

Transcript IFD 2003

El Hassan bin Talal

Dear friends, President Havel has brought us together in the spirit of consensus, in the spirit of sharing in our common humanity, for several years here in Prague, and to him we are very grateful. And it is to our distinguished host, that I give the floor to, to speak first.

Václav Havel

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, on behalf of the initiators of the seventh Forum 2000 conference, please allow me to welcome you most cordially to Smetana Hall. These conferences and discussions on the state of the world and possible dangers are always accompanied by something of a joint meditation and discussion among representatives from various religions. I consider this to be a very important and good tradition. In today's world it's as if we are beginning to recognize that the mad chase after consumer goods and after profit – actually a form of short-term nearsightedness suffered by our current civilization – is not enough. It is as if people are suddenly starting to remember that a long-term perspective also exists, a perspective that extends beyond our lifetimes; as if they are remembering and searching for the metaphysical roots of our moral code; as if they are suddenly realizing that should this moral code not be respected, humanity might come to a bad end. And the moment that these religious feelings are awakened is, in my opinion as well as in the opinion of others, of utmost importance; it is important that it be supported and to emphasize not what differentiates the world's religions but simply a mutual respect of one another, respecting each other's differences. What must be done is to actively search for what joins religions together, for what can help today's world and, if it is sufficiently apparent and visible, what can contribute to a better future. What can provide contributions to peace, to co-operation, to ensure that human actions are guided by a deeper insight, some glimpse into human existence? Humility – humility towards human existence and the mysterious ways of nature.

I would like to thank all of those participating in this year's and today's interreligious meeting; now I, the one who introduced this meeting, will transform myself into one who is prepared to sit by silently and listen religiously.

El Hassan bin Talal

May I, on all our behalves, thank President Havel for his introductory remarks. I would not describe them myself as introductory, for he needs no introduction, nor do the values for which he stands need explanation. Before turning to my list of distinguished speakers on the panel I would just like to remind the participants of the purpose of the discussion on this panel. Firstly, it will attempt to answer the following questions: Is it desirable and possible to strictly separate religion and politics, as liberalism and secularism have attempted to do in the Western countries over the last centuries? Secondly, does the connection of religion and politics necessarily lead to disastrous results or is there also the possibility for fruitful cooperation? And thirdly, on what level and in which fields should the dialogue proceed; what are the barriers preventing the dialogue and how can we surpass them?

I hope you will sympathise with the panel's moderator, ladies and gentlemen. I say they are all such moderate speakers that they do not need someone like me to moderate their contributions, but having given me this great privilege, I would like to turn to a dear friend, Julia Neuberger, the chief executive of the King's Fund, an independent health charity in the United Kingdom, and one of the founders of the concept of the Runnymede Trust to promote inter- and intra-religious understanding. I hope that the panellists are aware of the fact that time constrains us to an eight to ten minute intervention. Julia Neuberger, you have the floor.

Julia Neuberger

Your Royal Highness, thank you very much. It is an enormous pleasure and honour to have been asked to participate in this dialogue. I am particularly grateful to President Havel for including me in this panel. It is also wonderful to be back in Prague, even though this time I am only here for the day. But for me this is one of the great cities and I just love it. So many thanks to everyone here.

I think the three questions are really very difficult and His Royal Highness has asked us to have some sympathy for him as moderator. I would ask you to have some sympathy for us as panellists. It is really difficult for us to grapple with these, and I want to start by saying that coming from a Jewish background, from a German Jewish background – my mother was a refugee – for me much of the identity question of being Jewish has also been tied up with the Holocaust. Certainly, being in Prague, with its Jewish Quarter, that's brought very much home. And as a young woman, as a teenager, it seemed to me that the only way one could come to any kind of understanding of what had happened to my people was to begin by grappling with what had happened to other people, other genocides, other hatreds. And to look at the politics and the inter-religious hatreds that have led to that.

So for me the answer to the first question is that when you look at our history and you look at how people

have actually thought of religion as a label and have used it to label others as hated people, I would say it is very difficult to pull religion and politics apart. The liberal and secular West has tried very hard to do so. I have to speak not only as a very liberal Jew but also as a British citizen, and of course in our country we have an established church, a church where the Bishops sit in our parliament, not all of them, but twenty-four bishops sit in our parliament, and we have a church that is integrated to some extent with the political life of the state. So I would argue that while other western democracies have tried to keep religion and politics apart, in Britain we don't do so, and in many other western democracies they have failed to do so when they have wished to do it, and have failed to understand the very strong religious desire that affects many people. And we, certainly in Britain, are seeing a great revival of religious observance but not necessarily of religious traditions. So my first feeling is that the answer is "no" to question one, that we can't see them as separate but in different constitutions they play a different role. And, of course, also in European democracies in particular, we have all the emphasis on human rights, which has been seen as a secular concept, but which among others His Royal Highness has demonstrated, is not, necessarily a secular concept, and indeed many learned scholars, certainly within Judaism and Islam have argued the idea that an individual has a right also requires that other people ensure that that right is upheld, and that is, if you like, a duty and an obligation, and some would argue a religious obligation. So that's the answer to the first question.

But there are some very specific things that all religious faiths hold dear and to my mind the most important of those is the alleviation of suffering and oppression and poverty and the human task in all of our faiths, expressed in different ways, is to alleviate suffering. In the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, the message is to open the blind eyes, to heal the sick, to free the captive from his chains, and a great deal of the prophetic writing is saying that religious ritual is of no worth if social morality is not what we carry out. So human suffering requires human action, and arguably requires religious human action. And where we think we are best able to cooperate as religious people is in those sorts of areas. And I think that's quite difficult for some religious people and certainly for people in some countries to cope with.

I want to give you a quick aside: I stood for parliament in our country, as a rabbi. I stood for the Social Democratic Party, which doesn't exist any more, but we were roughly in the middle of the political spectrum. And it was really amusing. There I was, a rabbi, in south London, standing for parliament, and the priests in the Catholic churches, the mullah in the local mosque, the Church of England clergy in the local churches, two of my friends from the local Hindu society, all sent me messages saying, "We're supporting you. We clergy have to stick together." And one of the things that I think was very important was that nobody from that group was saying that it was wrong for somebody who was a religious figure to also be involved in politics, which suggests to me that for many people working on the ground in communities, the religious imperative to alleviate suffering is also to some extent a political imperative.

So to come to the third question. The third question is what can we most do best and at what level? And I think that is the most difficult bit. But I want to give you examples of things that I think have been brave and examples of what we can do and, therefore, we could argue, we could do more of. I want to cite a hospice in London, looking after the dying, which was set up as an inter-faith hospice. It has Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sheiks, Hindus and Buddhists, and it also has some people who aren't religious at all. And religious leaders walk in and out, and everybody has recognised that in care of the dying we can look after our own but also look after each other, and that has been a brilliant example of the faith communities working together for the betterment of society.

I also want to cite a much more difficult and much more political example: Neve Shalom / Wahat al Salam in Israel where Arab and Israeli, Jew, Christian and Muslim work together in a peace village, a peace village that has had enormous difficulties but has kept going against the odds and against the present political climate in Israel, and upholds some of the values I know that His Royal Highness holds so dear. I want to cite the Corrymeela Peace Community in Northern Ireland, where Protestants and Catholics have brought people together, particularly children, to think differently about what the atmosphere of hatred could be if they decided to live different kinds of lives. And I also want to cite the Women's Coalition in Northern Ireland where women of different perspectives and different religions came together to try and drive through peace. And the fact that we may be on the eve of a peace deal in Northern Ireland is in no small part due to them. I also want to cite the work of the Runnymede Trust, which is mainly an organisation to do with race, but which produced "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" with a group of Muslims, of course, Jews, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists working together to say that in our country hatred of Muslims was becoming a serious problem.

Those are the things, the examples we can do. What are the examples of what we should do? I would say that in Europe, particularly in the European Union, but in the enlarged Europe we are about to see, working on the issues of asylum seekers and refugees as religious people who believe that we should deal with suffering, is one thing we could do together. And it seems to me as we see the burden of support for refugees left with the poorest of countries, there are some major question marks left for those of religious faith to raise. I also believe that we could do far more in the field of education and that if we really wanted to do something we would be setting up multi-faith schools, where children are taught in communities of all religions, and they learn both about their own and about each other's. I think it is things on those levels:

local, regional, national, and international. I believe there is one level. Local is easiest, national is hard, international is critical and I don't believe we have much time. So I do believe that we have to start doing all those things now, and I know that on the panel here are many of the people who are contributing to that kind of dialogue and that kind of action.

Thank you.

El Hassan bin Talal

Thank you Julia Neuberger for your wealth of experience and for your passion and sincerity in the words you have shared with us. I now turn to His Eminence Archabbot Kakuhan Enami of the Tendai Buddhist denomination, who is a representative of the Enryaku-ji Monastery of Mt. Hiei, the most important traditional centre of Japanese Buddhism and recently also a renowned place of interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Your Eminence, you have the floor.

Kakuhan Enami

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to take this year again part in this gathering. I assume this year subject to be the questions whether it is possible to separate religion and politics and whether these should be separated, and the question what should the interreligious dialogue today be primarily based on. In Japanese, the politics is called matsurigoto which, exactly translated, means "worship". It indicates a concept that the divine service is a basis of politics or that "to govern means to worship".

In the mid 6th century AD, Buddhism was introduced to Japan via Korea. At the beginning of the 7th century, Crown Prince Shotoku, who was also an outstanding Buddhist scholar, compiled the first Japanese constitution, so-called "Constitution in 17 Articles". In this way, a kind of politics consisting in ancient divine service - Shinto tradition - linked with Buddhist teaching started to be practiced in Japan. Shinto is a way of paying respect to the Great Nature, which is a divine manifestation, and worshipping ancestors. Buddhism is based on teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni who is a personification of psychology. Essence of Buddhist teachings is expressed in the notion of compassion - jihi in Japanese, literally meaning "to remove suffering and bestow joy". In the Kan-Fugen-sutra - "On the Practice of Contemplating Bodhisattva Samantabhadra" - it is said among others, that an actual Buddha's teaching for common people consists in being dutiful to one's parents and respecting one's teachers and superiors. For the kshatriyas, or those put in charge of administration - governors and officials - it consists in making people to obey laws without oppression, in avoiding killing and inspiring others to kill, etc.

St. Dengyo Daishi, the founder of the Enryaku-ji monastery of Mt. Hiei, taught, that the main principle, which enables someone to become a leader of the society, is "to shoulder all the bad by oneself and to bestow all the good on the others". During his visit to Japan, the Roman Pope John Paul the 2nd declared that the spirit of the words of Dengyo Daishi "compassion means to forget oneself in care for others" should be shared by all religions in the world.

Buddhism teaches that the world cannot be changed unless one changes in his hearth. In this way, the compassionate hearth, which is born out of severe religious practice, is a precondition of any valuable service to one's country or society - or of politics if you want. "The care for common good" based on the care for any single being is a crucial part of Mahayana Buddhist practice. It is an accomplishment of bodhisattva monk practice.

According to Buddhist tradition, the state of mind itself is the entrance to Buddhahood. However, the state of mind itself may cast one into hell as well. According to the collection called Tanni-sho - "On Heresies" - St. Shinran, the founder of the True Pure Land School of Buddhism, when being asked about this subject, answered to one of his disciples in the following way: "The fact you have not yet killed anybody does not mean you are a good man. It only means that the opportunity for the evil hearth in you to arise has not yet come. If it should come, you would kill thousands of people. My case is the same."

On TV, we can see the addresses of the American president Bush to the nation. His speech is always concluded with the words of prayer for the God's blessing. Aren't these words connected with the conviction that if someone, who is put in charge of government, is not able to avoid a cruel decision - for example resorts to war which can never refrain from killing - he must ask God for forgiveness, he must repent of his decision? Politics can be in a sense be heartlessness itself. However, the God is a source of compassion. "Politics without God or Buddha" would definitely make a nation to taste the bitterness of hell. There was such a danger in past and there is such a danger even in present.

Following the first religious summit at Mt. Hiei which took place 16 years ago, every year representatives of various denominations join at our mountain in common prayer for the world peace. During these 16 years the number of spiritual gatherings in all parts of world has grown rapidly, interreligious dialogue has developed, common prayers has deepened. In the meantime, in this globalised world in a sense even more strongly than before, religion is highlighted in connection with war conflicts and terrorism.

In religion, there is a power to pacify the "devil spirit" in man, which is the real instigator of any war. Each religion promulgates a way to attaining a "spirit of harmony", which is the basis of the world peace. However, to make an appeal to a wide public, this message of religions should be backed up by mutual respect among religious people. Religion is based on spiritual experience. This is why it is necessary to

pray together and to have a direct experience of the venerable spirit of every tradition, as it reveals in daily life of religious communities.

Even though ten years has already past, in my heart there remains a deep impression of the visit of the vice-mayor of Jerusalem, who spent two days at Mt. Hiei doing the same practice in the same circumstances as our ordinary monks. Recently, last year, I had an opportunity to experience for a short time the monastic life in the community of Dominican brothers in Olomouc. I was deeply moved by the deep solemn spirit of prayer in the atmosphere of simple purity. Each of these connections is nothing more than a thin fibre, but if countless fibres would be tightened among the hearts, the gap among different religions may be covered not to fall in it.

El Hassan bin Talal

Thank you very much Your Eminence for reminding us that you in East Asia are so close to us in West Asia, in carrying us on the spiritual journey to Jerusalem. And I would like to turn now, in the presence of a Czech audience, not to introduce Professor Tomáš Halík, because he is known to all of you, but to express my gratitude to him for having been the moderator of our interfaith conversations in St. Vitus' Cathedral for the last few years and to say how much we have appreciated his emphasis on harmony between the adherents of faiths. So Professor Halík, you have the floor.

Tomáš Halík

Thank you Your Highness. I think that the majority of our audience is Czech, so I am going to speak in my native language, in Czech.

Our Western culture maintains the overwhelming belief that religion and politics should be kept separate. We often refer to the model of the separation of church and state, which, especially in the American context, has been a positive experience but in our history has repeatedly brought only negative consequences. I don't wish to dispute this model but I would like to point out its limitations. I think that this model is valid only under certain socio-cultural and historical conditions. These conditions have not been met outside of the Western world and today, even in the West, they are ceasing to be valid.

Very briefly on the history of this model: When the Westphalian Peace Treaty was concluded in 1648 in order to bring an end to the religious wars in the West, that is in Europe, it was decided to adopt the basic principle of *cuius regio eius religio* – whose the rule, his the religion. The application of this principle led to the inauspicious bonding of the throne with the altar, to the violation of the religious freedoms of the Evangelists in the Hapsburg-ruled Kingdom of Bohemia and the Catholics in Elizabethan England. And thus the principle of building policies upon a foundation of civil principles was adopted during the subsequent century. A very strong intent of this action was to protect the civil population from possible domination by powerful churches and to protect the freedom of religion and the church from the despotism of absolute states. Especially in the United States, where an accommodating model was implemented, this practice manifested itself in a positive manner and possibly the high level of religiosity that exists in the United States as compared to the large majority of Europe is also a result.

This phenomenon also appeared in areas other than the Western world, for example in Nehru's India. A while back, my friend the Very Reverend Abbot Enami and I were in Hiroshima where I also perceived a strict separation between the religious sector and the state sector.

Nevertheless, this model became outdated for several reasons. Religions, except for Christianity and, to a certain extent, Judaism are not represented in any physical form, as is the Church. In the West, the different churches no longer have the desire, and even should they have this desire, have no possibility of becoming dominant over the civil population and, in a democratic state that is bound by a declaration of human rights, there is also no threat of religious freedom being forcibly taken away. The churches are also not what they used to be. For example, at the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church radically redefined itself and its relationships with other churches and religions. But mainly, the churches lost their monopoly over religious life and the national state lost its monopoly over political life. Today more and more superstructures are coming to the forefront – supranational political structures as well as various interreligious ecumenical contacts. Various movements, both religious and civil, and civil initiatives bring a certain dynamism from the bottom that is not only religious but political as well. The goals of the national state as well as those of religious denominations remain, but they no longer carry the same level of importance as they did in the past. It is necessary to respect and recognize this fact. Therefore, a religion that would turn away from the world and its problems in disgust would truly be the opiate of the people or an opiate for the people, as Marx claimed. It is the right as well as the responsibility of a religion to step forth into the public sector, but not in a manner whereby it concludes a partnership or a non-critical alliance with some political power, but rather in a manner that provides a certain critical corrective influence as well as an inspiration.

Professor Jonathan Sax, London's Chief Rabbi, whose liberal Jewish thinking is very close to my Christian thought processes, said that a legacy of the old Israelite religion consists of three things – three types of authority. Royal authority, which in modern terms is the management of power. Pastoral authority, which is based on maintaining and cultivating certain symbols and traditions that are necessary for society. In

modern terms, this can be defined as a certain social hermetic identity. The third, which I view as the most important, is prophetic authority, which is the authority held by guardians, the guardians of power, whenever it has the tendency to disengage itself, the task of its critics becomes the fight against idolatry. Should religion clear the public arena, then sometimes, because religion is a certain anthropological as well as social constant, politics become a religion for the people and become dangerous. It was two declared secular movements that were the most destructive during the course of human history – Communism and Nazism. Nazism, which detested Judaism and Christianity, killed 8 million Jews, and Communism, which detested all religions, brought about the deaths of tens of millions of people in its concentration camps. These were political secular religions and proved to be very destructive; thus it is a great call to those who watch over spiritual traditions to try to at least be on guard, to play a critical and prophetic role to ensure that secularism, which breaks off communications with spiritual traditions, does not become demonic. Ernst Gelner, and these are my last comments, wanted religion to play a role in modern society that is similar to that held by the royal dynasty in Britain, to transfer its effective power to democratic structures but to keep the important power of symbols and maintain traditions. I think that, in today's world, when we have come face to face with the abuse of religion, it is necessary for this role to become even deeper and more dynamic than it seemed to be a few decades ago.

El Hassan bin Talal

Thank you very much for that Professor Halík. I would like to say that in terms of your emphasis on the distinctions between secularism and politicised secularism and religion, that in Arabic, when you say secular, you could mean agnostic or atheistic, and it is therefore safer to say civil society than it is to say secular society. But I thank you for your contribution and I now turn to Bishop Šilerová, bishop of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, to make her contribution, undoubtedly in Czech again, thank you.

Jana Šilerová

Thank you. I have the advantage, or maybe the disadvantage, of speaking after Professor Halík. I can now only briefly add on to his historical excursion. Either it was Caesaro-Papism or wars to prove what was mightier, whether spiritual or earthly power, and the specific religion that was involved was not in the least important. If what our former President is trying to accomplish here at these conferences is to instigate mutual dialogues on politics and religion, then he is in a very difficult position, because under our specific geographic conditions, I don't know how it works elsewhere, two things continue to be interchanged – specifically religious identity and politics. Religious identity as interest in public affairs, and politics as an ideologized interest protected by party interests in the name of power, and let's not lie to ourselves, business. Unfortunately the same applies to religion at the moment that it becomes an ideology – we, under our conditions, have historically had very strong experiences with ideologized religion – at that moment only power skirmishes start but where faith is concerned, let's say where trust is metaphysically ingrained, then co-operation cannot be interrupted because, as the Professor says, this intuition and knowledge of God is an anthropological constant. Here in Bohemia we say that knowledge about God, about someone over us, is inherent. But at the same time each person has the physical urge to participate in public life and with this comes the danger of being drawn into these ideologized structures.

So if we can initiate a dialogue between us, then it is only at a time that we both deinstitutionalize ourselves and deideologize ourselves. It is complicated, but I can't expand upon it in any other way. Does it have to lead to an inauspicious end? No, it doesn't. At the moment that religion and politics, faith and religious identity, start to be a service and power and business are not involved. You yourselves see how the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is problematical just because it is not the former that is involved but rather the latter.

And at what level can this third issue – dialogue – take place? I would like to make a reference to Gadamer; he's not been mentioned here yet, even though the old gentleman always knew that everything revolves around a dialogue of love and reconciliation. He, a one hundred-year-old philosopher, takes these words from the mouths of all religions. A dialogue of love and reconciliation. Below and above. Between various religions but even internally, within individual religions, because all religions – and I will speak for us, for Christians – very much like to moralize the world; we make all kinds of claims and admonitions yet we have problems communicating between ourselves, between us Christians. And other religions in the, shall we say, Euro-American world, and twice as much here in the Czech Republic, are knocking at our door. Except that every dialogue is prevented most likely by our fear of differences, fear which we use to prevent us from becoming enriched and we forget, and again I am speaking only about us, about Christians, that it is only when we rid ourselves of fear that a dialogue can begin.

You all are familiar with this from holy pictures worldwide. I am a Christian; therefore, I remember or think in this context or archetype: Christ is always holding out his arms and saying "peace be with you". The gesture of open arms is my friends, a gesture that drives away fears and misgivings but at the same time is vulnerable. Yes, because we know that we nailed His hands somewhat more and somewhat higher. Yet this gesture of "peace be with you", this gesture of openness, is an invitation to dialogue, to a patient and long-term dialogue. Even this will surely not be the last meeting; this concerns a journey down a long, long

path, but I always remind myself during this dialogue: even God is very persistent in his mercy and the primary characteristic of love is that it is patient.

At this point I would like to add, and I do apologize if I am exceeding my time limit, a reminder about the role of women in these politico-religious discussions on faith and religious identity. It is necessary for more women, loving and patient, to be active in politics and in religion. I am not going to venture into psychoanalysis – that is why the Professor is here. It is wonderful that women are given a certain healing function that is concerned with the wholeness of an issue; in fact, they train us for this function all our lives, both in religious identity and in faith. To put things together, as they do within a human family – when men come home tired, grandmother is sick, the children receive a bad mark, or maybe they want to fire you from your job – and in spite of all this you must calm the family hearth and put everything back together with loving self-assignment. I can say that this role of women is irreplaceable – it is different from the role of you men.

Here I would like to close. Loving patience in a friendly dialogue. Thank you.

El Hassan bin Talal

Thank you very much for your spirit of kindness and patience and reminding those of us who are blessed with children and grandchildren that in this day and age the children are actually more natural than their parents, and consequently, it is that naivety that I think needs to be promoted. Unfortunately, arid or extremist religion seems to kill joy. It kills it in the family, it kills it in the combination of esthetic and spiritual uplift. Thank you for reminding us of our humanity.

I think now it is the opportunity for me to turn to Mustafa Cerić, dear friend, one of the leading European Islamic thinkers. One has to remind some of our western audience from time to time that it is not a question of Europe and Islam, Europe is also Muslim and has been for many centuries. I am referring here to the Reis-ul-Ulema of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Cerić, who has lived in the United States for several years, and earned his PhD in Islamic theology at the University of Chicago. I would like to recognize Mustafa Cerić and to give him the floor.

Mustafa Cerić

Thank you, Your Royal Highness. If Sarajevo is the consciousness of Europe, then Prague is the heart of Europe, so I am very happy to be close to the heart or to be in the heart of Europe. Before I read my paper I have two pieces of news to tell you. One is good and one is sad. The good news is that President Havel is not only the president of the Czechs, I consider him to be also my president. I, in my own right, claim that, because he is a good friend of my president, Izetbegovic. He received Izetbegovic in Prague when it was difficult in Bosnia and we remember that. We will never forget that time that Izetbegovic spent with his Excellency President Havel. When I told him that I was coming to Prague, and that I was commended by his highness to participate on behalf of Muslims, he was very happy in his hospital, and he asked me to greet his friend President Havel. And then, I have the sad news, and that's going to be my personal history, just a few moments ago Alija Izetbegovic died, and I am sorry to have to tell you, because probably my performance will not be as I had hoped it would be. So this is history for me. Thank you for sharing this good and bad news with me. May god have mercy on him.

Modern times have witnessed the deterioration of the social role of religion and the restraining of the authority of religious leadership. During periods of social change, the tendency was to strengthen the process of religious restraint, although very often attempts were made to use religion for non-religious purposes. In the communist regimes of the 20th century, religion was restrained by using state means of non-atheistic coercion. Some, therefore, in the fall of communism, saw the opportunity for revenge in the name of religion. Today, we speak of renewal in the interest of religion, the growth of the social influence of religion, of the abilities of the representatives of the church and religious communities to act in solving or mitigating various problems of the contemporary world. Often we hear voices of expectation or even demand from outside the church and religious communities for a more active role for religion in today's society. It is expected or demanded of religious leaders to be active participants in political issues, of churches and religious communities to undertake a bigger responsibility in people's lives.

This approach is both pragmatic and idealistic. We have to bear in mind, however, that religion is one of those things that people believe they know what it is until they are asked to say what it really is. Hence, religion is what everyone thinks it is according to his/her belief or disbelief. Therefore, we hear that religion is, according to Islam, peaceful submission to one living, knowing, powerful and merciful God, the creator of the world. If you read a letter by James, you will find that he says, "Religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted by the world." Emile Durkheim would say that religion is a unified system of beliefs and practises relative to sacred things. Whitehead would say that religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness. And Karl Marx would tell you that, religion is the opium of people. Although these and the many other definitions of religion give us some idea about the religious factor in human life or in the history of human development, they do not, however, tell us about the key factor in the life of religion or in the history of religious development. I am trying to say that instead of asking, "What is the role of religion in the life of man?" it is more appropriate to ask "What is the role of man

in religious life?"

These somewhat adverse questions should not confuse us if we accept the premise that religion is more than a religious hierarchy or bureaucracy. After all, religion is faith and morality, it is human life and dignity. Religion is both a personal feeling of life and collective sharing of destiny. It is supposed to be free from human monopoly. I should not remind you that I believe in God's revelation or his intervention in history because that is obvious from my religious or faith profession. I should, however, remind you that I believe in man's intervention in religion as well.

No, I am not advocating any sort of outworn idea of historical positivism, at least in matters of religion, but at least I do assert the give and take relationship between man and religion and vice versa. It is somewhat strange that those who disregard the intervention of the supernatural in history, especially in matters of religious life, are now asking us what is the role of religion in today's world as if religion is an item that could be controlled by our manmade machine. That is not possible because God is older than man and in it there is a special trust between god and man, whatever it may mean. It is, therefore, man who should make his position in terms of his religious or moral attitudes, and he is the one who should meet the moral demands which are as old as his existence and are as important today as they have been before the fall from the bliss of Eden.

What is the difference between Adam and Socrates? The former had broken the law of God Almighty and, therefore, he had to leave the peaceful Garden of Eden and come here to the turbulent garden of earth. And the latter had offended the name of the gods of Greek mythology, and then he decided to commit suicide. The first sin brought a new human life to Earth because Adam offered his sincere repentance. The second sin, however, caused human death because Socrates refused to accept repentance. These two stories are human stories that tell us both about human humbleness, which brought a new meaning to human life, and about human arrogance, which caused an old worry about reasons for human, suicidal death. Where does humanity stand today - with humbleness that will lead us to the new meaning of human life on our planet after it had committed many sins, or with arrogance that will lead us to the old suicidal death? Who are we today? Adam, who is seeking repentance before merciful God, or Socrates, who is waiting for execution before merciless man?

In the same way that politics is too important to be left to the politicians alone, theology is too precious to be left to the theologians alone. Not because the politicians do not know how to play politics, nor because the theologians do not know how to appreciate spiritual values, but because we all want to know the answers to questions that are basically in the hands of politicians: Can the argument of the might of big nations be replaced by the argument of the right of small nations? Can the argument of historical myth be replaced by the argument of historical responsibility? Can the argument of poor political compromise be replaced by the argument of strong moral commitment? Can the argument of sinful behaviour be replaced by the argument of Adam's humble repentance? Can the argument of falsehood be replaced by the argument of Abraham's truth? Can the argument of revenge be replaced by the argument of Jesus' love? Can the argument of injustice be replaced by the argument of Muhammad's justice? If no one has a monopoly on pain, why is the pain of victims denied? If we all know that no one has a monopoly on morality, why is the righteousness of some people not appreciated? Why are those who are bad rewarded because they could be worse? Why are those who are good punished because they could be better? Why are those who are weak blackmailed because of their weaknesses? Why are those who are arrogant given concessions for their arrogance? Are rich nations willing to share their wealth with the poor nations? Can a man with a full stomach understand the grief of hungry people? Can poor children share the happiness of education and success in society with their peers? Can the refugees come back to their homes and share the blessings of safety and freedom of the rest of the world without racism, xenophobia and discrimination? And, as to the theologians, we all want to share with them these basic spiritual values. The time, the meaning of life and death and the soul – we are deeply immersed in our memories, in the time of our past, in the immediacy of our present and in the dreams of our future. We are not children of the moment, therefore, every one has his own personal history and memory of his past and every one of us has his memory of his future as well. The secret of success is in our balancing the memory of the past with a memory of the future. We all search for a meaning of life and death, and we are all eager to enjoy the blessings of freedom, right and dignity. Because we are not passive recipients of life and we feel that we have one death but two lives, we try not to fail either of the two lives, and we hope to meet the death in good spiritual health. And we have a soul because we are not machines. We laugh and we cry, we succeed and we fail, we are pleased and we are angry, we have hopes and we have fears. In short, we are human beings, not so good to be sinless angels and not so bad to be useless items in God's plan of human history. We have a soul that is capable of trusting another human soul because of the good state of humanity. But, also, we have a soul that may mistrust another human soul because of the bad state of humanity.

I came to Prague with my memories of the past, my excitement of the present and my dreamed memories of the future. But all these will have clear meaning in my mind if I am allowed to trust my homeland, Europe, and if I can tell my son that he should not worry for his future because Europe is an equally trustworthy place for Jews, Christians, Muslims and others to live in. I came here, thus, to give you the

sincere trust of my Muslim Bosnian soul, expecting to receive in return the sincere trust of a promising soul of Europe, which I have been trying to find here in this beautiful city of Prague.

Having said that, I would like you now to join me in a Bosnian prayer as an important religious factor in healing the broken hearts of the people of Srebrenica, who in one day on the 11th of July 1995, under the protection of the Security Council of the United Nations, lost 10,000 of their beloved relatives. We pray to thee, oh Mighty God, may grief become hope, may revenge become justice, may mothers' tears become prayers, that Srebrenica never happens again, to anyone, anywhere. Our Lord, do not let success deceive us, nor failure take us to despair. Always remind us that failure is a temptation that precedes success. Our Lord, teach us that tolerance is the highest degree of power and the desire for revenge the first sign of weakness. Our lord, if you deprive us of our property, give us hope. If you grant us success, give us also the will to overcome defeat. If you take from us the blessings of health, provide us with the blessings of faith. Our Lord, if we sin against people, give us the strength of apology, and if people sin against us, give us the strength of forgiveness. Our Lord, if we forget thee, do not forget us. Amen.

Thank you.

El Hassan bin Talal

All our gratitude, first to our Creator, and then to our distinguished speaker and our sincere condolences to you for the loss of Alija Izetbegovic and our prayers for the people of Bosnia Herzegovina. Thank you for those moving words.

The conclusion of today's panellists is the great privilege that we all share, of listening to one of the veteran pioneers of Forum 2000, a participant in 1997, 2000 and 2002, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who needs no introduction from me, who is a figure of consensus and admiration and respect to all of us in this hall. You have the floor.

Dalai Lama

After listening to the different presentations, there is very little left for me to say. The important point that I think all the speakers touched on and I usually make clear is that religious institutions and religion – these two things should be different.

We have to make a distinction. Religion is generally a little bit individual, the transformation of our minds. There are different methods, but I think all have the same aim – to make better human beings- but with different approaches. All religions have the same potential to achieve that. So religion is a little bit individual. So on that level all different human activities - even our politics, our economy, our education and whatever field – are carried out by people, by human beings. So all these different human activities, and also mental qualities – determination, frankness, truthfulness, honesty, all these different sort of factors - whether they can be useful or constructive, or destructive, entirely depend on one's own motivation. But the main thing is pure, sincere motivation. Pure and sincere also mean here a genuine sense of concern, a genuine sense of concern for others, so in other words passion, human affection, a sense of caring, a sense of concern. Religions extend these basic human good values. On that level, politics, and religion are not contradictory and should not be separate, but I think that we should work together.

In fact usually people have the impression that politics is something dirty. Why have politics become dirty? It is not that politics itself was right from the beginning something dirty but because the people who are involved in politics sometimes have unhealthy motivations politics becomes dirty politics. So, similarly, if religious teaching and religious activities are carried out because of different motivation, then that religion also becomes dirty religion. I think all human activities should be guided by sincere motivation. And I think that all religions have to increase that kind of motivation. Sometimes religious institutions' prime concern is not religion but some different matters. That also is possible. So, anyway it is better to have separate religious institutions and political institutions.

Many speakers put the emphasis more on religious faith. So here perhaps it is my turn. If you look at six billion human beings – if you judge closely the different sorts of activities carried out by a general sort of human being – their prime concern is their day-to-day life, or money or these things. In their life these things are something very serious. There are very few who really keep their minds on some sort of religious tradition. When they are happy they say, oh, I am Muslim, I am Buddhist, I am Christian, but when they are facing some sort of desperate situation they forget about these religious ideas. Then, they deal also with different matters. So these people are not really very serious about religious faith. So now I feel that religious faith, various religious traditions, as I mentioned earlier, all have the same potential, even today, in the 21st century. They play a very important role in humanity but I think that in order to become a warmhearted human being, you are faced with the question: should I have religious faith or not? I believe that without religious faith there can be ways and means to be a warmhearted, human, sensitive person. So that is based mainly not through religious teaching or religious faith, but I feel through awareness. Biologically, I think this body very much appreciates others' affection. Particularly, that's very clear when we are small, when we are children. Through the mother, or someone else, affection is an immensely important matter for the development of a healthy mind and a healthy body. Modern medical scientists say that the first six weeks after birth is a very crucial period for enlargement of the brain or development of the

brain. During that period, simply the mother's physical touch is a very crucial factor, they say. Then obviously, everybody knows that those children who have grown up in an atmosphere of human affection, their mental state is better, their physical state is better and those children study better. And those children whose family lacks affection, then, these children eventually become more difficult.

Even animals show a difference in behavior. According to some scientific research great differences develop between young monkeys that are separated from their mothers and those that stay with their mothers. Those young monkeys who remain with their mothers become more playful and happier. They grow very well. Those young monkeys who are separated from their mothers often have a lot of frustration; they are ready to fight and are aggressive. Monkeys have no religion, no constitution, no rules, no law, but because of the biological factor, we see that affection is very important. So, therefore, we human beings, as the same species of mammal – obviously, everybody here today, each one of us feels very independent, but when we are born, when we are a child, someone else's affection is so important that without it we cannot survive. That is a fact!

So on the basis of awareness, on the basis of scientific findings and also according to some brain specialists, scientists who are now carrying out some study on the human brain, different emotions create different sorts of brain states. As time passes we are getting more information on the basis of scientific research. On this basis, we should use these sorts of facts for education. While educating children, our future generation – I'm not talking about faith, that's up to individuals – as a part of society, as a human, younger generation, I think it is important to teach them that some of these negative emotions are very bad for our health, for our peace of mind. And some other emotions are very useful to develop for a healthy life and peace of mind. In that way I think we can convince people about inner emotions. There are so many different types. It is important to create awareness about these sorts of different inner qualities. Some are very harmful; some are very positive.

Usually I am for secular ethics. In India there is a secular constitution. Secular to us does not mean something negative about religion, or hostile towards religion. No. Secular means to respect all other religions, all other traditions and to give equal opportunities to all religions. In India, there are many different types of traditions. If India were to declare a religious state, then which religions would it be? There would be a lot of complications there. For a society that is multi-religion, multi-cultural, I think secular ethics are very suitable. Anyway, I think we need another sort of alternative, without religious belief, without religious faith. Try to increase, try to promote these basic human good qualities. All religions emphasize the importance of these things, like compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment, self-discipline.

All major religions, although they are similar, have a different way of approach. There are two categories of religion. One category is theistic religion. Another category is non-theistic religious tradition. The purpose of all religion is to provide a service to humanity, to serve humanity. According to theistic religion God created all of humanity. God created the whole world with a certain purpose, with certain reasons. As a creation of that supreme creator, one possibility is to fulfill his wish. All religions say that God is merciful. No religions say that God is intolerant or very angry. Nobody says that. All the good qualities of a human being, we say, God possesses. Therefore, when God created us we also had some pieces of those good qualities. Now I think our responsibility, when we pray to God, is to try to transform ourselves – we are faithful we are compassionate, we are good people. That is the real purpose of religion. All religion wants to create a better human being, a better world, a happier world, a happier society. The methods are also generally the same: compassion, forgiveness, loving kindness, charity, self-discipline. All these have the same method, the same goal, the same sort of practices. There are some small differences, of course. And it is better to keep the differences because that satisfies a variety of people. With just one religion, one sort of philosophy, I don't think you can satisfy a variety of people. So, similarly, different religious traditions are more useful. So once you understand that, yes, we need a variety of traditions that automatically brings a deeper understanding about the variety of different traditions.

Once we accept religion then we should be very sincere and very serious. For example, it is not sufficient to go to church on Sundays and for a few moments close your eyes, and outside church nothing. That's not sufficient. When we actually carry out our daily lives, when we go shopping, there are some very good things there. In some way, you want to buy that. Then think – contentment – I have the basic necessities. Is this really necessary or not? You often get the answer: no, it is not necessary. I have contentment. When you meet somebody about whom you feel a little bit uncomfortable, then think about that person in the image of God and the concept of tolerance, the concept of forgiveness. Keeping these things in your mind, meet these people, and the best thing is to tell them what happened in the past and forgive. Even give a little artificial smile. It keeps in our minds tolerance and forgiveness. If someone practices that, it is a sign of sincerity and seriousness. So once we accept religion we should be sincere and we should be serious; and in that way you gain more inner experience. Once you gain more inner experience through ones own tradition, then that person, I think, finds it a lot easier to accept the value of other traditions.

Thank you.

El Hassan bin Talal

Thank you Your Holiness for introducing humour into our exchange here today. I was always taught to take

other people seriously and myself not too seriously, and you have confirmed that very wise advice. I would also like in the vein of humour to recollect visiting Nairobi some years ago and seeing outside a church a slogan which read, "This church is full of hypocrites but we always have room for one more."

It is now my sad duty to make the concluding remarks, but I think that in the concluding remark I would like to quote President Havel in his New Years address at the Millennium: "The common denominator of the important tasks we should concern ourselves with now is the creation of a genuine, open and multi-layered civil society." And I would like to say from my humble experience in these conversations promoting the noble art of conversation that there is nothing global about global civil society. That civility is not global and that society is not listened to by governments has led us to this dialogue on bridging global gaps, and in the tradition of the dialogue of the last three days, we have produced the following statement, which with your permission, I shall share with you.

"During many years of work with interfaith and intercultural groups, we have noticed a tendency for our various faiths and traditions to rediscover each other every time we meet. We are living through a globally interacting religious process and its consequences at the same time that our communities are, on the whole, poorly informed or misinformed concerning other creeds and peoples. Familiarity has not always bred respect. Conflict in the Balkans, India, Indonesia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the Congo and elsewhere has shown that perceived or manufactured differences can catalyse horrifying violence. Physical security comes first in creating peacefulness, but physical security alone provides no guarantee for lasting peace. From experience in this field the participants felt that trust, mutual security and respect between different communities can only be built upon a strongly non-violent morality combined with a personal certainty that basic agreements are shared with the other. Confidence between parties that agree on enough basic standards and norms provides the framework for civilised disagreement in other areas. It used to be the case that mixed communities arrived at such stable *modus vivendi* through long experience of each other, growing up, learning, working and living side by side for generations without much outside pressure or intervention. Mass migration along with the information and communications revolution has for the most part ended that comparatively fragile process. For adaptive thinking in highly mobile, fast changing societies, the participants underline the importance of robust, agile and ubiquitous educational schemes which teach both shared values and the values of difference. The synergic interaction of understanding and respecting shared values and the value of difference should be a means to create an environment of mutual trust which can only ensure lasting peace. This is what an appeal for creating a spiritual coalition called for when we met in Prague in 200.

The task for spiritual leaders is to provide impetus within their communities and take a leading role in promoting global responsibility and mutual enrichment as an outcome of respecting the value of difference. This values-based approach should be offered to political leaders as a guideline for resolving conflicts. At this time in our history, when trust is at a low ebb, the participants emphasise the importance of demonstrating first, that we are working for mutual respect within and between our various communities; second, that economic, political and social objectives do not meet the whole human need for security; and third, that cultural security, a sense of dignity and the assurance of mutual respect are vital for human dignity and world peace. The participants believe that promoting inter- and intra-regional dialogue is a way forward in enhancing that which is universal and respecting differences."

Thank you.

President Havel, Your Holiness, distinguished participants, in closing this wonderful session, I hope you will indulge me in reading lines that were written in Spain between 1165 and 1240 by Ibn Arabi, a Zahilite, who lived and wrote the following: "My heart is open to all the winds, it is a pasture for gazelles and a home for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the black stone of the Mecca pilgrim, the table of the Torah, and the book of the Koran. Mine is the religion of love. Wherever God's caravans turn, the religion of love shall be my religion and my faith."

May God's peace be with you.

The session is adjourned. Thank you for your company.