

Spirituality as a Primary Resource

In Promoting Peace

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Introduction

All of us at times feel helpless as we watch the level and scope of violence rising in various parts of the world. War, terrorism, genocides, brutality, and crime are terrible realities before which we recoil in incomprehension. They are all so senseless, without meaning, useless for what we might achieve, if we were wiser. How can we rein in these destructive forces, and fashion a new universal civilization founded on a deep commitment to humanity, and the best in our noble species?

There is a way for us all, but it will require that we look into the spiritual depth of each of our great religions, discovering the mystical treasure that is hidden there. Spirituality, mysticism, inner realization, and contemplation represent the ultimate resources we possess to transform the consciousness of the world, of the human family--by allowing it to change us one by one. In what follows, after some preliminary definition of terms, I will discuss the nature and elements of transformation, uncovering the common ground of the religions in spirituality, examining their origin, exploration, fruit, and achievement in a new global society that is enlightened--a civilization, capitalism, and globalization with a *heart*.

In all of this, we will understand that the mystical path, the contemplative, and the spiritual are all resources for transformation. We will pursue how these resources operate, interactively, to transform individuals, families, groups, nations, and the world.

We will consider a spirituality open to all the religions as constituting what can be called *interspirituality*, and its nine elements will be elaborated. Four proposals for peace in Asia and the Pacific will be discussed. Two involve China: one in its relationship with Tibet; the other in its relationship with Taiwan. The third proposal concerns Islam, and the fourth, North Korea.

Mysticism, Contemplation, and Spirituality

As we reflect on the mystical, contemplative and spiritual process within the context of transformation, it is important to consider definitions of terms. I have written of these matters at great length in *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions* [1], and more recently, in *A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life* [2]. These two works are concerned with all the elements of this inner process of growth, change, and transformation. Mysticism is direct, or unmediated experience of Ultimate Reality, whether we mean by that term God, Spirit, the Tao, the *Wakan Tanka* of the Lakota Native Americans, the One, the Absolute, and

Unmoved Mover, the Divine, or Infinite Consciousness. Whatever word we employ, the Ground of all being and existence is what is meant. This reality is experientially accessible to us in the mystical, contemplative, or fully actualized spiritual states of the mind, in the depths of consciousness itself. [3] We are always able to reach these realms of consciousness if we follow a disciplined spiritual life. The various great world religions all have methods to do so.

Like science, mysticism is empirical, since it relies on experience, not faith. When it is said that this experience is unmediated, this means it goes beyond faith, belief, or reliance on a priesthood, and approaches the Divine directly through the person's own inner experience. When mysticism becomes a disciplined process, when it is a commitment of the individual, it then becomes a process of spiritual growth, and eventually of transformation as well.

Closely allied with mysticism is contemplation. The contemplative dimension is also part of mystical experience, that is, part of the process itself. Contemplation has a lot to do with the method, or spiritual practice chosen. Contemplation, in its depth and maturity, is an effortless receiving of the mystical gifts. These include direct awareness and experience of the Ultimate, the Divine, God, or Infinite Consciousness; metaphysical knowledge, illumination, self-knowledge; discernment of the hearts of others; insight into the nature and meaning of existence; and profound cultivation of the virtues, especially love, kindness, compassion, sensitivity, forgiveness, generosity, and patience. Contemplation is also a spiritual practice, often of the meditative variety. It is mystical meditation, a form that puts us directly on the path of perception of the Ultimate. Its greatest extent would be mystical contemplation, which is detailed in the spiritualities of the Hindu, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, to name a few.

Spirituality names the individual commitment of each one of us to embrace the mystical path in our life. Doing so, we enter into the mystical process proper. The emphasis in spirituality is on our own individual commitment to live the spiritual life. We do not lean on the institution to accomplish our transformation for us, but rather, accept that responsibility as our own. No religious institution is capable of transforming us. That is our own individual task. Spirituality is not opposed to religion, and often exists in a religious tradition. The emphasis here is on individual responsibility and discipline to carry on in the spiritual path, the journey to wholeness, or integrity, transforming virtue, holiness of life, and effective compassionate, loving action consistent with the demands of love and kindness.

All of the great world religions have originated in mystical consciousness. This is their generating source and inspiration. The *Sanatana Dharma*, or the Eternal Religion, as Hinduism is called, can be traced back to the *rishis*, the forest sages of Indian antiquity, who were these extraordinary mystics who had direct experience of the Divine Reality, the Brahman. The experience of God by these sages, and the founding mystics of other traditions, existed long before the concept of God, or the Divine. Similarly, the *Dharma*, the Buddhist tradition, owes its existence to the inner

process of enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni, known as the Buddha, the Enlightened One; his experience is paradigmatic for every Buddhist in every age. In the Western traditions, we find that the faith of Israel, the Jewish tradition, has its origin in the mystical experience of its patriarchs and prophets, who all encountered, and were encountered by God, or Yahweh. Moses and the prophets each describe their own experience of this Mysterious Presence, the Divine Reality, the Infinite Spirit.

The same is true when we examine the life of Jesus Christ, regarded in Christianity as the Incarnate Son of God. All of Christianity takes its life and being from the inner consciousness of Jesus in his intense, pervasive awareness of his father, who is presumably our Father, as well, and the very same Presence who is Yahweh, the Lord of all. We can also discern a similar mystical content behind the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, who received a twenty-three year private revelation from Allah through the mediation of the Archangel Gabriel, who commanded him to recite, that is, to utter passages that would later constitute the Qur'an. Each of these represents a mystical experience that became a process through a commitment to the spiritual path, or journey, the journey to greater and greater knowledge, wisdom, and transformation.

The Nature and Elements of Transformation

Transformation means fundamental, substantial, and permanent change, radical alteration of the inner understanding, will, character, memory, imagination, unconscious mind, and behavior of the person. It is generally the case that a person's view of reality, life, and the world is directly related to their overarching desire--what actually motivates them. Often what they desire, or what motivates them, are selfish goals. When transformation begins, a basic shift occurs from a self-preoccupied fixation to other-centeredness, a focus on the Divine, and other sentient beings, one's surrounding community.

There is first a **transformation of understanding**. The individual expands their view of reality, discovers subtleties and hidden connections, and begins to grasp everything from a unifying ground, the Divine itself. Transformation of course is an ongoing process. We keep growing in knowledge, wisdom, and virtue. The Buddhist would call this element of transformation right view, leading to enlightenment. It is a vision of Truth based on the experience of Ultimate Reality, God, the Spirit, the Divine, Infinite Awareness. For all the theistic traditions of mysticism, this transformation of understanding is to see all things in God. This is an illuminative phenomenon, that is, a person who is transformed in this way is illumined by the divine intellect. One of the classical distinctions between the East and the West is found in the emphasis in Hinduism and Buddhism on consciousness as the locus of transformation, whereas in the West, the locus is the will. I truly believe that enlightenment requires both the will and consciousness, integrated in the surrender to the Divine in the definitive transformed condition.

Realizing the second element of transformation, that of **the will** itself, requires a change of priorities. No longer does the person's will assert itself blindly, or

choose in a selfish way, but rather aligns itself with God's will, seeking the greater good of others and the self. The will surrenders to God in acts of selflessness, and identifies with the sufferings and needs of others. Christian mysticism greatly stresses this element of the process of transformation as the essential one. Even the intimacy of union with God is regarded as primarily involving the will. The will is grounded in love, divine love, as its motive power—that which inspires it, and propels it forward.

Third, there is a transformation of **character** that slowly takes root in the person's identity, becoming firmly established in one's behavior, in the way he or she treats others, especially the most vulnerable. The transformed character conforms to love, compassion, kindness, mercy, and sensitivity. This sensitivity is a vast kind of awareness that sees, feels, and intuits the conditions of others, regarding them as precious. This character is one of holiness and caring; it is other-centered in its orientation, always available to the needs of compassion in every situation of life. The transformed character is one deeply fixed in virtue to a very high degree of operation.

The fourth element of transformation concerns the **memory**, which undergoes a healing, and a letting go of unneeded memories with negative, destructive emotional contents that hold the person back from real growth, and cause them to be stuck in an earlier stage of development. The awakening to a deeper inner life of enlightened awareness of the Divine Reality takes the person to a heightened state of mature identity. A healed memory acts in concert with an expanded understanding, and the transformed will and character, the imagination, a purified unconscious, and compassionate, other-centered action.

The fifth aspect of transformation is that involving the **imagination**. The imagination is the faculty of envisioning the world, reality, life, and truth. In its fullness of operation, when it works in an enlightened being, it is a holy faculty. It operates in tandem and collaboration with all the other dimensions of transformed being in the identity of the person. When the imagination is receptive to the transcendent, the Divine Reality, it is able to see without end. It is able to know in a mystical sense, and this impacts the transformed understanding, will, character, and memory. It also positively affects the unconscious, and the person's behavior.

The **unconscious** is the sixth element in the transformative process--the realm of hidden desires, illuminations, and knowledge, mystical perceptions, and encounters with spirits, the Divine, or infinite Knowledge. The unconscious, when operating independently of the other elements, has its own motivation. This motivation normally influences understanding, the will, character, memory, imagination, and action. It can influence who we are by manipulating us with desires. The unconscious is very powerful, and immensely creative in endless ways, but it is transformed only when it is purified of the control of its desires; when it reaches a state in which desires no longer control the conscious life, and its understanding; and therefore desire no longer has effects on the other elements, especially behavior--the realm of action.

It is **behavior** that receives the benefit of the transformation of the other elements, the faculties of identity, of the person being transformed. Behavior expresses the transformation through loving, compassionate, kind action. This intention informs the functioning of the faculties, and they guide behavior, inspiring it in a positive direction. Virtuous being becomes transformed actions in the world. We all have to be, and to act in the world, in life, and these actions can be enlightened ones if the person is in harmony with all the elements of his, or her being, and acts out of a pure intention for good.

Spirituality as Common Ground

We have seen how mystical spirituality is the origin of religion as such. The breakthroughs it gave to the founders of the world's religions became the foundation for the religions as institutions in history and world. Mystical spirituality is the source that continually nourishes civilization and culture, that inspires individuals to heroic acts of self-sacrifice that guides people in their lucid moments of self-examination.

Spirituality, in this contemplative, mystical sense, is also the starting point for exploration between and among the religions in their depth core experience of the Absolute, the Divine, or Vast Awareness. The fact that we have this dimension in common means that we also have a meeting place in it. I am fond of pointing out that the real religion of the human family isn't religion at all. It is spirituality, and spirituality is the universal tradition, although this tradition is neither intentional, nor systematic. No one decided to create a universal, overarching tradition of global mysticism, or spirituality. The term rather, names the phenomenon of the omnipresence of spirituality at the dawn of every tradition. In that sense, it is the universal tradition as a dimension of human experience found in all ages and cultures. That being the case we have very significant common ground for dialogue, and for experiential explorations by more generous members of the various world religions.

Spirituality in its cross-cultural operation in the lives of persons living it in openness to other traditions and in various cultural settings becomes an agent of a creative intellectual, political, and moral ferment, allowing for new developments between and among nations. Spirituality in this sense is what I have come to call interspirituality. [4] In its cross-cultural outreach through its countless representatives, such spirituality generates constructive engagement between and among various groups, organizations, and NGOs. These opportunities for constructive engagement lead to real possibilities of collaboration on the critical issues we face as a planetary population, and which can only be solved by our common efforts. These critical issues include the environmental crisis; war and peace; closing the gap between the wealthy and developing nations; the catastrophe of famine; the tragedy of refugee populations attempting to escape conflicts, economic hardships, genocide, and hunger; the protection of children; the rights of women; access to sufficient healthcare, and many others.

I believe that one of the greatest fruits of collaboration across traditions, one of the concrete benefits for the whole of humanity of such an out-going, universally oriented spirituality, is the collective work for the birth and emergence of a new planetary culture and civilization: a civilization, a global society and culture with a heart.

We have witnessed so much tragedy in the last century, and the threat of global catastrophe still looms over us. As the Dalai Lama has often stated: we have a universal responsibility to change the course of history, to guide it in a more positive direction, a universal order that works for the welfare of the whole of humankind, and all sentient beings. Such a civilization with a heart, a planetary society animated by the deepest values of the human family--selfless love; compassion; kindness; non-harming; sharing; and the elimination of poverty, homelessness, disease, hunger, domestic violence, and weapons of mass-destruction--can become an actuality even in our lifetimes if we are willing to work for it. We have this responsibility, both individually and collectively, and this responsibility extends to the whole earth itself. If we can envision it, then we have an alternative.

A civilization with a heart, a compassionate, humane world order predicated on kindness, and the universality of the Golden Rule, a variant of which exists in every religion, means a new polis that is not governed by considerations of power and cold economics, but love. In order for this to happen, a transformation must occur in the hearts and minds of everyone. This change is articulated eloquently in the words of William Gladstone, former Prime Minister of England: the love of power must give way to the power of love! If we express this guiding insight in a more positive rendition of the Golden Rule, we can say: always do for others what you want them to do for you.

A new world community, whose axis revolves the values of love, compassion, kindness, gentleness of being, sharing of resources, ecological responsibility, peace, and genuine economic and social justice, and sustained by a viable spirituality, will focus on transformation of capitalism and globalization. In order to have a universally enlightened society, capitalism and globalization must also have a heart, must be rooted in something more meaningful than economic benefits for the comparatively few, and power relationships that keep these few in a dominant position vis-à-vis everyone else. Many of the demonstrations around the globe relating to globalization, trade issues, the WTO, IMF, and the World Bank, are important indications of the often profound injustices that exist because of a globalization and a capitalism that is essentially heartless. The new civilization, as a project and a goal of the interspirituality movement, and a more universal understanding of spirituality, needs to focus its efforts on profound transformations in the areas of politics and economics.

Interspirituality and the Elements of a Universal Spirituality

Spirituality, in its interspiritual manifestation, is a vision of the spiritual life nourished by other schools of spirituality, mysticism, and contemplation, integrated with a person's own tradition, if indeed the person is fortunate enough to have one. Interspirituality in this sense represents a spaciousness of being in the conduct of spiritual life, in the human search called the spiritual journey that culminates in an understanding of spirituality that is sustained from its universal stream of mystical consciousness. In my studies, contemplative experience, travels, and time spent in India, I have encountered in depth mature members of all the world's religions. I began to notice the common elements operative in their spiritual lives, and identified these elements in my book *The Mystic Heart*. [5] All of these mature figures were spiritual teachers and saints in their particular tradition. I realized that if the fruits of the spiritual life, the contemplative, mystical process are the same, then the Source who inspired these transformed beings is the same. The one Divine Presence is behind it all, in every age. This insight has significance for peace-making in Asia, the Pacific, really indeed everywhere, and it is very meaningful as a major resource for transformation as we embrace the monumental task of reshaping our global political and economic culture.

The elements of a **universal spirituality** or **mysticism** include: (1) actualized moral capacity, (2) solidarity with the earth and all beings, (3) deep nonviolence, (4) humility of heart, (5) spiritual practice, (6) mature self-knowledge, (7) simplicity of life and lifestyle, (8) love in action--compassionate service, and (9) prophetic voice and action. All these aspects work together, and are essential to a fully formed and operative spiritual life in any part of the world.

There can be no genuine spirituality worth its salt that lacks the **moral dimension** of a fully operative or actualized practice. We see this principle at work in the lives of the saints of all traditions. Indeed, when the moral life has been inwardly actualized, the person no longer needs the external guides or norms to be moral, because the person is moral almost by nature. Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi, John Paul II, or any other holy person does not require any precepts or commandments to be good, since they are good by nature, disposition, and choice. It should be emphasized, however, that a genuine spiritual life is not possible without an operative, or functioning moral commitment.

Secondly, an awakened contemplative, mystic, saint, or anyone aspiring to be so, understands the intrinsic **interdependence of all beings**, all sentient beings, and certainly all human persons. Such a one grasps inwardly, existentially, this ontological truth of the interconnectivity of all life. It leads one to a deep sense of solidarity with all beings, and especially with the earth itself, our mother, and the basis of our material, aesthetic, and even our spiritual life here in this world. This interdependence is the ontological condition of humankind, and further, the social, economic, and political interdependence exist because of the deeper interconnection of all beings. Each of the great world religions attests to the essential, ontological interdependence of all being. Hinduism speaks of non-duality, Buddhism of dependent arising, Christianity of the Mystical Body of Christ, all of which indicate a unitive holding of reality together. It is

out of this ontological condition that the sense of solidarity emerges in the mystic's vision of how he or she is related to everyone else.

The third element of a universal mysticism or spirituality is a commitment to **deep nonviolence**. This commitment occurs quite organically from the realization of our ontological or essential interdependence, the intrinsic relatedness of all being. As one grows in holiness, integrity, and wisdom, understanding the nature of reality, one desires never to harm another, or others, even other sentient species. Saints and mystics, seers, and contemplatives become inherently nonviolent because they see so deeply into the nature of reality.

It was Jainism that first awoke to the wisdom and necessity of non-harming. This principle is an absolute in the Jain tradition. Everything else in this faith is subordinate to it, even the truth itself. Both Buddhism and Hinduism were greatly influenced by Jainism in their adoption of the ideal of nonviolence, which was also an absolute commitment for Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and now of the Dalai Lama, and his people, in their moral struggle with the People's Republic of China. If we are ever to achieve a global society with a heart, then nonviolence is a vital value we must learn, and inculcate in the fabric of the universal culture. I have felt for several years that what Gandhi represents, what was manifested in his life, is a gift from the Divine, a revelation of a critical skill we must implement if we are to engender the transformation of the world into a social order with a heart.

The fourth element of a universal spirituality or mysticism is **humility of heart**. It is present in every form of spirituality in each of the religions. It is very clear from all the schools of mysticism that no progress in the spiritual journey is possible without this incisive virtue of humility. All the saints are imbued with its radiance, as are real mystics and contemplatives. Humility of heart is a clarity of truth about ourselves, and it is a deeply committed other-centeredness, a powerful desire not to manipulate others, or reality. It is a respect for the freedom and dignity of all beings, and a reticence even to mention our own needs. It provides the necessary perspective in the spiritual life to negotiate obstacles, pitfalls, and the threat of self-deception. Humility keeps us honest, and on the path.

Spiritual practice is the fifth element in a universal spirituality, and is the crux of the matter in terms of those powerful breakthroughs that occur from time to time, and are the substance of our relationship with the Divine, or of our realization of infinite consciousness. Spiritual practice can include prayer, meditation, chanting, liturgy and other rituals, singing, yoga, t'ai chi, spiritual reading, walking, and communion with the natural world. No spiritual life is either authentic or effective in the long run where a viable spiritual practice is absent. It is the cutting edge of inner realization, of the momentous eruptions of vision and insight in the spiritual journey. One's spiritual life or mystical process enters maturity when there is a commitment to a viable practice that is daily observed.

Element six concerns **self-knowledge**, which is profound, comprehensive, accurate, and indispensable to growth, transformation, and unitive experience. It works in tandem with humility and spiritual practice. It is nourished by regular exercises of examination of conscience, of delving into our motives that are evident to us, or hidden from our sight in the depths of the unconscious. Self-knowledge in this sense is an expression of the efficacy of humility of heart, and the effectiveness of practice, which rests on self-honesty, and a commitment to truth. The lucidity and veracity of self-knowledge, its humble admission of our faults, and its uncertainty about our virtue, keeps us steadily on the path of self-transcendence, love, and a pervasive peace.

Simplicity of life and of life-style is the seventh element, or aspect of a global mysticism, an emerging planetary spirituality. Along with the other the person nine elements, it is a definitive sign of the authenticity of one's commitment to spirituality. The person who is living the spiritual life in its depth and plentitude always has this attachment to simplicity, to the unadorned state of focus on the essential reality, free of all that is extraneous. In India, in the experience of Gandhi, his followers, and later in the life and example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and her sisterhood of the Missionaries of Charity, simplicity of life was a cardinal ideal, what the catholic tradition calls the vow of poverty. It means to live simply, or as Gandhi was fond of saying: "The earth has enough for humankind's needs, but not its greeds." There is a saying in the counter-culture of America that goes like this: "Live simply, so others may simply live!"

The eighth element of universal spirituality is **love-in-action**, self-less service, and compassionate response to the sufferings of others. This is the proof of the genuineness of one's spiritual life. It cannot be real without this dimension of action out of love, kindness, compassion, and sensitivity. The capacity to respond to others from the innateness of love, compassion, kindness, and sensitivity is directly related to living his or her spiritual life. The more we are immersed in the Divine Presence, or exposed to infinite Awareness, the more we become love-in-action, pure kindness, compassion, and sensitivity, and sensitivity is a vast awareness, a consciousness that transcends our human limitations. It is the inner, natural, emergent intention of the person with a good heart, a perfected being, a holiness of life.

The ninth, and final element of global mysticism is **prophetic witness**, (or voice,) and action. Authentic spirituality, when it is engaged with the world and the sufferings of the human community and other sentient species, is responsive to the sufferings of others, the struggles of the poor, vulnerable, homeless, the unwanted and unloved of humanity. The person of mystical spirituality in our time is prophetically engaged with the world. Such a person is always ready to take risks for the sake of peace, the environment, justice, equality, love, kindness, compassion, and sensitive awareness of the needs of others. The enlightened being will stick his or her neck out for others. Again, it's an indication of the reality and maturity of one's spirituality.

All of these elements are part of twofold awareness: a vertical and horizontal dimension. Spirituality in its mystical fullness, extent, and depth has a vertical direction

that is an openness to and a direct awareness of the Divine Reality, the Spirit, God, Infinite Consciousness. It is a consciousness of the transcendent reality, the Source that grounds one's spiritual commitment, and the mystical knowledge that arises from it. The second dimension of this awareness is equally indispensable, and is the horizontal direction of spiritual perception. It is the focus of loving awareness and action in relation to all others. It is animated by a depth of kindness and compassion, and the vast awareness of sensitivity that knows the preciousness of everyone and everything. Both these directions of awareness are the fruit of the spiritual life, and the fruitful foundation from which we can make peace in Asia, the Pacific, and the rest of the world.

Some Concrete Proposals for Peace

St. Augustine in the fifth century gave us a definition of peace in his master work *De Civitate Dei*. He remarks: "Peace is the tranquility of order."^[7] This peace is the gift of Heaven, of the mystical life, and it cannot be fashioned by us left to our own devices, and out of alignment with the Divine. It is a spiritual reality that is the fruit of the inner surrender to God, the Divine Reality, the Spirit, Infinite Awareness itself. It is from this fruitful understanding that I would like to propose four steps towards peace in Asia, the Pacific, and the around the planet.

1. The first proposal concerns Tibet, and it presupposes the great value of this culture, and what it has to offer to the People's Republic of China, its culture, social existence, and fuller notion of nationhood. There is so much the Tibetan people and culture have to offer China and the world. This Buddhist culture has evolved an elaborate system of personal transformation with a connection to the transformation of others and society. This is the precious gift that Tibet can give to China and the world. Peace in Asia, Pacific, and the world depends in part on China sincerely befriending the Tibetan People, and giving them a chance to make their contribution. I appeal to China to think about this insight, and all it has to gain by such a friendship. If the government of the People's Republic of China would adopt this positive course, everything will then work for it, and it will acquire the respect and love of the whole world.

In this process of befriending the Tibetan People, restoring their culture and way of life, the Dalai Lama is the most important factor. The Chinese government can acquire much benefit from a changed relationship with this Tibetan leader. He is not their enemy, but a friend waiting to be discovered. If China would reach out to this simple monk, as he calls himself, they would be inspired by what they would find. They have a precious treasure in this man, and their hearts would melt in his presence, because his goodness would radiate forth. It would be enormously wise for the Chinese to give this man a chance. Doing so, they will be pleasantly surprised.

2. Another important factor for peace in Asia and beyond is altering the relationship between China and Taiwan. Forging a new relationship requires vision and imagination. I believe, as with the Tibetan issue, it's time for a bold move from Beijing. I believe the answer is quite simple: let Beijing invite the two major political parties of

Taiwan into sincere dialogue with the government of the People's Republic. This has the power to prevent a potentially tragic conflict, ushering in an historic compromise.

A third proposal concerns North Korea. There can be no illusions about the government of the North; it has not been able to meet the legitimate needs of its people. At the same time, we have to deal with this government, which has put all its eggs in the basket of military power, sacrificing its people in the process. The governments in the region, along with Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia, should do all they can to provide sufficient resources to mitigate famine and starvation in the North. I think we have a responsibility here to bring North Korea through this crisis, but they must agree to pay a price for the aid: give up its development of nuclear weapons.

Finally, concerning Islam in Asia, and other areas of the world, given the present crisis within the Islamic commonwealth, what is needed as a major step towards an enduring peace, and a positive change in its relationship with non-Muslim peoples, is the creation of a new institution with absolute authority to speak for Islam itself. This might be an international Islamic Assembly, which would be invested with all the power it needs to teach the Muslims of the world what the Qur'an requires of them. Only in this way will the moral ambiguity of this moment in history be cleared away, allowing Islam to progress beyond this dangerous period where the potential for damage to its reputation is very high. The creation of such an important institution is a historic necessity, and much good would come out of such a development.

Spirituality, mysticism, contemplation, and a universal spirituality, nurtured in an interspiritual vision and practice as resource for transformation, can lead us into the task of building a new global order, a civilization with a heart, as detailed above. Such a global society is the only hope for the human family, a society envisioned by Pope Paul VI during his pontificate, in what he called “a true civilization: the civilization of love.” [8]

References

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2. Wayne Teasdale, *A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2002).
3. For an understanding of the nature of consciousness, see chapter three of *The Mystic Heart*.
4. See *Mystic Heart*, chapters 1 and 2, and *A Monk in the World*, chapter 9.

5. See *Mystic Heart*, chapters 5, 6 and 7.
6. See *Mystic Heart*, chapter 6, and *A Monk in the World*, chapter 2.
7. St. Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei* XIX, 13, 1: “Pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis.”
8. Pope Paul VI, Message, “World Day of Peace”, January 1, 1977.

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<http://home.comcast.net/~brotherwayne/index.htm>