On September 11th, 2001, a day never to be forgotten in human history, gruesomely and insanely, our global neighbourhood changed, changed by terrorists who, even if they invoke the name of God, are as much Islamic as the IRA bombers or the Ku Klux clan are Christian. It is poignant that this address is being given in the city which has witnessed the arson of a mosque in the aftermath of the New York and Washington calamities. Less than two weeks ago, almost to the hour, 10,000 people of all faith communities and people of goodwill came together at Melbourne Park for a multi-faith gathering. Seven communities prayed for us, with us and over us.

- the Buddhist community, to the sonorous gong of a bell sounding the passing of life, asked us to close our eyes and become bodies of light, praying for this disaster not to worsen

- to the sound of the ram’s horn, the oldest known musical instrument, in the year 5762 of its calendar, the Jewish community asked us to reflect on the Talmudic saying, “Those who share in the grief of the community will share in its redemption” to which they invited us to

- the Hindus focussed on the aphorism that ‘experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you’, lighting the candle of love for peace and prosperity for the world and for the departed souls, and praying “may there be peace in the heavenly

- the Sikhs were consumed by the horror of it all, and in our despair they cried out, “O God, the world is going up in flames; save it; by whatever means, deliver it. O God, who can save it?”

- the Muslim imam, focussing on “the convulsion of the days”, in sending their community’s condolences to the people of the USA, prayed for peace and harmony in the whole world and reminded us, “O all mankind, fear your Lord”.
And in the silence of that vast auditorium, where our diversity was held in community, we found peace from the senseless violence and the senseless deaths in the World Trade Center atrocity. As we came out, we wondered if we were being drawn into the quagmire of World War Three. And we must be intellectually rigorous in asking: why? There are many voices and one was that of the Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, “To most people in the Arabic and Islamic worlds, the official US is synonymous with arrogant power, known for its sanctimoniously munificent support not only of Israel but of numerous repressive Arab regimes, and its inattentiveness even to the possibility of dialogue with secular movements and people who have real grievances. Anti-Americanism in this context is not based on a hatred of modernity or technology-envy; it is based on a narrative of concrete interventions and specific depredations” (Said 2001: 19). And the Pope on his visit to Kazakhstan asked for negotiation and dialogue. Another voice was of the American senator who shouted, “God will show you

Juxtaposed in that same week were two other related happenings: in post-apartheid South Africa the UN Conference on Racism broke up in disarray and bitterness with a deep cleavage between the world’s nations; and in the M.V. Tampa affair Australia refused to accept mainly Afghan Hazara refugees, fleeing the murderous, extremist zealotry of the Taliban - they had left the island called Christmas, an event associated with family and good tidings, humanity and salvation, and were transported to a phosphate Alcatraz. It was good theatre appreciated by the overt white Australian supremacists and their covert fellow travellers on talk-back radio but across the Muslim diasporic world it was seen as yet another humiliation and act of Western selfishness.

Throughout these events, and so many other recent ones too numerous to list, have reverberated the threads of diversity and religion in a globalizing world. While some may dismiss it as globaloney, globalization, or preferably global-local interconnectedness, with its compression of time and space and its intensification of the world’s interdependency built on the revolutions in transportation and the information technologies and the political collapse of the Soviet Union, is an unstoppable juggernaut. The tragedy in the USA encapsulates the central themes of globalization, not just of economic globalization which the global intelligentsia and opinion-makers focus upon, but also of social and cultural globalization in which religion, language and ethnicity are intertwined with economic, political and media processes.
In this paper, I want to reflect on the formation of multi-faith societies across the world, and the interconnection with certain key features of globalization. As we work our way through this present world crisis, I would like to suggest that governance bodies, whether at the local, national or international levels, need to renegotiate their relationships with faith communities, and that faith communities need to renegotiate their relationships with each other. This global-local faiths agenda will require leadership and investment on all sides together with the capacity to imagine a new future. Imagination is at the core of globalization.

Firstly, I want to briefly focus on the main features of globalization and their interaction with religiosity and religious organizations.

**The Triumph of Global Capitalism**

- with the fall of the communist states and their command economies, global financial capitalism, if not crass commercialism, has triumphed. It talks up the notions of free and open trade, convertible currencies and shares as the engine of growth on behalf of the world’s leading countries who corrupt the world’s agricultural systems and allow the free flows of money, technology and media images but not of people; it talks down the losers, the basketcase countries, mostly in Africa, and their monstrous debt burdens increasing the cleavage between rich and poor; but it is a capitalism built always on shifting sands as the markets react to world events. Capitalism has been accompanied, from the 1950s, by secularization, modernity and now post-modernity. Yet across the world, according to Haynes (1998), there have been a range of religious responses such as resistance both to disestablishment of state religion and to the differentiation of the religious and the secular as seen in the rise of the fundamentalist or revivalist groups; such as the mobilizations and counter-mobilizations against other religions and secular movements or parties; such as religious groups’ mobilization in defence of the rule of law and of social, political and religious rights. The anti-religious ideologies of Nazism and Communism have been thrown into the dustbin of history. As historians reflect upon the twentieth century, according to the Oxford historian, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, author of a major study of the history of the second Christian millennium, they will be impressed by the enduring stability of religion and its institutions. All the predictions by such varied individuals as Nietzsche, H.G. Wells, Lenin, Bertrand Russell and Arthur C. Clarke that religion would die have proved wrong. Religion is now very much at centre stage.

**The Rise of the Global City**

- The rise of the global city is a second important feature of globalization because the global city plugs the nation into the world’s networks. And diversity takes place mainly in the city. Secular global cities such as New York and Singapore with their skyscrapers thrusting to the skies, nodes of the global network, sucking up the resources of their rural hinterlands, triggering the politics of resentment and grievance and exploiting the rural and migrant...
workers who flock to the city - this further exacerbates the rift between the professional
global and national elites together with their techno-cadres and the disenfranchised, the
lowly skilled and the job insecure. While religions always hanker for the solitude of the fields
and the forest, essentially, while they may weep over the city, they are engaged in and with
the cities with their beauty and their filth, their grandeur and their corruption, their boredom
and their creativity, the place for the rich and the homeless, the artistic and the bored. And it
is in the cities that we are seeing the rise of new religions with more religious diversification
and where inter-faith encounters are taking place all the time - in the neighbourhoods and
the schools, the factories and the shops.

The Formation of Global Ethnic and Religious Diasporas

- A third feature is people on the move. Central to globalization has been the creation of
multilayered movements of people such as the movements of global professionals working
for international organizations, national governments, global social movements and
transnational corporations; universities are moving their students world-wide as part of the
internationalization of their curricula; then there are the international contract workers,
landfarers and seafarers, led by the Filipinos; older tourists and their backpacker children,
conference attendees and religious pilgrims to places such as Mecca and Rome paying
homage at their sacred sites. As economic expectations rise, there are the permanent
migrants together with border-hoppers, and as inter-ethnic conflicts rise, growing numbers
of asylum claimants and refugees, victims of ethnic cleansing and growing numbers of illegals
looking for a better future they see each night on their television screens; in the future, there
will be environmental refugees as sea levels rise and small island nations endure their version
of the Great Flood. Also to be noted is the rise of international marriages, a very accurate
barometer of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations. Fortunately or unfortunately, love
takes little notice of border sentry-posts, and the old Chinese saying that “a chicken does
not marry a duck” is increasingly irrelevant - yet religious and ethnic community leaders
have varied enormously in their reaction to outright condemnation and ostracization to quiet
antipathy to genuine ambivalence or to perhaps a resigned acceptance of the inevitable. This
reconfiguration of national and religious profiles implies that religious pluralism cannot be
wished away nor can the intermingling of cultures and religions be synthesized into a
syncretist amalgam in some form of global culture and global religion. Also as a
consequence, diasporas to a greater or lesser extent create a transnational ethnic economy
and a transnational public sphere which carries on their debates overtly or covertly in
discourse perhaps little known to their host countries and to McWorld - the ICT revolution
means they can more easily be networked across time and space; if these diasporas provide
cities with multicultural colour and cuisine, they also can provide cover for religious
encapsulation and, unfortunately, for international criminals and terrorists.
The Linguistic and Communication Landscape and Political Power

- Associated with diasporas is a fourth feature: the emergence of a complex multilayered linguistic pasticcio dominated by several variants of global English dominant as the international means of communication but layered underneath are other world languages such as Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish, other local forms of English such as Singlish, Manglish and Taglish, national languages such as Swedish and Korean together with regional, tribal and indigenous languages. For a while it was thought that the internet would be dominated by English - several years ago, 80 per cent of internet exchanges were in English, whereas by 2000 it had dropped to 45 per cent with Chinese, Hindi and Spanish the big movers. Within two years in 2003, the figure is estimated to be 29 per cent (Global Reach 2001). Despite the delusions of the Americanists, cultural homogenization is not the global future. This is not to say that burgers and PCs will not be available across the world. The global future will be multilayered with, as one top layer, a common but differentiated global culture but there will be other layers that will reflect the values and practices of particular religions, languages, cultures and regions. Global society, as the power of the United States recedes, will be criss-crossed by a multi-polar or multi-nodal world as countries such as Russia and China and political groupings such as the European Union, the Ibero-American Summit and the Organization of Islamic Council gain cohesion and strength. China, India and Russia have begun a high level dialogue to create a ‘strategic triangle’ and -polar world’ which is a euphemism to counter the USA’s global dominance. Other challenges will come from the Arab and non-Arab Islamic world and from the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds of Europe and Latin America now that Spain is gaining in confidence after the dark years of the Francoist regime.

Localized wars and the politics of identity

- Partly as a consequence of the end of the Cold War, a fifth and dangerous aspect, highlighted by the USA tragedy, is the rise of the so-called politics of identity, the politics of memory, the politics of retribution. At the last Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace held in Amman in November 1999, its Secretary-General, Dr. William Vendley, stated the new post Cold War context: “The end of the ideologically based proxy wars in the East-West competition of the Cold War has given way to the rapid proliferation of smaller scale, more localised armed conflicts. Increasingly people have sought security through identification with a group closer to their own experience and over which they have some control. Most violent conflicts today occur between identity groups within national boundaries, making them inter-group in character and internal or intra-national in scope. Group identity may be based on some mix of ethnicity, clan, race or geographical affiliation, but it also typically involves religious factors. Recent examples complement more ancient ones in illustrating that religion, insofar as it is related to how a people or culture define themselves, can be manipulated to become a factor in this type of conflict” (Vendley 1999:}
1). Since 1989, there have been approximately 110 armed conflicts, seven between States while the rest are intra-State in nature. Part of this scenario is the emergence of non-State actors such as local and international warlords, ethnically or religiously motivated terrorist groups and money oriented criminal groups involved in the illegal drug or diamond trade and laundering money through safe havens.

Risk and Global Governance

- The sixth and connected feature concerns risk and global governance. Never again can we look at skyscrapers in the same way. These steel and concrete cathedrals are now symbols of the risk and unpredictability of the future. For more than a decade, theorists like Ulrich Beck have been writing about the “world risk society”, about the risk of a backlash against the West; they have spoken about the link between risk, responsibility and trust, and of “organized irresponsibility” and the “limited controllability” of the dangers we face, the dangers from the disorganized capitalist market, of the polluted environment, of the fanatical terrorist group, of the destruction of tradition and wisdom and scholarship.

The Contemporary Currency of Religion

In response to the challenges of globalizing forces, some world leaders have seen the major religions as part of the solution because of their fundamentally altruistic orientation and because of both their unrivalled access to grassroots communities and their world-wide networks.

But religion did not die except perhaps in the West with its fear of death and its fetish with “fun”. Some sociologists came to the conclusion that faith builds community, and the psychologists and psychiatrists, over-aware of the destructive nature of religious phobias and scruples, realised that, other things being equal, faith is more related to emotional stability than to instability. In China after 50 years of official atheism, there is a profound spiritual thirst. In the West, the youth suicide and youth drug addiction studies suggest that young people need not just a stable family life unmeshed by divorce and separation but a belief in something beyond themselves instead of the gnawing, superficial nihilism of pop culture with its fattening fast food, decibel music, and drugged-up pop stars. Religion can remind us that sitting in front of a computer screen, like sitting in front of a poker machine or hushly around a black-jack table, are activities not fully human. As our computers become more and more clogged up with emails, religion reminds us that print is not necessarily communication, information is not necessarily wisdom, and lack of noise is not necessarily silence.

If it is to survive and develop over the long term, a cultural system needs to have a spiritual base. It might well be a civic rather than a spiritual faith though the foundations of civic religion are weak. Religion also offers an antidote to cultural homogenization; it can build a sense of belonging and help in constructing a multifaceted identity in a global world where the sense of “home” has become more problematic. It provides an additional binding element to the links
that bond together diasporic or transnational communities. Religion has become more public, except in the Western developed countries where, with clericalism in its death throes, it decays behind closed doors in the main, privatised and relativised, except for occasions of tragedy such as the death of Princess Diana where civic religion comes to the fore. Religion still retains its potency as seen in the rise of the BJP in India, in the emergence of charismatic and evangelical movements in European-heritage countries and the rise of the Falun Gong in contemporary China. If religion has retain its potency, it has also retained its capacity to be manipulated. Ex-communist Russian leaders have rushed to be photographed smilingly alongside Orthodox leaders; religious factors have been one factor in almost all local conflicts in Africa as well as being a positive factor in reconciliation in Sierra Leone in 1999 and 2000; religiosity has never not been a factor in the various stages of the recent Balkans saga and religion remains an underlying factor in the major hotspots such as Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and Chechnya.

Religion and global-local social capital

What are the implications of this changing, diverse, disjunctural, multi-faith landscape? Focus has now shifted to the notion of social capital, which has been described as the silent partner in global change, the resource for global and local action and a potential source of major improvements. As John Montgomery has commented, social capital “is not displayed in almanacs, stock market reports or tourist advertisements; its presence has to be discovered through intuition or diligent rationalism. Yet it is ubiquitous; it is so often invoked to enhance desired behaviour in the present or to bring about purposeful change for the future” (Montgomery 2001: 1). It is reflected in the stability and solidity of institutions; it highlights trust and its maximization in public life; it underpins and influences the flows of communicating and associating between individuals and collective entities like religious communities and ethnic groups and between nations; it gives nations competitive advantages in the international economic race or in responding to international crises and national disasters; it can help to achieve social justice by improving distributive justice; it can foster and facilitate grassroots change and initiatives. But like the two-edged sword, it can, at its worst, destroy all these things. And religious leaders, like educational and all other community leaders, can enlarge the stock of social capital and help choreograph social and ethnic cohesion in complex societies and across the world.

What can be done to foster and guarantee ethnic and religious cohesion in the global-local neighbourhood? In a multi-faith world, what can we, as a Commonwealth and holding common wealth and social capital, do to move beyond the WTC calamity with the acrid smoke and soot still in the nostrils of the world?

THE GLOBAL-LOCAL FAITHS AGENDA
In endeavouring to provide the contours of a response and the formulation of a hyphenated
global-local faiths agenda, we need to take a reality check and acknowledge, firstly, that faith
communities, especially the missionizing ones, are in competition with each other in marketing
their faith products and keeping their market share as much as they are in conflict or in co-
operation with each other. Co-operation is not easily achieved even when there is no historical
baggage of hostility and war. While belief is much more than a commercial product, the religious
message still has to be marketed and packaged because each thinks that their product is the
best, especially if they are insistent on themselves as repositories of ultimate truth. There is the
movement towards unity and co-operation as seen in the ecumenical movement within
Christianity, the interfaith dialogues at national and international levels and the growth of
organizations such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the World’s Parliament
of Religions. But this is countermanded by the fact that faith communities are at one level players
in the global marketing game as seen in the global pastorate of Papa Wojtyla and the spiritual
interventions of the Dalai Lama.

Secondly, religious faith is a solid, robust entity, not easily moved nor opened to global horizons.
There are the religious captive identities, held within their own subcultural and religious
enclosure, which avoid or are afraid of contact with religiously different groups whom they may
demonise, which are aggressively bigoted in arguing for the superiority of their own religious
faith, and are strenuously opposed to contacts with other faiths and to entering into any kind of
dialogue. Then there is the more comfortable religiously encapsulated identities which participate
primarily within their own religious group with some but little outside contact, have internalized
the superiority of their faith commitment but not aggressively so, aware of the existence of other
faiths but apathetic towards them and ignorant of them.

What we need are reflective inter-religious identities with a global view like cosmonauts who are
fully committed to their faith tradition, able to clarify and defend its values and attitudes but able
to reflect on the essential nature of religious activity and expression and wish to dialogue with
and participate with members of other faith groups and their religious rituals; in that commitment
to their own faith, they have moved beyond it in seeing all religious faiths in mystical and cosmic
terms as expressions of God or the Absolute or the Numinous and have a multi-faith
competency in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills.

Thirdly, as has been already suggested, the varying kinds of interrelationships between religion,
culture and nationalism imply that the emerging new order will see greater levels of ethnic and
religious conflict. Whilst for all of us the experience of inter-faith contact generates warm, fuzzy,
altruistic feelings, we need to warn against the naivete that is often found in the inter-ethnic and
inter-faith area which is full of hidden complexities, subtleties and vexed historical legacies. The
aftermath events of the USA tragedy have highlighted this point. Religious fundamentalism is
increasingly seen in the major religious groupings where the religious framework is aligned with a
Biblical or Qu’ranic fundamentalism or with an introverted nationalism which does not accept
the universalism that is at the authentic core of all major world religions.
Again, what can be done? In thinking both globally and locally, there are five steps that I would like to place on the religion and diversity agenda in the global ecumene:

1. **International Governance Organizations and the Global Faiths Agenda**

   The construction of a realistic global governance agenda beyond what we presently have has become critical. The Manhattan message is that the world is in trouble, and that disorder in the world cannot be fenced off. As part of this broader agenda, we need to construct and negotiate a global human coalition built partly around the major faith communities and their leaders. Of course, there has been some dialogue with many initiatives and the formation of organizations such as the Parliament of the World’s Religions, the Three Faiths Forum and the World Conference of Religion and Peace. It seems to me that we need to engage religious community leadership not just with the fact that this is a multicultural and multifaith world, but, more importantly, that it is an inter-cultural and inter-religious world.

   The international community has a vested interest in encouraging the transnational linking of the national and local nodes of global faith communities to hear the voices and narratives of their own particular diasporas and of other faiths and spiritualities, the voices of the many traditions, the pastoral and the mystical, at the core and at the periphery, the voices of moderation challenging the voices of extremism, highlighting and celebrating their internal unity and diversity and learning to engage with other religious traditions. The international community has a vested interest in encouraging, also at global and regional levels, strategic inter-faith contact not so much to understand and debate their religious similarities and differences, but to develop their own global theologies for a multi-faith world and to negotiate and address social and cultural issues, to address core issues such as poverty and human rights and to plan for the construction of global-local social and spiritual capital. The current structures and mechanisms need capacity-building in constructing a global architecture for religious tolerance, if not harmony.

   But another change has taken place in managing diversity. Whereas public institutions at national and global levels downgraded or even ignored the role of religion during the Cold War except when it was convenient to co-opt religion in the ideological battle between Moscow and Washington, religion has been returning to centre stage as we have previously suggested. “Across the world, there is a dawning recognition that religions have both moral and institutional assets that, if mobilized and equipped, could provide uniquely important contributions to solving conflicts” (Vendley 1999: 1). In other words, religion is seen more as part of the solution than part of the problem. The World Bank is funding the World Faiths Development Dialogue with its centre in Oxford. With September 11th, 2001, religion is now right at the centre of centre stage.

With the increasing formation of multi-faith societies, it has now become urgent to articulate more precisely the nature of religious rights for individuals and their faith communities and their mutual responsibilities to work for inter-religious harmony and global cohesion. It needs to be a document that addresses the contexts of diasporic communities and inter-faith contexts, and it seems appropriate that the articulation process should be fostered and choreographed by the United Nations but built upon a grass-roots educative and consultative process that involves faith communities across the world. My dream is that it be affirmed across the world by every religious community, modern and modemless.

Related to this is the notion of a global-local ethic. The contours of a global ethic are only emerging, and the trigger was the *UN Declaration on Human Rights* together with other international conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. But there are difficulties in the construction of a global ethic. In 1993, after a preparatory period, the Parliament of the World’s Religions met in Chicago and approved the *Declaration toward a Global Ethic*, built around the axiom, there can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. The Declaration was built around the basic principle, ‘every human being must be treated humanely’ found in every great religious or ethical tradition and also the so-called Golden Rule, ‘Do not do to another what you would not want to be done to you’, and around the four fundamental ethical demands found in all the great religions, ‘Do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not commit sexual immorality’

3. The Repositioning of the Faith-State Relationship

In a global world characterised by ideoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapes and technoscapes, the role of the nation state has changed because it is inescapably vulnerable to global processes. Despite Kenichi Omae’s claim that the nation state is increasingly “a nostalgic fiction”, it will survive, as the popular song says, though some will divide and break up, and borders generally will become more porous. Each nation state has had to reposition itself in the fractal global neighbourhood. This raises the faith-state relationship which till now has expressed itself in the separation of religion and state on the one hand or in the close configuration between religion and government in theocratic states on the other. Neither extreme is helpful. Defining the social and political space for faith communities is a delicate art - it requires communities to practise their faith with due regard to their multi-faith contexts but also to accomplish their task of building up cultural, social and spiritual capital that contributes to the broader nation-building and world citizenship agenda. But it has to allow religion to be counter-cultural in critiquing society for its social and spiritual ills.

It seems to me that every society has to construct a multicultural or inter-faith agenda or charter or some such document that is built around generally accepted values and provides both structures and funds to be invested for the future well-being of nation states.
4. The Harnessing of International Business in the Creation of Global and National Social Capital

We are in a new situation as money, commodities and people chase each other around the world with the frenetic expansion of transnational corporate activity and the growing authority of financial institutions above the nation state. The anti-globalists see current global processes as essentially a continuation of the exploitative past. James Petras (1998) who dismisses the claims of globalists who suggest that their theories are “the filet mignon of social theory” suggests that the emerging social context - with the USA as the advance model of the future - is ‘a nineteenth century lookalike’ of Dickensian proportions with health care more dependent on income level, impoverished families sometimes neatly hiding their desperation, increased numbers of abandoned and exploited children, greater use of prison labour, downward mobility of the younger generations, longer work hours for salaried staff, increased job insecurity and regressive taxation coming increasingly from wage earners and from gambling with the transnational corporations becoming the artful dodgers of taxation.

The darker side thus has been that multinational corporations are able to play governments off against each other, resulting in a seeming need for the international co-ordination of corporate tax policies so as national tax bases are not eroded. Another negative is that some countries either because of such factors as national resource deficiency, lack of an educated workforce, dangerous agricultural and industrial practices or political or economic mismanagement have become or may become ‘international basketcases’.

International and local business after the collapse of the World Trade Centre now have a vested interest in furthering the interrelationship between humans right observance, the democratization of nations and the social responsibility of business to build up social and spiritual capital. Globally engaged business-led impacts with their concept of tripled tiered accountability or the triple bottom line can help foster outlooks that are culturally and religiously inclusive and that accept global civic values. For example, contrary to the perceptions held in the West and pedalled by some autocratic Confucian-heritage politicians, countries in eastern and northern Asia have had substantive historical, non-royalist traditions in support of human rights as primary universal values. The non-royalist dictum, “The voice of the people is the voice of heaven” sounds suspiciously like the Latin dictum, “Vox populi, vox Dei”.

5. The Interrogation by Faiths of their own Traditions

Lastly, religious traditions have an inherent tendency to be handcuffed to the past even if they are also fundamentally oriented to a this-world or beyond-world future. In the creation of civil societies, religion cannot be left to one side. They are handcuffed to an imagined, if not imaginary, past that is often based on poor history. As Flaubert remarked, “our ignorance of
history makes us slander our own times”. There is ‘good’ religion, there is ‘bad’ religion; there are extremes in each religious tradition that become locked into their enclosed world-view. Every religion has its cancers and potential cancers; “what our world needs is men and women whose religious commitments are both clear and ambiguous, rooted and adaptive, particular and pluralistic, yet this would not be sufficient: in addition, we must probe our traditions so that we can identify and eradicate the pathologies that have contributed to inquisitions, holy wars, obscurantisms and exclusivisms…religiously committed men and women (who) come to the public forum with powerful and necessary tools for the transformation of the world. They bring the sacred into the public realm” (Boys, Lee & Bass 1995: 256).

Global faith communities would seem to have to confront one fundamental and three other challenges. The fundamental one is the attitude to religious pluralism, a religious pluralism that ensures peaceful co-existence and avoids any evangelical and forced missionization but allowing conversion and reciprocity - Ninian Smart (1996) has developed the twin notions of “soft non-relativism” and “infederated complementarity” to inform a religious pluralist view based on the three propositions (a) no world-view or revelation is susceptible of proof, so certitude is not possible (b) not all world-views teach compatible theses so there exists a rivalry even if there is considerable overlap - given the uncertainty, the only possible stance is soft non-relativism and (c) a multicultural stance implies a positive stance towards the different religions and world-views which complement each other and have something to teach each other whilst they co-exist in a world-wide federation. The three remaining challenges are these (1) the development of an ecological consciousness that recognizes the sacredness of the universe and the dangers of the exploitation of the world’s non-renewable resources (2) the doctrinal and inpractice commitment to the equality of male and female in and beyond their structures and the development of a feminist sensitivity that is not about power but about distributive justice, about care and nurturance and the importance of civility and human relatedness and (3) commitment to the spiritual and the mystical, not being too distracted by their social and political lobbying activities and their welfare and educational initiatives.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, martyrdom, whether self or inflicted, occurs at the extremist of times. Never again shall we be able to look again at skyscrapers in the same way in their ambiguous symbolism of the divine and the secular. In the face of immense provocation, we must retain our nerve. And be rigorous in our thinking. No one is without sin. And this Commonwealth of 54 nations can play a major role. As Hans Kung (1996), one of the driving forces behind the Parliament of the World’s Religions, says, what is needed is “religiosity with a foundation but without fundamentalism; religiosity with religious identity, but without exclusivity; religiosity with certainty of truth, but without fanaticism”, a new religious cosmopolitanism. All the great religious figures of history have been teachers - and education is at the core of the global faiths agenda.
In Amman late in 1999, for the first time, 23 religious leaders from Bosnia-Herzegovina were brought together as a group. At the end of the colloquium, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Orthodox Metropolitan and the Catholic Cardinal each reported that the only antidote to the radioactivity of hate in South-East Europe is that of love and peace. The Mufti spoke of the “many problems in front of us” and the difficulty of “learning how to communicate with each other”. He commented, “human blood has no nationality, no religion, no culture”. He concluded, and it is also my conclusion, “it is not a sin to go back into history but it is a sin to

List of references:


