**PCS 106**

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**Religion can motivate people to violence. But religion also represents a powerful force for reconciliation**

First what is Religion? Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified place, prophecies, ethics, organizations that relates humanity to supernatural or spiritual elements. Or a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

Both Islam and Christianity claim to be revealed religions, holding that their teachings are truths that God himself has conveyed to us and wants everyone to accept. They were, from the start, missionary religions. A religion charged with bringing God’s truth to the world faces the question of how to deal with people who refuse to accept it. To what extent should it tolerate religious error? At certain points in their histories, both Christianity and Islam have been intolerant of other religions, often of each other, even to the point of violence.

This was not inevitable, but neither was it an accident. The potential for intolerance lies in the logic of religions like Christianity and Islam that say their teaching derive from a divine revelation. For them, the truth that God has revealed is the most important truth there is; therefore, denying or doubting this truth is extremely dangerous, both for nonbelievers, who lack this essential truth, and for believers, who may well be misled by the denials and doubts of nonbelievers. Given these assumptions, it’s easy to conclude that even extreme steps are warranted to eliminate nonbelief. Don’t people have a human right to follow their conscience and worship as they think they should? Here we reach a crux for those who adhere to a revealed religion. They can either accept ordinary human standards of morality as a limit on how they interpret divine teachings, or they can insist on total fidelity to what they see as God’s revelation, even when it contradicts ordinary human standards.

According to the Encyclopedia of Wars, out of all 1,763 known/recorded historical conflicts, 123, or 6.98%, had religion as their primary cause.

Much has been said in both popular and scholarly circles about those who engage in violence in the name of religion. And with good reason: an increasing number of global conflicts have a significant religious component, and those conflicts that do are likely to be longer and more difficult to solve.

There are a number of reasons to expect religious peacemaking to matter for conflict resolution. First, religion is, in many ways, naturally predisposed to resolve conflict. Religious traditions are often built on foundations of healing and reconciliation. Religion often uses ritual and tradition to teach the lessons of forgiveness and moving forward.