] Rowan Williams, *Christ: The Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 195.
[32] Rowan Williams, *Passions of the Soul* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024), p. 44.
[33] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 219.

in the midst of poverty, disease, violence, corruption and disaster, we starve. Our failure in giving to the neighbour becomes an injury to ourselves."[34] We also often fall prey to "zero-sum" thinking which "assumes that there can never be 'enough to go round': if I have more, they have less; if they have more, I have less" which is "so evidently at the root of virtually all major conflicts, social, national and political as much as personal."[35]A perspective of unity, however, gets beyond such zero-sum thinking and can promote peace.

The essential basis of our relations with all is love, Williams notes, which was Jesus' example, as Jesus advocated for the "harmony and well-being of the entire human family."[36] To follow Jesus' example is "to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts…humanity in endless growth towards love."[37] Just as God loves all, "we too must learn to love beyond the boundaries of common interest and natural sympathy and, like God, love those who don't seem to have anything in common with us."[38] He further asserts that "Creation, the total environment, is a system oriented towards life—and, ultimately, towards intelligent and loving life."[39] Lord Rowan is insistent that "There cannot be a human good for one person or group that necessarily excludes the good of another person or group"[40] and "no life can be allowed to fall out of the circle of love."[41] On the basis of this love—the love on which the "universe" is founded[42]—will society and the world flourish.

Williams also argues that just as truth cannot be encapsulated in one's own limited perspective without encountering the "Other," no one religion can be so contained—the divine is much larger than any single experience, comprehension, or tradition. Concerning Christians, he cites the French Catholic theologian Jacques Pohier, who said, "God does not show himself in Jesus Christ as being the totality of meaning."[43] This means, Williams contends, that everyone is trying to understand God in their own ways, and God "does not control how the divine is to be

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[34] Williams, *Passions of the Soul*, p. 44.
[35] Williams, *Passions of the Soul*, p. 66.
[36] Williams, *Christ*, p. 220
[37] Rowan Williams, *Holy Living: The Christian Tradition for Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 95.
[38] Williams, *Passions of the Soul*, p. 107.
[39] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 205.
[40] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 230.
[41] Williams, *Choose Life*, p. 38.
[42] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 232.
[43] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 122.

met by means of a single set of revealed schemata."[44] "We do not, as Christians," Williams explains, "set the goal of including the entire human race in a single religious institution, nor do we claim that we possess all authentic religious insight.[45] Being Christian "is believing the doctrine of the Trinity to be true…It is not to claim a *totality* of truth about God or about the human world, or even a monopoly of the means of bringing divine absolution or grace to men and women."[46]

Once again, as a Mingler, Williams is calling our attention to a larger reality which unifies us. While, "we are, by the very nature of our humanity, naturally *attuned* to the reality of God," [47] he argues, the particular ways in we understand God will differ. This is where interfaith dialogue can be very fruitful, because "we have none of us received the whole truth as God knows it; we all have things to learn."[48] Williams asserts that "there is no possibility of claiming that every human question is answered once and for all by one system."[49]

Williams' approach to interfaith thus starts from a position of "humility" which asserts that "even as we proclaim our conviction of truth," we "acknowledge with respect the depth and richness of another's devotion to and obedience to what they have received as truth."[50] This does not imply "for a moment that dialogue entails the compromise of fundamental beliefs or that the issue of truth is a matter of indifference; quite the opposite."[51] It is likewise not a matter of "the triumph of one theory or one institution or one culture," [52] but how we can constructively "find a way of working together towards a mode of human co-operation, mutual challenge and mutual nurture."[53]

Williams goes even further and gives us a concrete and practical program for how to conduct interfaith dialogue. He counsels us to avoid misunderstandings by paying close attention to the

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[44] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 122.
[45] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 194.
[46] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 196-197.
[47] Williams, *Where God Happens*, p. 49.
[48] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 301.
[49] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 299.
[50] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 301.
[51] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 301.
[52] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 191
[53] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 191

language and concepts we employ, asking questions like "Are these two or more traditions addressing similar or different concerns when they use language and imagery that seems to be closely similar?"[54] When we begin to understand another tradition on its own terms, things that we initially thought might be the opposite of what we believe turn out not to be so. Then you can "try to discover what your own tradition commits you to and how it answers legitimate criticism from outside—criticism which often (as in the case of the mutability of God) could be raised intelligibly *within* the native tradition. What emerges is frequently a conceptual and imaginative world in which at least some of the positive concerns of diverse traditions are seen to be held in common."[55]

We are already often operating at a disadvantage when we attempt dialogue between faiths and cultures because of the images that we often have of the "Other." Frequently, Williams states, the "Other" is constructed as the "opposite" of the "Self."[56] This distorted "Other" is often a "fantasy" to us—an act of "conscription" into our "story,"[57] without caring to understand their story from their own point of view. It is a universal problem as "all human beings are liable to be drawn into the fantasy lives of others."[58] This, however, is destructive, with Williams explaining, "When you get used to imposing meanings in this way, you silence the stranger's account of who they are; and that can mean both metaphorical and literal death."[59]

This has been done often by Christians, Williams says—they "conscripted Jews into their version of reality and forced them into a role that has nothing to do with how Jews understand their own past or current experience." [60] Speaking of the resulting anti-Semitism, Williams told us, "the poison is still in the system. And even now, even today." It is also the case with Muslims, who "were made to play a part in the drama written by Christians, as a kind of diabolical mirror image of Christian identity, worshipping a trinity of ridiculous idols."[61] Jews and Muslims, for

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[54] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 131.
[55] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 290.
[56] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 287.
[57] Rowan Williams, *Writing in the Dust: After September 11* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), p. 68.
[58] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 297.
[59] Williams, *Writing in the Dust*, p. 64
[60] Williams, *Writing in the Dust*, p. 63
[61] Williams, *Writing in the Dust*, p. 63

their part, "cherished equally bizarre beliefs about Christianity at times. They, like us, needed to assert some kind of control over the stranger, the other by 'writing them in' in terms that could be managed and manipulated."[62]

In the contemporary world, Williams lamented, this is happening far too often. We fear one another, and thus build walls between us, but "Every wall we build to defend ourselves and keep out what may destroy us is also a wall that keeps us in and that will change us in ways we did not choose or want. Every human solution to fears and threats generates a new set of fears and threats…Defences do some terrible things to us as well as to our real and imagined enemies."[63] We also often see ourselves as victims of an "Other" which feeds into our opposition of them. This sense can become "so entrenched that even one's own power, felt and exercised, does not alter the mythology."[64]

How do we get past our fantasies of the "Other" which can be so dangerous? Once again, Lord Rowan presents several practical steps. First, he calls for "abandoning the right to decide who they [strangers] are."[65] Instead, we should be "enabling the stranger to be heard, deciding that the stranger has a gift and a challenge that can change you."[66] Second, is to acknowledge our inherently limited view. Williams states, "I recognize that what's before me, whether rose or person, can be seen from other perspectives than mine."[67] In being open enough to listen, we will also learn how we are seen—we will discover "things about ourselves we did not know, seeing ourselves through the eyes of another."[68]

Thirdly, rather than trying to learn about the "Other" by focusing only on theology or beliefs, spend time with them. Williams recommends, "hang around with the representatives of one or another religious tradition—share the experiences of worship, entertain the images, the stories they tell. Look at the lives they point to as important lives, important saints, figures in their

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[62] Williams, *Writing in the Dust*, p. 63
[63] Williams, *Choose Life*, pp. 44-45.
[64] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 144.
[65] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 303.
[66] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 305.
[67] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 17.
[68] Williams, *Choose Life*, p. 156.

tradition: because I think it is profoundly true that the religious apprehension is caught, not taught."[69]

This was the element he emphasized in his interview with us, stating, "When you realize you've not really got close to your neighbors, you will either panic, or you can say, 'well it's time I started isn't it?' So either you react with projecting all sorts of mysterious and terrible things on to them or you sit with them and listen." In the case of Muslims, Williams said, "We in Europe and elsewhere simply need to educate ourselves about what Islam really is. And we need to listen very hard to the average Muslim neighbor…To listen to the experience of those who are unobtrusively but faithfully living ordinary Muslims lives fully within our society. Listen to them."

The fourth step, in a recommendation also endorsed by Minglers such as Rumi, is to attempt to see others who you may not like from the perspective of those who love them.[70] You will then see them as full human beings and it becomes more difficult to hate and dehumanize them. The final step is to acknowledge that others have suffered. In that sense, tragedy can provide an opportunity because it can enable you to empathize with others. This was Williams' message when he spoke at a church in New York on September 12, 2001: "trauma can offer a breathing space; and in that space there is the possibility of recognising that we have had an experience that is not just a nightmarish insult to us but a door into the suffering of countless other innocents, a suffering that is more or less routine for them in their less regularly protected environments…There is a global hospitality possible too in the presence of death."[71]

Another aspect of Lord Rowan's thought important for our discussion of Mingling is his political philosophy. Like philosophers such as Plato and Socrates, Williams has spent a great deal of time pondering the ideal society. For him, in accordance with his Christianity and outlook on the "Other," the ideal society is a *plural* society. It is a place where everyone can be themselves, where they bring their own unique contribution to public life and learn from each other. In this,

[69] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 125.
[70] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 17.
[71] Williams, *Writing in the Dust*, p. 60.

he is engaged in a similar project and is in dialogue with UK Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, another one of our Minglers who also attempted to put forth a model of the ideal society based in the high aspirations of his own religious community.

Williams posits the ideal society on two main levels, the level of the nation or state and the level of the world. The same general elements are present in both. Williams' ideal nation-state and world alike is a place in which people from different groups are able to recognize, communicate with, trust, and respect one another, and have conversations and debates "across cultures about the requirements of the good."[72]

In the state, he explains, there will always be different communities and groups, each with their own concerns, their own unique worldviews, their ways of running their own affairs and so on. Williams argues that every group should have their utmost rights and abilities to do so. But his model is not the "multicultural" one discussed in the West which, he contends, can isolate communities and in which the state can become "chaotically pluralist, with no proper account of its legitimacy except a positivist one (the state is the agency that happens to have the monopoly of force).'"[73] Nor is it the secular model, which seeks to push difference, especially religious difference, into the private realm and to remain "neutral" in public. If religions are not brought into the open, Williams believes, "the most important motivations for moral action in the public sphere will be obliged to conceal themselves. And religious identity, pursued and cultivated behind locked doors, can be distorted by its lack of access to the air and the criticism of public debate."[74]

So, we are forced to deal with each other, and the gifts and results of the encounter are substantial. "Forget 'multiculturalism' as some sort of prescription," Williams urges, "begin from the multicultural fact. We are already neighbours and fellow-citizens; what we need is neither the ghetto nor the reassertion of a fictionally unified past, but ordinary intelligence,

[72] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 123.
[73] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 80.
[74] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 53.

sympathy and curiosity in the face of difference—which is the basis of all learning and all growing-up, in individuals or societies."[75]

Once we are aware of others' differences, we will discover what elements we share and which we may not. As far as the politics of the state itself, the political process should be to identify those "transcendent values"[76] we discover in the process of dialogue that we all have in common, those "values and priorities" which "can claim the widest 'ownership.'"[77] This can be a particular moral vision or something as practical as paved roads. Other examples include development programs for a city or region, environmental regulations, and questions of bioethics.

The goal is to hold state-level discussions and pass laws concerning how everyone can live together, dealing with issues of common interest that are beyond the level of the individual or a particular group. But the state can only be the desired "space in which distinctive styles and convictions could challenge each other and affect each other" if members of each group first have "the freedom to be themselves."[78] In the end, "what is needed for our convictions to flourish is bound up with what is needed for the convictions of other groups to flourish. We learn that we can best defend ourselves by defending others."[79] He calls for "a model of politics which is always to do with negotiation and the struggle for mutual understanding."[80]

Williams endorses Jonathan Sacks' belief that society can best function as a "covenant," a resonant concept in Judaism and Christianity. As Williams explains, "Diverse communities resolve to enter a kind of 'covenant' in which they agree on their mutual attitudes, and thus on a 'civil' environment, in every sense of the word; and they build on this foundation a social order in which all have an investment."[81]

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[75] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 112.
[76] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 296.
[77] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 297.
[78] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 81.
[79] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 297.
[80] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 297.
[81] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 300.

One important role for the state—and other groups and entities—in Williams' vision is in education, particularly in educating students about each other's traditions and discussing the important links between them in the past. He says, "A society in which religious diversity exists is invited to recognize that human history is not one story only; even where a majority culture and religion exists, it is part of a wider picture."[82] History shows that "diversity cannot help being interactive; and that it in itself can prompt us to think of social unity as the process of a constantly readjusting set of differences, not an imposed scheme claiming totality and finality."[83] History is key because "if we don't know how we got here, we will tend to assume that where we are is obvious. If we assume that where we are is obvious, we are less likely to ask critical questions about it."[84]

State education should highlight the ways in which religious traditions interact in history and how they arose together. The reality is that "divergent strands of human thought, imagination and faith can weave together in the formation of each other and of various societies"[85] and this is just what has happened, for example, in the UK. The country and culture are the product of many different influences, Williams told us, for example, "we've always had waves of immigrants. In fact, the English themselves are a wave of immigrants from the point of view of the Welsh." Concerning the UK, Europe and Islam, Lord Rowan said that Islam is not separate from Europe nor does it represent something alien, but it is within the European cultural sphere and context and tradition: "Islam has long been bound up with Europe's internal identity as a matter of simple historical fact, and it stands on a cultural continuum with Christianity, not in some completely different frame."[86] The UK has been "affected by the strand of mathematical and scientific culture stemming from the Islamic world of the early Middle Ages…aspects of medieval Christian discourse took shape partly in reaction to Islamic thought. The apparently alien presence of another faith has meant that we have had to ask whether it is after all as completely alien as we assumed; and as we find that it is not something from another universe, we discover elements of language and aspiration in common."[87]

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[82] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 299.
[83] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 299.
[84] Williams, *Being Human*, pp. 56-57.
[85] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 300.
[86] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 71.
[87] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 300.

Williams put it this way while speaking with us: "The history of Andalucia and the interaction of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities there, that's very well known. I'd also point out the enormously important cultural phenomenon of Sicily. Right in the heart of the Mediterranean world, where you have the Norman culture of Northern Europe coming in, you have the Byzantine culture of Eastern Europe present, and you have a North African and Arab-speaking element. And through most of the Middle Ages Sicily was, again, a place of conversation. And look at Eastern Europe. You may say that the Eastern Empire, the Byzantine Empire was locked in conflict with the Islamic world, and of course it was. At the same time, it was also interacting constantly with it, more than with the West at times. Even intermarrying with it." Thus, the reality of our current situation where we are living with so much diversity "becomes a stimulus to find what it is that can be brought together in constructing a new and more inclusive history,"[88] and "The fuller awareness of a shared past opens up a better chance of shared future."[89] Education should stress these kinds of past connections between communities that helped create the society of the present.

The same principles that hold true for the ideal state also hold for the ideal world. Just like the state, the world has diverse peoples and, in our current system, states which have sovereignty. There is a need for a world body to bring the different groups together in the common interest—especially at promoting agreed-upon rules and norms. Williams explains, "Just as the particular state has the task of addressing issues that no one community can tackle, so in the global context there are issues beyond the resource, the competence or the legitimate interest of any specific state."[90] This is particularly crucial concerning the mediation of disputes between countries and issues like climate change, environmental degradation, water access, and controls on deforestation and overfishing. There are issues that affect "the security of any imaginable political and social environment, safeguards without which no individual state can realize its own

[88] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, pp. 299-300.
[89] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 300.
[90] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, pp. 53-54.

conception of the good."[91] Additionally, "The unchallenged dominance of one national interest will always need restraining."[92]

Williams is clear that he is *not* arguing for a kind of "world government" that dictates terms to individual countries. He is proposing that matters be decided on different levels—a local level, a state level, and ultimately those matters that concern all states and peoples should be discussed at a world level. We must always work to perfect international institutions, to prevent them from "micromanagement" on cultural or economic issues of individual states or from majorities enforcing "their group interests on particular states."[93]

In his interview with us, Williams discussed his ideas for a UN-level global body that could specifically mediate between peoples in the key areas of concern that arise around the world: "In addition to a United Nations Security Council, perhaps we need a United Nations Mediation Council. Perhaps we need a few a states with a reasonably good political track record who could be relied on to do some of the brokerage of peace agreements and so forth between communities in tension."

Like the other Minglers, Lord Rowan embodies a profound optimism and faith of conviction even in difficult times. He articulated this sense powerfully in a rumination on visiting South Africa under apartheid. Speaking of the courage of a Black South African church worker he met named Helen, who was interrogated by the secret police after Williams departed, he asked, "Is it possible for human beings—especially in circumstances of pressure and oppression like that—to look at something other than just the power and violence that is around them? Is there freedom even in the middle of an experience like that?...Is there somewhere else to go? Is there something else to see? Is there another world? 'Other world' may conjure up images of fairies, spirits and ghosts but I hope [Helen's story] may show what it is to live in another world and at the same time to live right in the middle of this one; to live with another vision; to step to a different drummer...because that is the heart—the hard essence of faith."[94]

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[91] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 55.
[92] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 56.
[93] Williams, *Faith in the Public Square*, p. 56.
[94] Shortt, *Rowan's Rule,* p. 119.

In our interview with him, Williams closed with the following hopeful prayer which captures his own faith and optimism that the peoples of the world may be brought together in love and peace: “May God our Creator open our hearts and our ears to one another. And may God our Creator whose will is for our peace and our wellbeing lead us hand in hand towards a true worldwide community in which none is forgotten, none is oppressed, none is humiliated. May God our Creator teach us to value and to revere the signs of His presence in each one of us, so that in all things there will be the peace and reconciliation that our Lord God requires. Amen.”

Biographies

Akbar Ahmed is Distinguished Professor and the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC, and Wilson Center Global Fellow. He was described as the "world's leading authority on contemporary Islam" by the BBC. Among his many books are his quartet of studies examining the relationship between the West and Islamic world published by Brookings Institution Press: *Journey into Islam* (2007), *Journey into America* (2010), *The Thistle and the Drone* (2013), and *Journey into Europe* (2018).

Frankie Martin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at American University. He was senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's previous quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on the relationship between the West and Islamic world and holds an MPhil in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. His writing has appeared in outlets including *Foreign Policy*, *CNN*, the *Guardian*, and *Anthropology Today.*

Dr Amineh Ahmed Hoti is Fellow-Commoner at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge and Governor, St. Mary's School, Cambridge. She was also a senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on Western-Islamic relations. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge and co-founded and directed the world's first Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations at Cambridge. Her most recent book is *Gems and Jewels: The Religions of Pakistan* (2021).

Jonathan Sacks–The towering Rabbi who built bridges of peace

Akbar Ahmed, Frankie Martin, and Dr Amineh Hoti

One day, not long after the 9/11 attacks in the US, I received a truly inspirational gift out of the blue. It was a copy of *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (2002), the best-selling book by Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the then-Chief Rabbi of the UK, with a warm personal inscription. While I had been familiar with Lord Sacks' bold initiatives in fostering dialogue between religions, I had never before had the pleasure of meeting or interacting with him. His gift was the beginning of what would blossom into a deep friendship. Over the years, our friendship symbolized the power of extending a hand, and has shown how friendship can go a long way in mending deep tensions despite different religious and ethnic boundaries. Two years later, in 2004, Sacks and I first met in person. He had invited Judea Pearl, the father of murdered Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, and myself to discuss recent bridge-building endeavors in which we were engaged. The three of us visited both a Muslim school—the East London school run by the famous Yusuf Islam or Cat Stevens—and a Jewish school in London together, making history by bringing the Chief Rabbi of the UK and a leading American Jew in direct contact with one of the largest Muslim communities in England.

Our visit formed part of Sacks' BBC address to mark the Jewish New Year. This encounter, widely viewed across the UK, made a huge impact on the British public and allowed people to see Jewish-Muslim relations in a more positive light. The following year, Sacks, alongside other religious leaders such as John Chane, the Episcopal Bishop of Washington in charge of the National Cathedral, Dr. Haru Haisa Handa, a Japanese Shinto priest, artist, and Chancellor of the University of Cambodia, Bruce Lustig, the senior rabbi of the largest Jewish Congregation in DC, the Washington Hebrew Congregation, and Mohamed Magid, the head imam of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, the largest mosque in the DC area, joined me at my home for breakfast in an inspiring show of interfaith harmony the morning after American Thanksgiving. Sacks and I, with our distinguished guests, dined,

talked, and even prayed together, aiming to simply bring leaders of diverse faith backgrounds together in the spirit of friendship. This gesture of mutual prayer and affection moved all in the room.

At this meeting, Sacks, who is from the Orthodox Jewish tradition, described the symbolism of "two hands joining."[95] In Hebrew, he explained, there are numerous words which carry more than one meaning. For example, "fourteen" can also mean "friendship." Sacks told us that there are 14 joints in a human hand, and if two hands are joined, there are then 28 joints linked together. Furthermore, the word for "twenty-eight" also means "strength" in Hebrew—thus strength comes from two hands joined together in friendship. It was just this kind of human solidarity and unity between the world's peoples representing different religions, cultures, and ethnicities that Sacks was attempting to encourage with his work.

Lord Sacks was also a long-time supporter of Dr Hoti's interfaith initiatives. He was a loyal patron of her Muslim-Jewish Center at Cambridge of which she was the founder-director and she invited him to her College, Lucy Cavendish, for lunch. They corresponded and he wrote encouraging letters. In a volume edited by Burridge and Lord Jonathan Sacks, Baylor University Press: Texas, Sacks invited Dr Hoti to contribute a chapter which he received warmly. It is called *Empathy as Policy in the Age of Hatred.*

At the same time, as with so many Minglers, Sacks experienced a backlash to his efforts. He told us that he had nearly lost his job as Chief Rabbi following the publication of *The Dignity of Difference.* In particular the controversy was over one passage in which he stated that each religion accesses the same God in their own unique way. He wrote, "God has spoken to mankind in many languages, through Judaism to the Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims . . . no one creed has a monopoly of religious truth. In heaven there is truth, on earth there are truths. God is greater than religion. He is only partially comprehended by any faith."[96] After members of his community protested—the book was condemned by certain orthodox and conservative

[95] See Melody Fox, "Unprecedented Visit of Chief Rabbi UK to Home of Muslim Scholar," *Pakistan Link*, December 5, 2005.
[96] Ruth Gledhill, "Sacks will rewrite book in 'truth' row," *The Times*, October 25, 2002.

rabbis and some accused him of heresy—Sacks agreed to revise the passage without, he argued, altering its core meaning. It now read, "God communicates in human language, but there are dimensions of the divine that must forever elude us. As Jews we believe that God has made a covenant with a singular people, but that does not exclude the possibility of other peoples, cultures, and faiths finding their own relationship with God within the shared frame of the Noahide laws."[97] Sacks later said of the episode, "When extremists call you a heretic, that's their way of giving you an honorary doctorate."[98]

Sacks also ran into trouble while promoting *The Dignity of Difference* when he said of Israel in an interview with the *Guardian*, "I regard the current situation as nothing less than tragic...It is forcing Israel into positions that are incompatible in the long run with our deepest ideals."[99] Two days after this interview was published, the *Jerusalem Post* called on Sacks to resign. Yet Sacks weathered such storms with his integrity intact and never wavered from his Mingling message. When we were conducting our project on Islam in Europe, *Journey into Europe*, we welcomed Sacks to American University and he gave us an interview in which he discussed the deep ties between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in European history, the profound impact on Judaism of Islamic thinkers, and how we can learn from periods of human coexistence in the past such as Andalusia to shape an inclusive future.

Sacks' death in 2020 of cancer was a blow to us and to many around the world. Prince Charles captured the feelings of many when he stated, "With his passing, the Jewish community, our nation, and the entire world have lost a leader whose wisdom, scholarship and humanity were without equal. His immense learning spanned the sacred and the secular, and his prophetic voice spoke to our greatest challenges with unfailing insight and boundless compassion. His wise counsel was sought and appreciated by those of all faiths and none, and he will be missed more than words can say."[100] Sacks had been knighted fifteen years earlier by Queen Elizabeth II, "for services to the community and to inter-faith relations."

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[97] Richard Allen Greene, "British chief rabbi revises controversial book," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, March 16, 2003.
[98] Tom Gjelten, "Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Towering Intellect of Judaism, Dies At 72," *NPR*, November 9, 2020.
[99] Richard Allen Greene, "British chief rabbi revises controversial book," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, March 16, 2003.
[100] Clarence House statement, Twitter.com, November 8, 2020.

Sacks was born in 1948 in London to a family of Jewish merchants. Both his father and his mother's parents were refugees. On his father's side they came from Poland fleeing pogroms and anti-Semitism. His great-grandfather on his mother's side had first attempted to live in Palestine in the 1870s and founded an agricultural settlement, but fled to England after encountering hostility from local Arabs.

Sacks went on to attend Cambridge University, where he studied philosophy. He had not intended to pursue a life of religious leadership but during his time as an undergraduate, he made a trip to the US which changed his life. There, he sought out and met with two towering rabbis—Rabbi Joesph Soloveitchik, the leading thinker in American Orthodox Judaism, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe, or the Rebbe, leader of the Hasidic Chabad Movement. As Sacks told us when we interviewed him, "Rabbi Soloveitchik challenged me to think and the Lubavitcher Rebbe challenged me to lead. I found it incredibly inspiring that these great leaders that had many thousands of disciples took the time to spend with a 20-year-old student with whom they had no particular reason to be interested in and that was hugely influential with me. And though I met very many brilliant people at Cambridge and then at Oxford, these were different, these were holy people and there's something different, there's a humility, a sense that it's not all about how clever I am." While he had journeyed to learn from the rabbis, Sacks was surprised when the Lubavitcher Rebbe asked him questions—such as what Sacks was doing to strengthen Jewish life at his university, and was he befriending other students. Sacks had not before thought of himself as a leader, but now understood that "*A good leader creates followers. A great leader creates leaders.*"[101]

In both rabbis, Sacks explained, though they didn't discuss it explicitly, "I sensed the extent of what Jewish life had lost in the Holocaust. In both too I felt the scale of the challenge in the present, as Jews were losing interest in Judaism, nowhere more so than on campus in their college years. Both conveyed the gravitas and depth of the Jewish soul. There was something in them that was more than them, as if an entire tradition spoke through their lips. This was not

[101] Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), p. 254.

'charisma'. It was a kind of humility. In their presence you could feel the divine presence."[102] Sacks completed his degree and subsequently went on to study philosophy at the graduate level and taught the subject. Yet, as he described, his meetings with the two great rabbis "stayed with me, challenging me to learn more about Judaism. So in 1973 I said goodbye to everything I had dreamed of doing as an academic, and began serious Judaic study. Five years later I became a rabbi. Thirteen years after that I became Chief Rabbi. God kept calling and I kept following, hoping that at least some of the time I was going in the right direction."[103]

There are several big ideas that Sacks discusses repeatedly in his teachings that capture the core of Mingling. The first, as alluded to in the above quote, is the importance of concurrently recognizing and embracing both the universal unity of humanity and the particular strength of our own religions, traditions, and communities. When Sacks said that members of different religions approach the same God in their own particular ways and that no faith totally comprehends God, he was accused of heresy. Essentially, the charge was that he was favoring or recognizing the universal over his own community and its religion, a common accusation against Minglers. And yet, Sacks was prepared with textual evidence that he was operating firmly within the bounds of his own faith.

Sacks laid out his reasoning by arguing that in the Jewish tradition, God makes two important covenants, first with Noah and then Abraham. A covenant in the ancient Near East, Sacks explained, was a common feature of political agreements, usually between a strong and a weak nation, which set up certain terms to be followed. The strong power would protect the weak one, in return for which the weak would pledge its fealty to the strong. In the Bible, however, we find a "revolutionary" use of this concept, Sacks says—"It is now conceived of as a partnership between God and a people...In return, they are to pledge themselves to God, obeying his laws, accepting his mission, honoring his trust."[104] Covenants in the Bible represent a morally committing bond of love and trust.

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[102] Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 2011), p. 91.
[103] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, pp. 91-92.
[104] Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 105.

These two covenants, with Noah and then with Abraham, operate at different levels, Sacks contends. First, after the great flood, God makes a covenant with Noah which, Sacks says, serves as a covenant with "all humankind." Included in this covenant are what Sacks calls "moral universals—the sanctity of life, the dignity of the human person, the right to be free, to be no man's slave or the object of someone else's violence."[105] These are "the general rules of a moral society."[106] Then there is a specific covenant as described in the Torah between God and Abraham. This tells the Jews, Sacks explains, that they are a specific people and "confers on us loyalties and obligations to the members of our community."[107] It means that "We have duties to our parents and children, friends and neighbours, and the members of society considered as an extended family."[108] These directives are not speaking to all of humanity but "just one particular people within it."[109] Yet the second covenant does not negate the first. Quite the contrary, for the initial covenant with Noah tells us that "*our common humanity precedes our religious differences*."[110] As evidence, Sacks points to the narrative in the Book of Genesis which clearly discusses affairs relevant to all of humanity, including Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, before turning to the Abrahamic covenant—and subsequently going on to describe the covenant between God and Moses on Mt. Sinai. This all means, Sacks states, that Jews are concurrently part of two families, the "universal human family" and "a particular family with its specific history and memory."[111]

Where does this leave non-Jews theologically, who as members of the human race are associated with the first but not the second covenant? Sacks cites no less an authority than the great Rabbi Maimonides, who argued that a non-Jew who practices the basic morals of the first covenant arrived through human reason "is one of the 'sages' of the nations."[112] Sacks concludes, "According to Jewish teaching, therefore, a person does not have to become a Jew to serve

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[105] Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 57.
[106] Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), p. 200.
[107] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 57.
[108] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 57.
[109] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 195.
[110] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 200.
[111] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 57.
[112] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 21.

God."[113] He also notes that "Judaism's ancient sages maintained that 'the pious of the nations have a share in the world to come.'"[114] It is in this context that we may better understand Sacks' aforementioned statement, "God has spoken to mankind in many languages, through Judaism to the Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims."

Thus this universal component is crucial, as without it, if one only were to focus on one's own group, they would not be correctly recognizing or appreciating God. "We are not all the same," Sacks contends, "There is an Us and Them. But God is universal as well as particular, which means that he can be found among Them as well as among Us. God transcends our particularities."[115] "God is the God of everyone," he asserts, "though not necessarily in the same way."[116] The reality is that "every human being, regardless of class, color, culture, or creed, is in the image and likeness of God"[117] and "You cannot love God without first honouring the universal dignity of humanity."[118]

Sacks further poetically phrased the nature of God thusly: "God is the One within the many; the unity at the core of our diversity; the call that leads us to journey beyond the self and its strivings, to enter into otherness and be enlarged by it, to seek to be a vehicle through which blessing flows outwards to the world, to give thanks for the miracle of being and the radiance that shines wherever two lives touch in affirmation, forgiveness and love."[119] While we all seek to reach God, we can only do so from our own unique positions: "The divine light is infinite but to be visible to us it must be refracted through finite understanding."[120] This should bring us a certain degree of humility as we try to understand God and also understand that others are trying to do the same thing from their own perspectives and positions.

Sacks is talking here about an awareness, acceptance, and celebration of the diversity of the world. Indeed, there is no way for it not to be so. Even selecting the example of a single animal,

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[113] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 21.
[114] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 53.
[115] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, pp. 204-205.
[116] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, pp. 69-70.
[117] Jonathan Sacks, *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), p. 69.
[118] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 200.
[119] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 94.
[120] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 65.

the beetle, Sacks notes that there are 40,000 different varieties.[121] Not only is diversity a reality that we cannot nor should not change, but it is beautiful. "God loves diversity, not uniformity," he states, and argues that "Every attempt to impose uniformity on diversity is, in some sense, a betrayal of God's purposes"[122]—"Any attempt to impose…an artificial uniformity in the name of a single culture or faith, represents a tragic misunderstanding of what it takes for a system to flourish. Because we are different, we each have something unique to contribute, and every contribution counts."[123] "Difference does not diminish" but "enlarges the sphere of human possibilities."[124] He cites an ancient Jewish saying: "When a human being makes many coins in the same mint, they all come out the same. God makes every person in the same image—His image—and each is different."[125]

Sacks also makes the point that it is not even possible to think of a human being as a human being alone in the abstract, a sort of Platonic form of a human, because the moment we start to talk about real people, they are embodied in some cultural or ethnic context. We all have a particular language that we were brought up in, for example, a culture we are a part of. We grow up inside, not outside, of these particular contexts. "What is real," Sacks says, "and the proper object of our wonder is not the Platonic form of a leaf but the 250,000 different kinds there actually are."[126] This again reiterates his point that we must concurrently think of ourselves and our own groups and localities in terms of the universal and particular at the same time.

Speaking of monotheism generally, Sacks states that while it is commonly believed that in monotheism there is "one God, therefore one path to salvation," this is actually not the case. "To the contrary," he explains, "it is that *unity is worshipped in diversity.* The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages spoken by mankind, the proliferation of cultures, the sheer variety of the imaginative expressions of the human spirit, in

[121] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 215.
[122] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 215.
[123] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 22.
[124] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 209.
[125] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 60.
[126] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 53.

most of which, if we listen carefully, we will hear the voice of wisdom telling us something we need to know."[127]

It is the case that "*no single faith is the faith of all humanity*"[128] and "there are many paths to the Divine Presence."[129] According to Sacks, God is "capable of being comprehended in any human language, from any single point of view." "God's world is diverse," Sacks concludes, "There are multiple universes of wisdom, each capturing something of the radiance of being and refracting it into the lives of its followers, none refuting or excluding the others, each as it were the native language of its followers, but combining in a hymn of glory to the creator."[130] This should "lead us to respect the search for God in people of other faiths and reconcile the particularity of cultures with the universality of the human condition."[131]

We run into trouble, Sacks believed, when we attempt to go too far towards either the universal, which can lead to attempts to enforce or project conformity on the "Other" and fail to recognize their own unique contexts, or the particular which results in tribalism and an aversion to the "Other." Being pushed towards a global or universal culture could be seen as threatening to identity. This is why Sacks believes that "universalism is an inadequate response to tribalism, and no less dangerous. It leads to the belief—superficially compelling but quite false—that there is only one truth about the essentials of the human condition, and it holds true for all people at all times."[132]

The reality is, that to one another we are "the same *and* different, human beings as such, *but also* members of this family, that community, this history, that heritage."[133] The relationship between the universal and the particular is even more indivisible because, as Sacks puts it, "Our particularity is our window on to universality…Because we know what it is to be a parent, loving our children, not children in general, we understand what it is for someone else, somewhere else,

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[127] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 20-21.
[128] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 55.
[129] Jonathan Sacks, "Reith Lectures: The Persistence of Faith," Lecture Four: Paradoxes & Pluralism, November 13, 1990: https://rabbisacks.org/archive/reith-lectures-the-persistence-of-faith/
[130] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 204.
[131] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 55.
[132] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 50.
[133] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 56.

to be a parent, loving his or her children, not ours. There is no road to human solidarity that does not begin with moral particularity—by coming to know what it means to be a child, a parent, a neighbour, a friend. We learn to love humanity by loving specific human beings. There is no short-cut."[134]

Celebrating our innate human diversity can also aid our search for knowledge, which is fundamental in Judaism, as Sacks explains: "In Jewish tradition, God *wants* us to pursue knowledge. The first thing Solomon asked for, and the first thing we ask for in our three-times-daily prayers, is wisdom, understanding and knowledge, and that includes science…the rabbis instituted a blessing over scientists, whether they shared Jewish faith or not."[135] "Each culture has something to contribute to the totality of human wisdom," Sacks states, "The sages said: 'Who is wise? One who learns from all men.' The wisest is not one who knows himself wiser than others: he is one who knows all men have some share of wisdom, and is willing to learn from them, for none of us knows all the truth and each of us knows some of it. Nothing has proved harder in the history of civilization than to see God, or good, or human dignity in those whose language is not mine, whose skin is a different colour, whose faith is not my faith and whose truth is not my truth. There are, surely, many ways of arriving at this generosity of spirit, and each faith must find its own."[136]

In terms of how to treat the "Other" or the "stranger," Sacks argues that treating the stranger well is deeply embedded in Judaism, and centers on the fact that Jews were once themselves oppressed. When we interviewed him, Sacks said, "There is one thing that to me speaks very powerfully from the Hebrew Bible. Jews experience slavery in Egypt and then Moses, having taken them out, says, 'Never oppress a stranger because you know what it feels like to be a stranger.'" Sacks also has pointed out that in the Hebrew Bible, the verse "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" occurs once, but "in no fewer than 36 places" the Bible "commands us to 'love the stranger.'"[137] Sacks calls for us to converse with each other, to listen to each other, and to hear their perspectives. He cites the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski on the importance

[134] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 58.
[135] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 211.
[136] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 64-65.
[137] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 58.

of conversation—Malinowski said that conversation establishes "bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship."[138] Sacks urges us, "if only we were to listen closely to the voice of the other, we would find that beneath the skin we *are* brothers and sisters, members of the human family under the parenthood of God."[139]

We all can benefit from the Jewish insight of role reversal, Sacks argues, and should remember that even if we are not being persecuted now, we may have been in the past and could be in the future. Sacks urges us, "*To be cured of potential violence towards the Other, I must be able to imagine myself as the Other*"[140]—"We have to remember that we were once on the other side of the equation."[141] He argues, "The best way of curing antisemitism is to get people to experience what it feels like to be a Jew"[142] and "The Hutu in Rwanda has to experience what it is like to be a Tutsi. The Serb has to imagine himself a Croat or a Muslim."[143] "The best way of curing hostility to strangers is to remember that we too, from someone else's perspective, are strangers."[144] "I learn to be moral," Sacks teaches, "when I develop the capacity to put myself into your place." [145] How do we gain this capacity? It is only by having contact with others—"that is a skill I only learn by engaging with you, face to face or side by side."[146] "To be fully human," in other words, "we need direct encounters with other human beings. We have to be in their presence, open to their otherness, alert to their hopes and fears, engaged in the minuet of conversation, the delicate back-and-forth of speaking and listening. That is how relationships are made. That is how we become moral beings."[147]

In order to foster more inclusive societies, Sacks embraces and promotes the concept of the covenant. Informed by its use in his own tradition, Sacks believes that it has much to teach us about how to live together in the twenty-first century. He explains that in the Jewish tradition, in

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[138] Bronisław Malinowski cited in Jonathan Sacks, *Celebrating Life: Finding Happiness in Unexpected Places* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 78.
[139] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 160.
[140] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 179.
[141] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 187.
[142] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 188.
[143] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 179.
[144] Sacks, *Not in God's Name*, p. 188.
[145] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 57.
[146] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 57
[147] Sacks, *Morality*, pp. 58-59.

the Hebrew Bible and among the rabbis, society was seen as a covenant with God. Yet this idea goes beyond the Jewish tradition, also having "deep echoes in Christianity and Islam."[148] The concept of the covenant has also been invoked in such cases as the Mayflower Pact, by the Dutch Republic, by John Calvin in Geneva, and Sacks discerns the idea of a covenant in the US founding documents. A covenant, Sacks says, "is a collective moral undertaking on the part of 'We, the people,' *all* the people."[149] They are about love and trust, "the attempt to create partnership without dominance or submission."[150] A covenant ultimately "binds people together in a bond of mutual responsibility and care."[151] It can be small, for example the bond between a husband and wife, but it can also be vast—"there is, I believe, a covenant of human solidarity that binds all seven billion of us alive today to act responsibly toward the environment, human rights, and the alleviation of poverty for the sake of generations not yet born."[152] Covenants are "about what we have in common despite our differences"[153] and have the potential to turn "self-interested individuals into a community in pursuit of the common good."[154]

Sacks sees the idea of the covenant as a way to foster inclusive notions of national identity today. A covenant, like a nation, Sacks says, is about a story or narrative. "In the case of the Bible," he argues, "it is the story of the Exodus. In the case of the United States, it is about a journey from oppression to freedom in the new world, the almost promised land."[155] The story of a nation "is the basis of its collective identity"[156] and recognizes that "We are part of a story, begun by those who came before us. They have entrusted us to write its next chapter in such a way as to do justice to, and keep faith with, what went before. We cannot change our colour; most of us do not wish to change our religion; but we can learn a new story and teach it to our children. That is why, when nations have stories, they can be inclusive."[157] The reality is, unlike the past, a nation

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[148] Jonathan Sacks, "Reith Lectures: The Persistence of Faith," Lecture One: The Environment of Faith, November 13, 1990: https://rabbisacks.org/archive/reith-lectures-the-persistence-of-faith/
[149] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 124.
[150] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 202.
[151] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 313.
[152] Sacks, *Morality*, pp. 313-314.
[153] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 319.
[154] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 322.
[155] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 134.
[156] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 121.
[157] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 122.

can no longer "be held together by a single dominant religion or family of religions"[158]—nations are simply too diverse for this now. We need to shape our national stories in such a way that recognizes that "our fates are bound together. We benefit from each other…A nation is enlarged by its new arrivals who carry with them gifts from other places and other traditions."[159]

To aid us in fostering plural societies, Sacks told us when we interviewed him, he recommended communities getting to know each other at a local level: "Tip O'Neill said all politics is local, I think all great interfaith is local as well. Then I think communities can do just that, if a rabbi or an imam arrange for their congregations to get together. And if they're able to do that in order to do acts of kindness or social action to other people in the neighborhood, that's what I call side by side and that really is a very powerful builder of friendships. And to my mind friendship is the essence here. We don't always need to engage in high-level interfaith dialogue. Sometimes just being friends is even more powerful."

We should follow a model of what Sacks called "integration without assimilation" in our nations—whereby we each have our own particular identities but then apart from that have another larger identity that enables us to come together and contribute things that only we with our unique identities and gifts can. Sacks characterized a nation as a "home we build together" wherein, "we have our own private rooms, but we also have our public spaces, and those public spaces matter to all of us, which is why we work together to make them as expansive and gracious as we can."[160] If, however, we remain within our own private rooms or communities without this shared space where we can "celebrate our common humanity,"[161] the arrangement will not work as we will simply be fragmented, disconnected, and lonely. He recommends, for religious groups in the nation, that "Each church, synagogue, temple of mosque should have some project of kindness to strangers: unconditional kindness, with no element of evangelism or hope of conversion."[162] Beyond the nation, this concept can work at a world level, Sacks

[158] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 321.
[159] Sacks, *Morality*, pp. 320-321.
[160] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 16.
[161] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 239.
[162] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 180.

believed, and he called for a "global *covenant*…framing our shared vision for the future of humanity."[163]

Sacks also suggested that to build inclusive polities in the present and in the future, we should draw on those times in history where there was coexistence between different peoples, times where people could preserve their own identities but also contribute to a social project that was much larger. Speaking about Andalusia, Spain under Muslim rule where Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived together, he brilliantly summed up his big idea, "Andalusia is one of the most important facts about our present situation. The reason is when you talk about good relations between faiths at moments of high intensity conflict, people think you're being utopian, people just aren't that good. So what brings these aspirations from utopia to reality is the knowledge that we have been there before. Andalusia showed how it could be done and showed that it could be done...We have a precedent, we know what it looked like."

Not only do we have examples like these, but we have the lingering effects of these examples in our own traditions that attest to their impact. As Sacks explained to us, "I think any study of Judaism or Christianity will see exactly how Islam contributed to these other faiths." He gave the example of Maimonides, who was from Andalusia: "Moses Maimonides, the greatest rabbi of the Middle Ages whose, not only his philosophy, but almost every aspect of his work was influenced by and stimulated by Islam. His creation of this magnificent legal code was inspired by sharia codes. His formulation of the principles of Jewish faith was inspired by the fact that Muslim thinkers had done this wonderful presentation of Islamic faith. So, it spread from Islam to Judaism. It then spread to Christianity through Maimonides and influenced a figure like Aquinas."

In order to improve relations between peoples, Sacks said that the mutual grief of communities in conflict can bring them together. Sacks recollected, "I once asked Prince Hassan of Jordan, shortly after the assassination of Israel's prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, whether there was anything that might bring Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Muslims, together. Was there a bridge over the abyss? He answered, 'Our shared tears, our history of suffering.' That was a wise

[163] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 205-206.

remark. There are 6,000 languages spoken today, but only one is truly universal: the language of tears. It is to that language and its covenant of human solidarity ('I will be with him in time of trouble' [Ps. 91:15]) that 'the ways of peace' belong."[164] As Sacks told us, "I think just looking at our own tears must make us realize that the other side has had those tears. And it does seem to me that there are moments when there is something very human that reaches out to the other across the divide, and in that moment of contact a hope is born. I think the other thing is the experience of being a parent, or even a grandparent. It kind of makes us want to leave our children and grandchildren a better world than we currently inhabit…Let us present our children with a more hopeful world."

Indeed, like the other Minglers, Sacks stresses the importance of hope. He provides a dramatic image to make the point: "'Even if the blade of a sharp sword is resting on your neck,' says the Talmud, 'do not lose hope.'"[165] Hope is different, Sacks believes, from optimism: "Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better."[166] It is hope and not optimism that "empowers us to take risks, to offer commitment, to give love, to bring new life into the world, to comfort the afflicted, to lift the fallen, to begin great undertakings, to live by our ideals."[167] Pluralism is itself "a form of hope, because it is founded in the understanding that precisely because we are different, each of us has something unique to contribute to the shared project of which we are a part."[168]

We can also all learn lessons from the Jewish mystical concept of *tikkun olam*, or healing a fractured world, Sacks believed, which captures this sense of hope and the positive impact that each individual can have. Here again Sacks returns to his point about the necessity of diversity. This gives us hope, because "we are here, now, in this place, among these people, in these circumstances, so that we can do the act or say the word that will heal one of the fractures of the world."[169] "We cannot change the world altogether in one go," he reminds us, "but we can have an effect, one act at a time, one day at a time, one person at a time. That is what it is, intimates

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[164] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 106.
[165] Jonathan Sacks, *Faith in the Future* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995), p. 223.
[166] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 206.
[167] Jonathan Sacks, *The Politics of Hope* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 267.
[168] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 203.
[169] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 272.

Maimonides, to be awake: to know that our acts make a difference, sometimes all the difference in the world."[170] There also exists, Sacks affirms, "within nature and humanity, an astonishing range of powers to heal what was been harmed and mend what has been broken. These powers are embedded within life itself, with its creativity and capacity for self-renewal. That is the empirical basis of hope."[171]

Tikkun olam additionally holds that even in evil acts "there is a fragment of good that can be rescued and redeemed. Every profound experience of suffering is a form of *dis*integration. The world we had taken for granted is no longer there. Something is missing, lost."[172] What *tikkun olam* represents, however, is "*re*-integration"[173] and "Every good act, every healing gesture, lights a candle of hope in a dark world…We never know, at the time, the ripple of consequences set in motion by the slightest act of kindness."[174] Sacks again cites Maimonides, who said that "A single act, performed for its own sake out of love, gives us…a share in the world to come."[175] Sacks also informs us that the rabbis argued that a single life "is like a universe. Change a life, and you begin to change the world. Every generous deed, each healing word, every embracing gesture brings redemption nearer."[176]

Sacks inspires us to reach out to all in what he called "loving kindness, across boundaries. We must love strangers as well as neighbors."[177] We should "see the divine presence in the face of a stranger"[178] and understand that "the ethnic outsider is in God's image even if he or she is not in our image."[179] In doing this, we can turn "strangers into friends"[180] and cannot go wrong, as "what renders a culture invulnerable is the compassion it shows to the vulnerable."[181] Sacks asserts that "humanity is indeed a single extended family"[182] and affirms, "This, then, is my

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[170] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 233.
[171] Sacks, *Morality*, p. 19.
[172] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 220.
[173] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 220.
[174] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 271.
[175] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 271.
[176] Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 266.
[177] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 180.
[178] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 208.
[179] Sacks, *Faith in the Future*, p. 86.
[180] Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, p. 182.
[181] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, p. 195.
[182] Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, p. 62.

credo. I believe that the idea that the universe was created in love by the God of love who asks us to create in love is the noblest hypothesis ever to have lifted the human mind."[183]

Let us conclude by relating how Sacks ended his interview with us—with a prayer for the future. He said, "Jews always end every set of prayers with a prayer for peace. It's our highest hope but we know it tends to come last. But we always say this prayer, and this is the prayer I share with Muslims, Jews, and Christians and people of other faiths throughout the world: '*Oseh shalom bimromav*.' 'May God who makes peace in his high places help us make peace down here on earth. Amen.'"

[183] Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, p. 288.

Biographies

Akbar Ahmed is Distinguished Professor and the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC, and Wilson Center Global Fellow. He was described as the "world's leading authority on contemporary Islam" by the BBC. Among his many books are his quartet of studies examining the relationship between the West and Islamic world published by Brookings Institution Press: *Journey into Islam* (2007), *Journey into America* (2010), *The Thistle and the Drone* (2013), and *Journey into Europe* (2018).

Frankie Martin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at American University. He was senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's previous quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on the relationship between the West and Islamic world and holds an MPhil in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. His writing has appeared in outlets including *Foreign Policy*, *CNN*, the *Guardian*, and *Anthropology Today.*

Amineh Ahmed Hoti is Fellow-Commoner at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge and Governor, St. Mary's School, Cambridge. She was also a senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on Western-Islamic relations. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge and co-founded and directed the world's first Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations at Cambridge. Her most recent book is *Gems and Jewels: The Religions of Pakistan* (2021).

Haris Silajdžić–The true ambassador of peace between Islam and the West

Akbar Ahmed, Frankie Martin and Dr. Amineh Hoti

I first met Haris Silajdžić, prime minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the 1990s in London during the height of the Bosnian war. A Bosnian Muslim, or Bosniak, Silajdžić was leading a country that was at war for its very survival. The Bosnian capital, Sarajevo was then under the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. And yet, I found Silajdžić to be a thoughtful and humane person passionately dedicated to intercultural and interfaith coexistence. Facing genocide, Silajdžić upheld Mingling at a moment and in a region when it easily could have been extinguished. We reconnected during our fieldwork in Bosnia for *Journey into Europe*, and we have remained in touch, for example, meeting later in Washington, DC.

The reasons for the dire position of Bosnia lay in the breakup of Yugoslavia, which coincided with the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. The crisis began during this period when Slobodan Milošević, a communist party official in the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia, began his ascent to power by projecting himself as the defender of the majority Serbs across Yugoslavia. His vision was to unite the Christian Orthodox Serbs in one unitary state in a contiguous territory—a "Greater Serbia." It was a substantial change from the Yugoslav policy of rendering discussions of ethnicity and nationality taboo in favor of a communist Yugoslav identity. Milošević was not alone. The Catholic Croats under their leader Franjo Tudjman in the Yugoslav republic of Croatia, for example, sought the same for their people. The Balkans descended into a bloody confrontation which gave the world the term "ethnic cleansing" and saw concentration camps opened in Europe for the first time since the Second World War. The term captured the aggressive nationalist impulse to engineer ethnically "pure" territories through killings and expulsions.

In Bosnia, however, many people did not think of themselves in such ethnically and religiously exclusive terms. The reason lay in history—Bosnia had the majority of Muslims in Yugoslavia who had a continuing memory of the Ottoman period, in which different communities had coexisted. Sarajevo had more ethnically and religiously mixed marriages than any other place in

Yugoslavia. Many Serbs, however, saw the Muslim period in the opposite way, as that of the domination of the "Terrible Turk." In fact, Milošević cast his goal of "Greater Serbia" as revenge for the Ottoman victory against Serbs in the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, and his 1989 address to a million Serbs on the battle's 600th anniversary immediately preceded Yugoslavia's breakup and the Serb campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Not only did Muslims not belong in Serbia, the Serb nationalists argued, but they did not belong in Europe at all. Muslims were called "invaders" and even "Turks"—regardless of the fact that the Bosnian Muslims are not Turks. In three years, 100,000 people were killed in Bosnia, and most of the civilian victims were Muslim.

Silajdžić, a classic European intellectual statesman in the mode of Václav Havel or André Malraux, the French minister of cultural affairs under de Gaulle, is equally an Islamic scholar—as such he confidently projects Bosnian Muslim identity that is at once European and Muslim. Silajdžić once ran the office of the grand mufti of Bosnia, his father headed the largest mosque in Bosnia, in Sarajevo, and his grandfather was a religious judge. Silajdžić himself has degrees both in Islamic studies from Libyan University in Benghazi and a PhD from the Pristina University College of Philosophy in Kosovo, then in Yugoslavia.

Silajdžić grew up in Sarajevo, which, he recalled, "was beautiful. Sarajevo was a monument of tolerance, of civility, of coexistence, which Europe wants to be. It was another Jerusalem. From my window in my house, I see the Orthodox church, the Muslim mosque, the Catholic church, and I live next door to the Jewish synagogue—four cultures who have lived together for hundreds of years without any problems."[184] A university professor in the 1980s, Silajdžić stated that "I was never a Communist. That means I was deprived of whatever the benefits of being Communist were by very subtle means—I was persona non grata everywhere."[185] In 1990, he joined the electoral campaign of the Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic, who founded the Party of Democratic Action (PDA). Silajdžić said, "we went to the elections to defeat the Communists, and we won in fair and free elections in 1990."

[184] Phil McCombs, "At the Bosnia Crossroads," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1993.
[185] Phil McCombs, "At the Bosnia Crossroads," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1993.

It was a fraught time as the war broke out, and Silajdžić became foreign minister and then prime minister of the fledging nation. Yet the Bosnians had a serious problem. In 1991, the UN placed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia which it intended to help bring peace. Instead, the embargo served to allow the Serbs under Milošević to carry out their campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide while the Bosnians were denied access to weapons even to defend themselves. It fell to Silajdžić to travel the world lobbying for the removal of the arms embargo, support for a Bosnian state, and a resolution to the Yugoslav conflict.

While speaking in foreign capitals to gain support for the Bosnian cause, Silajdžić repeatedly argued that in contrast to the way the Balkans were being commonly perceived—as a place of "ancient hatreds" where people did not know how to live together—Bosnia already had a model of coexistence, and the international community should just let it be itself. Bosnian identity was already multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious, and Silajdžić and the Bosnians were determined to keep it that way. Silajdžić began a February 1994 speech in Washington, DC, for example, by noting that he was a Bosnian Muslim and that delegation which accompanied him that day included the president of the Bosnian parliament, an Orthodox Christian Serb, a Croat Catholic member of the Bosnian presidency who was also the head of the national council of the Croats in Bosnia, and the Bosnian *chargé d'affaires* at the embassy in Washington, DC, who was Jewish. "I could as well stop here," Silajdžić said, "because this is what we are and this is what we want to be. Nothing else."[186]

But, he said, "we are alone." The Bosnians "are fighting the aggressive nationalism, the only ideology that seems to persist in Europe after fifty years of peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, that is still there and sometimes I wonder whether we Europeans are able to produce anything else other than aggressive nationalism."[187] While the Serb government sought to create "Greater Serbia" by seizing and "cleansing" parts of Bosnia and the Croat government sought to create "Greater Croatia" by resorting to similar measures, Silajdžić said, slicing up Bosnia by ethnic nations is a recipe for disaster: "Creating national states in Bosnia is counterproductive—that is

[186] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia
[187] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia

the cause of war, *casus belli*…drawing lines there. If you draw lines, if you create national states, you exclude the others." This is because "Bosnia is one. It's a living flesh, you cannot cut through it without bleeding, there are no borders there."[188]

There was a need for the international community to act in Bosnia, Silajdžić urged, not just because there was a moral imperative to save human lives, but also to stop "the dangers that are coming very soon to this world" in far-right aggressive nationalism.[189] Bosnia, he argued, is "a monument, a landmark of what the world must become, like it or not" if the world is to avoid succumbing to aggressive and exclusionary nationalism.[190] "Aggression and genocide must not be rewarded," he stated, "This must not be a precedent for other dictators and tyrants to take heart and do it to their neighbors if they have enough tanks to do it."[191]

In the end, Silajdžić and the Bosnians were successful in lobbying the United States in particular to intervene, particularly following the genocide of Bosnian Muslims by Serbs at Srebrenica in 1995. The US and NATO launched a major bombing campaign against the Serbs which brought them to the negotiating table later that year. The US convened the parties together at Dayton, Ohio to negotiate, with Silajdžić conducting the talks on the Bosnian Muslim side. Speaking to reporters at the conference, Silajdžić said, "We cannot revive the dead. We cannot revive the 17,000 children who died in Bosnia. But we can get some justice here and justice means a fully functional Bosnian state."[192] Silajdžić had wryly and famously remarked of an earlier conference to which Serb perpetrators of genocide were invited, "If you kill one person, you're prosecuted; if you kill 10 people, you're a celebrity; if you kill a quarter of a million people, you're invited to a peace conference."[193] Indeed, at Dayton Silajdžić engaged in direct and intensive talks with Milošević, and in the end a deal was reached to end the war.

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[188] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia
[189] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia
[190] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia
[191] "Conflict in Former Yugoslavia," American Enterprise Institute, CSPAN, February 23, 1994: https://www.c-span.org/video/?54801-1/conflict-yugoslavia
[192] *The Death of Yugoslavia*, BBC, Episode 6, "Pax Americana."
[193] Hilmi M. Zawati, "Geneva III: The Stillborn Conference and the Endemic Failure of the International Community," *HuffPost*, February 6, 2016.

Although he could now accurately be described as one of the founding fathers of modern Bosnia, he was not entirely satisfied with his creation. The Dayton Accords resulted in a strange unworkable concoction of a state which remains paralyzed by the clash of interests of opposing ethnic groups. Although the Serbs were given their own national entity within the larger country, and Bosniaks and Croats another sub-entity, Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats still hold one-third interest each in Bosnia. While the agreement successfully ended the violence and brought peace—which Silajdžić considered the most crucial imperative—the very people who the Bosnian Muslims viewed as the aggressors in the genocide against them now had veto powers over their lives.

Silajdžić himself, one of the two most prominent Bosnian Muslim leaders along with Alija Izetbegovic, was forced out of the post of prime minister in 1996. He split publicly with Izetbegovic, breaking from the PDA to form a new political party, the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) in 1996. He now felt the PDA was too nationalistic, and remarked, "I entered politics to defeat the one party, one minded, police system, and I'm not about to make peace with another one."[194] A notable characteristic of the SBiH was its focus on incorporating Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, and Silajdžić was described as "the strongest advocate of a multi-ethnic Bosnia" by the *Associated Press.*[195] Shortly after he founded the party, while speaking at a political rally, he was attacked by around 100 PDA activists who struck him on the head with a metal bar and sent him to the hospital. Silajdžić was undeterred, however, and remained a prominent player in electoral politics and government, serving as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the head of government), and the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Silajdžić has had a profound impact on Bosnia. As early as 1995 a prominent Serb journalist recognized that he had helped to establish the very identity of the new nation: "Silajdzic's reputation, his confident charm, multi-lingual abilities, negotiating skills, European smoothness

[194] "Bosnia: Haris Silajdzic Profile," *Associated Press*, September 11, 1996, YouTube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg9BYeY8h7E
[195] "Bosnia: Haris Silajdzic Profile," *Associated Press*, September 11, 1996, YouTube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg9BYeY8h7E

and sophistication, are already considerably incorporated in the Bosnian state and nation and Silajdžić cannot extract them from the foundations, even if he wanted to."[196] He has remained an infatigable proponent of interfaith pluralism in Bosnia, advocate for the Bosnian Muslims, and a promoter of reform of the administrative system set by the Dayton Accords. He told CNN in 2021 that while Dayton brought peace, "we need another constitution. We need a reform that would give us a normal civic democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina…like anywhere else in Europe. Why can't we have it?"[197] He noted continuing Russian support for the Serbs and reported that the ideology of "Greater Serbia" is once again rising. He observed a "repetition of 1991 and 1992—with more smiles" and explained that the goal is "Greater Serbia by force, that is the problem of the whole region, not only of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Democracy is in danger here, in the whole region because of that."[198] Even the Dayton Accords, he said, had not been fully implemented, for example its clauses allowing for the return of refugees to areas from which they were expelled.

When we met him in Sarajevo during fieldwork, I sensed a certain resignation creeping into his reflections, as though he felt he had done what he could for his nation and people and was perhaps leaving active politics. Our meetings allowed us to see Silajdžić the man, at once both philosopher and national statesman; the former forever fascinated and in despair at the human condition and the latter embodying the hopes and aspirations of the people in spite of it. He was constantly amazed at humankind, remarking, "We are a miracle!" What was remarkable was, like the other Minglers, his compassion had survived the mephitic hatred and anger that genocide engenders. He is also a poet, acutely aware of the world around him and the pain, joy, tears and laughter in it, and he shared some of his poetry with us.

The topics agitating Silajdžić are common to the Minglers—how, in an environment of tribalism, exclusivity, intolerance, and violence, can people coexist and connect with each other? Silajdžić argued, "I believe civilization is one. We may have different cultures, but it is human civilization." The true mark of civilization is the treatment of the weak: "I believe that you are

[196] Ljiljana Smailovic, "Silajdzic's Resignation," *Vreme News Digest Agency*, no. 202, August 14, 1995. Archived at Rutgers University Libraries: http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/serbiandigest/202/t202-10.htm
[197] *Amanpour*, CNN, November 26, 2021.
[198] *Amanpour*, CNN, November 26, 2021.

civilized if you protect weaker groups within your society." Yet this human civilization is in trouble, faced with threats including "Nuclear annihilation, climate change, famine, lack of water, inequality, relativization of truth, anonymous authority after deliberate decomposition of traditional sources, family, school, religious institutions, and degradation of social communal cohesiveness." We also "still store weapons that can kill millions in seconds, and we call it a civilization." Humanity, he believed, requires all the help it can get to face the future—yet it is mired in conflict and exclusivist thinking. Today, "Everyone can see what is going on but few are prepared to act. There is an increase of nationalism and, generally, right wing ideas in our part of the world but, again, little action, like everybody is tired of it and is waiting for all of this to fade out on its own. How short is our memory!"

Silajdžić wondered if this is in fact part of human nature, and what could be done to transcend the limitations humans are placing on themselves: "We need all ideas in order to see what can be done about us today. We are in possession of nuclear arms, we are in possession of horrific power that can destroy us—so we need all these ideas, we need people who can help us." While "we have been talking about religions and our spirituality for ages," he asked, "Where did it go? Did anyone listen to this?" "The base, the needs, the greed, the arrogance, it goes with human beings, but where is our spiritual superstructure? How come a critical mass of people still want war? Where have we failed?"

Indeed, Silajdžić felt, "The paradigm never changed: the dominant ones always think they are culturally superior, this did not escape any civilization. One, domination, next confrontation, looking for enemies, looking for broadening its influence. Unfortunately, it's all about human nature, humans,' if you like, physical and mental nature." While humans are reaching for something higher, he felt, "we are still somewhere in the beginning—might is right. You can call it this way, or that way, wrap it in very nice papers, but that's what it is and we see it today." In Europe, Silajdžić said, the carnage has been "unsurpassed." He named figures such as the Spanish conquistador Pizzaro, King Leopold of Belgium, Hitler, and Stalin and noted, "At the end of the 15th century, both Americas had roughly 100 million natives, making one fifth of world's population. One million survived, one fifth of the world was murdered! It is beyond greed, it is something very dark. And all that with primitive tools." Today, "God knows what

new tools science brings." Why, he wondered, did this happen, "could it be that the Europeans developed some sort of claustrophobia being pressed by consecutive migrations against the Ocean for centuries? The *lebensraum*? There must be some explanation." They did all this, Silajdžić noted, despite the presence of those calling for humanism, pluralism, equality and coexistence—"Despite Goethe, Shakespeare, Aristotle and many others. Despite Jesus! Atilla did not have that reference, they did."

While Europe sees itself as unique and distinct from Asia, Silajdžić asked us to see Europe from another perspective. There are many ideas in Europe which "are foreign, like many ideas in Asia are foreign too. So that is why I say we are talking about one civilization, you cannot put up walls and barriers of ideas, it's impossible." Europe is "an Asian peninsula…Part of it, if not a bigger part of it was in Asia, interacting with the Asian cultures, with the religious movements and so on so…a strong component of the identity is Christian, as you all know, it also came from Asia where the idea of monotheistic culture was clearly formulated."

Despite these strong Asian links in history, Europe is now apprehensive of "the rise of Asia. This is the twenty-first century, it is the Asian century, there is no way to deny it, so all the corridors of power, of influence, of culture are now changing direction. I believe instead of embracing the change, these right wing parties are trying to stop the time, stop the change, which is impossible." "If they continue this way," Silajdžić told us, "they will close the horizons, go back to the core, sit behind the wall and wait to die. That's why they do not want to accept Turkey within the European Union. Turkey being the bridge towards Asia, this is the bridge towards taking part in the proceedings of the twenty-first century. Some prefer sitting behind the walls."

Today, "the ascending paradigm holds that there can be no other but one…not really any other people but one, the rest being *untermensch*, servants at best, no interfaith dialogue for there can be no other faith but one, and no other way of communication except monologue." Silajdžić associated "euronationalism" and tribalism—in both, "in times of danger, true or perceived, they tend to go back to the core to meet the challenge. In the stable it smells bad but it is warm." "If they continue this way," he said, "they will close the horizons…sit behind the wall and wait to

die." In this environment, "Universalism, humanism and similar notions are too thin to be credible. It will take a lot of time and effort to quiet the call of the motherland and blood." He noted that "The Prophet of Islam knew that very well and worked hard against *asabiyya* [tribalism, group feeling] promoting new allegiance. The Qur'an introduced the revolutionary notion of brotherhood amongst men."

Currently, Silajdžić affirmed, "people are afraid of losing their identities" and are "looking for a culprit. Of course, rarely someone says well, I am to blame. It is always the outsider who is blamed. So where are we going?" In Europe, he said, "the right wing parties, to me, reveal a hidden fear. All living organisms, including societies, do step back when threatened, and what is threatened in Europe is the feeling of domination." In Europe, "There are negative demographics as you know, the problem of strangers, some people do not like strangers coming to Europe—but then without those foreigners you cannot have clean streets and so on. So, this I think is a reaction to all the threats conscious or unconscious. The blood goes back to the vital organs in order to protect life."

Speaking of the migration that Europe was dealing with, Silajdžić felt "It has become a litmus test of sincerity for all who talk about humanity, solidarity and lofty principles. For rich Muslims too who can do more to save the dignity of the migrants by improving their lot in their own countries, since no new continent is about to be discovered." He expressed that he felt that Europeans are saving lives and "offering some help…Considering the conservative state of mind in today's Europe, I frankly expected less. It appears that this predicament has an awakening effect. At the end of the day, it is the state of heart that counts." He recounted a story he published which captures the plight of the refugee: "Long ago I published a short story in which I meet a Bosnian Man in Mexico who tells me that a refugee is like a stone in the air, wherever it falls it is not welcome. I wish to be proven wrong. The story is titled 'Stone in the Air,' long before war in Bosnia."

In their encounter with the migrants, Silajdžić believed Europeans were failing to connect the relationship between colonialism and immigration: "If you pay a visit, you should expect a return visit…So the Europeans went to the Subcontinent, North Africa and so on, so these guys are now

paying a return visit to them, and some of them don't seem to like it…They don't even ask for their artifacts to be given back to them which were taken by the Europeans. So they are coming in peace, they want to work, and this is their right. You cannot go to the Subcontinent and take what you want, come back, and say we nothing to do with this. That is not how it works. That's not life."

Of the Europeans who say Muslims cannot be European, Silajdžić said, "Who is that person to say, you are not of this, does he own a monopoly of what is culture and religion? They are talking about freedom of this, freedom of that, what is freedom?" "I do genuinely respect someone who says well I am a Buddhist," he continued, "Great. That's your choice, but do not step over my freedom. I respect you but you should respect me. That's all." People who are saying that Muslims cannot be European, for example, are actually conveying, "I don't respect you, you have to be what I am. And I am sure that is not a good Christian. Maybe a good fascist, but not a good Christian, that is not a believer. A believer knows that God is one and we are all God's creatures. That is how it is. So, respect it, I choose this way, you choose that way so what's wrong with that?…That's why in the Quran it says that we have created you tribes and peoples in order for you to know each other...what's wrong with that? And if we follow this, we just know each other so it's good to know and it may enrich me."

Speaking of his people's own horrific experience with European ethnonationalism, Silajdžić noted that during the war in Bosnia, "over one thousand mosques, cemeteries and Islamic sites were destroyed, not as a collateral, but as a planned effort to erase the memory and extinguish the spirit." He contrasted this aggression with the Islamic ethos which he said his Bosnian Muslim community lived. He pointed to the lack of revenge strikes by Muslims on Serbs who had perpetuated a genocide against them—in Sarajevo today there are 20,000 Serbs, he told us, including 10,000 Serbs from Srebrenica itself. And yet, "Not one single act of revenge occurred, not even an accident. To me this proves that the people from Srebrenica carry civilization in their bones and their faith has to do something with it. The Muslims in Bosnia submitted petitions to the German authorities during World War II appealing for the safety of their Jewish co-citizens. Other communities did not." He elucidated that "Bosniaks did not do what others did to them because they are inherently better; they were taught to respect the Other."

This is partly why Silajdžić is so upset at the violent actions of groups like ISIS which people associate with Muslims: “to lump a billion of Muslims together with these monsters is a crime against history with grave repercussions for the future.” “They say Sunnis are ISIS in Iraq, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, Hamas these are the groups,” he stated, “It’s painful to listen to this, it gives you no hope, it’s so false but it falls on ignorant ears because people don’t know. Like I don’t know about the aboriginal culture in Australia. I know very little so you can tell me anything, you see? I know very little unfortunately, so this is the same thing. They tell them the Boko Haram, you know, ISIS, all these small groups are the representatives of one billion people. If these one billion were terrorists, God forbid, the whole world would be in flames, but it’s not.”

The adverse reaction to the “Other” being seen across the world, Silajdžić believed, is in part attributable to the pace of social change. We are all dealing, often adversely or in a reactionary way, to sudden changes which are all around us in our current time: “the speed of change, it’s happening very fast. Unprepared societies, they do not fare very well, traditional societies do not fare well in this fast-changing circumstance. Some fundamental traditional values are going to be the victim of this period.” This is because “human beings can only take that much of change in a unit of time without breaking down, together with the fragmented world around them.” Ultimately, “We are biology, despite all the progress we still need nine months to be born, we need twenty years to grow up, there are no jumps in nature, these leaps are possible with maybe chips yes but human beings are biological so it’s gradual, things happen incrementally. But we are asked today to go with time, right, and it’s accelerating to such an extent that I think it actually presents the biggest problem of this civilization.”

“The consequences are clear,” he believed—and they are not positive. Having time to adjust is important: “In Bosnia we have a saying, ‘losing the barakah [blessing, spiritual power] of time.’ We talk about taking care of nature, but time is rarely mentioned, like it is not a part of our existence. When we try to accomplish too much in a short time we show disrespect for time, the order of things. The whole thing might be summed up like this: Speed boat for the few or Noah’s Ark for the many.” Thus, “It is vital that leaders of this impatient world understand this so that

those ahead of the pack could learn to wait for those behind them. The real satisfaction is in sharing—not in chasing the More and the New for the few. And it is also safer."

AI, Silajdžić argued, is only making the problem worse. Individuals and societies—and some more than others—are already at their breaking points in terms of how fast change is occurring, and AI is promising a kind of quick fix, a way to make sense of all the information around us. "We are piling up heaps of info on our fragmented reality in the clouds without the center of gravity of higher, vertical reference," he said, "and more is coming every millisecond. It is impossible to just forget it (The right to forget is a natural human right). On the other hand, we cannot make sense of it. So we obviously abdicate the effort to the AI to restore order even if horizontal, in keeping with our aversion for the vertical and the perennial inclination to anthropomorphize the supreme principle. After all, we created the AI, did we not?" "We turn to the machines, AI, for direction," he argued, "to, even subconsciously, perpetuate teleologically our godlike nature as we are the creators of the machines…Such is the yearning of humans to be gods."

"What's wrong with getting bored?" Silajdžić asked, "that is the mother of invention, now we don't have that right anymore. It is entertainment 24/7." He recounted that a few years before, "I visited one of the Rodin's statues in an open-air museum in Paris and penned a poem. Two things impressed on my mind: The Thinker in his deep thoughts and crowds milling around him with earpieces in their ears to mute their own thoughts. There was a woman hurrying by and dragging her little daughter, while talking on the phone. The little girl pauses and says pointing to the statue: Mom, this man hasn't got a phone. Would you give him yours?"

Considering developments around AI led Silajdžić to discuss the relationship between religion, secularism, and science. He affirmed, speaking of common secular views, "We have been humble enough to admit we know that we do not know (Socrates) except for one thing—God does not exist." It is, "amidst our admitted ignorance" the "one prevailing certainty; we know little but we know there is no God." The actual "religion" of Europe, Silajdžić said, was "doubt and profit." Yet while "generations have been conditioned to this materialistic understanding of the totality of our existence," even this assumption is now being "shaken" as science itself seems

to be leaving materialism behind. Today, he explained, “matter seems not to be the matter we know, rather bundles of energy, frequences and vibrations (strings perhaps). What now? What will the temples of science preach now?...Some in the temples have started talking about ‘unified, universal vibrating field of pure intelligence.” But, “They will keep discovering *how* and the public will keep forgetting that to discover is not to create and that *how* cannot replace *why*.” He again came back to the point of humans feeling directionless, under threat, and retreating inward—thus contributing to tribalism. “We are between various Scyllas and Charybdises”—the paradox is that on the one hand we have “walless cyberspace” and on the other “ever more walls on the ground. Is it the fear of our own invention?”

Ultimately, the notion of the divine, Silajdžić said, is an inclusionary one and he noted different traditions who interpreted God as “one”: “There is a hymn in Rigveda that talks about Hiranyagarbha, ‘the Creator...God of Gods and no other but Him.’ In Upanishads it is Brahman, hence Brahmanism, then Ishvara and so forth.” The “South American and North American Indians” speak of the “Great Spirit” and “all monotheistic sacred texts talk about a big number of messengers, and it is safe to assume that they were not confined to one locality.” At the same time, he argued that monotheism has also been “used to create a global social hierarchy an ideological cover for colonialism, *la mission civilisatrice*, a not-so-subtle way to ‘civilize’ the pagans for which they should almost be grateful.”

Interpreted philosophically, it is the relationship between the “self” or subject, for example from the European perspective, and the “Other,” the “object”—it “is the story of the subject-object dynamics, and how to make it stick in the minds of the perceived objects.” The assumptions based on the subject/object relationship are still with us: “The consequence is that we take this order for granted, so deep it is. A couple of thousand people rule the world despite all the talk about democracy, everything changes but not that.” Is there a way to transcend this dynamic? “Depending on the angle of observation,” Silajdžić explained, “subject can be object and vice-versa, but this is not popular with those deeply imbued with the spirit of the vertical order. Edward Said clarified it in his *Orientalism*.” He noted the work of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk who offered a framework whereby “subject-object evolves into subject-subject.”

While we met Silajdžić in Sarajevo, Israel was conducting one of its wars in Gaza, which would reach even greater levels of destruction after the October 7th attacks in 2023. Yet Silajdžić was already interpreting Gaza as test for the world: "Gaza is disgrace for all of us. People are bombed and people dying under the occupation in our time of human rights and talk about democracies—it takes the credibility away from all of us. From international organizations, talk about democracy, talk about this, it's all talk." "You will hear a lot of justification for this massacre," Silajdžić said, "which is not the first time. But that does not have any credibility anymore, no explanations, no justifications of this and that, no tricks with consequences, not talking about the underlying causes and realities…It's caveman's behavior, we are not far away from that. What changed is the stone, we can now throw a very big stone far away, but it's is still stone and it's still killing our neighbor in order to steal his meal or what have you."

Silajdžić was particularly moved at the image of a young boy in Gaza which he saw on CNN, and he was moved to write a poem using the scene and Gaza as a metaphor for our current world. He described the image: "a boy, he turned towards the wall crying…like saying this is my world, the world gave me the wall so I don't want to look at you. This is my world, I don't want to know anything else because everything else is worse than my wall." This is "is all he has been given, that's all his father has been given, and his grandfather only talked about the fig trees, olives, grass. That was all taken from him, from his grandfather, so the boy may have a memory only." Then, Silajdžić saw another image of Gaza, this time of two donkeys—one was breathing heavily and dying but the other had a bandage around his leg—indicating to Silajdžić that "someone took care of this donkey in this hell. So I can say that humanity is dying in Gaza, the question is only who will survive? The hand that put the bandage on donkey's leg or the hand that killed the man and the donkey? This is what it is, this is where we are."

He explained, "what I ask in my poem from that boy is not to turn his back to the world that has turned its back to him, but to turn his face towards us and allow us to be ashamed, looking him in the eye…If he does not allow us to be ashamed, then we are finished. If we do not have shame than we are finished if we can go and kill innocent people…We may have whatever you can think of but we are not human beings, we are something else."

We reproduce his poem here:

“Save the World: The Young Boy in Palestine

The wall in front of you
The wall behind you
The wall is all
This world has for you

But in your heart
Don’t let it grow
Young boy in Palestine
Don’t turn away
From the world
That has turned
Away from you
Allow the world
To feel ashamed
Looking you in the eye
The eye of a boy
Without boyhood

Say
Whose hand
Ignoring death
Whose steady hand
Put the bandage
On your donkey's leg
Say
For you see farther
Facing the wall

Which hand
Will lead the world
The one that
Pulled the trigger
Or that which healed
Your wounded donkey

Turn around
Show the face
Of a boy that never was
Help the world
That has not helped you

For the sake
Of brave people from afar
Sharing with you
Death and Honour
In the name
Of the children in Nigeria
Syria, Mexico, Iraq
Abducted children. In Australia
Dead children
On the bottom of the Mediterranean
Children still alive
In the mines and sweatshops
Children on the borders and wires
Waiting for a raindrop in deserts
Sleepless and dreamless
Children in the slums
Children in the Philippines
Somalia Palestine and Bosnia

For the sake
Of all those
Unafraid of your memories
Of wells with clear water
Of uncut olive trees
Last seen
In your grandpa's eyes
When he talked of home
The memories unscathed
By bullets and barbed wires

For the sake of children in Israel
Who bear no guilt
Turn around
Young boy in Palestine
Save this world
Help it be ashamed."

To move ahead, Silajdžić said the answer is to "open up, don't be scared, the devil is not so ugly as you think. Get to know people." He loved the work of Goethe, "because he opened this window; Europe without him would not have been Europe" and "Goethe opened a big window to look outside Europe, broaden the horizons of Europe." He explained that the current world order that we have was "made by the winners of World War II. That in itself carries faults exacerbated by time being a forced consensus." Yet this paradigm is not sufficient, "a shift of the paradigm is necessary." Too many walls are being erected between peoples, and "walls are symbols of fear and defeat. Something must give and if History is true to itself, the walls will give. This time it must happen peacefully. Waiting for the Third World War to take place to install a new world order is not pragmatic. We may not be around to see it."

“There must be a way to synergize human experience in all fields,” Silajdžić stated, “There are things to learn from China,” for example the example of Confucius. Generally, “The world needs a trusted anchor which would include teachings of all faiths, ideologies.” “Many can identify with saving nature,” for example, “it is in their faith and tradition.” He mentioned Native American traditions and also the example of the Quran, which states that animals are “peoples like you.” Another problem he identified, the “acceleration in technology and Time itself is dealt with in many traditions,” for example Surah Al-Asr of the Quran “begins with Time and ends with Patience.”

The problems humanity faces, such as ethnical questions associated with AI, are global. To address these problems, education and making connections between peoples are an imperative: “Now, what tools do we have? With multilateralism diminished and unilateralism and nationalism on the rise and the seats of power, learning and influence abdicating the responsibility for all practical purposes, there must be an initiative to summon our capacities globally to try and see beyond the next quarter. In the long run, education is the answer. If there is an agreement, priority could be given to inclusiveness, learning about the Other. People fear what they do not know and emphasize with what they know. In a couple of decades, we can have a new, better generation. Arts and entertainment, the popular culture can be mobilized to that end. With modern tools at hand it is possible.”

Like many other Minglers, Silajdžić discussed the importance of international organizations and cooperation: “In the short run we have the UN; that organization cannot be managed by a number of big states if we want it to succeed. The big ones will not be excluded from the problems to come. The UN had the non-aligned, 100 countries, to temper the big to some extent. Now the big ones are on their own and it is not a good prospect. Giving the UN another dimension by adding a Global Committee in charge of ethics might be one way. That body would have to have a sanctioning mechanism and members should be elected in their countries to have weight. The Committee might deal with issues ranging from historical responsibility to ethical questions of abuse of technology. Do we really need the G6 while millions die of hunger and disease? How to deaccelerate (the concept of *Sabr* [patience in Islam]) with the view of others catching up? How to give the small ones the relevance they deserve, their place under the

sun, to mitigate their condition giving them true respect at the very least." He even questioned the utility of talking of big and small powers because the "small ones are in billions now" in terms of population and "the big ones should take that seriously."

While, "I certainly shall not live to see the world without frontiers, I think we are going there because this is the only way to survive. All these walls—when you wall out something, you wall in something. Wall out, wall in all the time and this leads to wars and then we shall not survive. I do not know what the rest of the universe thinks of planet Earth but I believe, you know, we are not that bad, you know? We should last a little bit more, but if we choose to kill ourselves, annihilate everything, I think it's stupid thing to do, but we may do this. It's not excluded if we teach our children hatred…Or if you press and oppress people to the point that they are desperate, then again it's not very wise."

Silajdžić urged, "humans have to unite in their quest for survival, using science and spiritual traditions, turning diversities into opportunities." "Cohabitation, inclusiveness, respect for the Other are not matters of choice; It is the imperative," he said. "I always thought that someone with wide horizons should finally connect the world. From the Subcontinent to the west, Tagore and Galib sitting with Rumi and Goethe, Shakespeare and Emerson, with Greeks and Arabs in the middle, having a tea with Lao Tzu and Octavio Paz in Mexico." "The cure is opening up, not closing itself within the walls. This is the cure. But that is conditional, open broad horizons…I believe we not should tolerate each other, we should embrace each other. Embrace cultures, learn from the cultures."

Biographies

Akbar Ahmed is Distinguished Professor and the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC, and Wilson Center Global Fellow. He was described as the "world's leading authority on contemporary Islam" by the BBC. Among his many books are his quartet of studies examining the relationship between the West and Islamic world published by Brookings Institution Press: *Journey into Islam* (2007), *Journey into America* (2010), *The Thistle and the Drone* (2013), and *Journey into Europe* (2018).

Frankie Martin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at American University. He was senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's previous quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on the relationship between the West and Islamic world and holds an MPhil in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. His writing has appeared in outlets including *Foreign Policy*, *CNN*, the *Guardian*, and *Anthropology Today.*

Amineh Ahmed Hoti is Fellow-Commoner at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge and Governor, St. Mary's School, Cambridge. She was also a senior researcher for Akbar Ahmed's quartet of Brookings Institution Press studies on Western-Islamic relations. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge and co-founded and directed the world's first Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations at Cambridge. Her most recent book is *Gems and Jewels: The Religions of Pakistan* (2021).