Chapter 2
Sacred and Secular Activists Are Now Joining Their Strategies for Peacebuilding

Philip Hellmich
The Shift Network, USA

Kurt Johnson
The Interspiritual Network, USA

ABSTRACT

The common ground approaches of the new peace networks are based on an implicit trust in the human spirit, be that defined sacrally or secularly. When there is recognition of common humanity, innate spiritual qualities of tolerance, compassion, forgiveness, and love can be awakened. With these positive human qualities present, it is easier for people to shift their mindset. A new consciousness arises, one where they can start to discern that the “others” are not the problem, but rather that they may share similar problems, such as poverty, corruption, or political manipulation. From there, it is possible to face problems together instead of attacking each other. In essence, the approach was similar to a meditation practice: help a person move beyond fear, expand their identity or consciousness, and experience a sense of oneness or connection with other people and nature. This process opens people to their innate spiritual potential and allows them to tap into collective creativity and possibly higher states of consciousness to identify win-win solutions.

INTRODUCTION

It is the authors’ privilege to work with companion global networks and movements that are building new pathways to peace. What is unique about them is that today they join both sacred and secular activists in joint works toward global peacebuilding. These partnerships include the emerging global paradigm of “Interspirituality” (which seeks to recognize and meld the shared wisdom resources of all the world’s spiritual traditions), newly emerging, more secular, global peace networks and organizations, and the fruits of new research and discovery in the field of neuroscience. Together, these new movements seek DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3032-9.ch002
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to advance global peacebuilding by identifying peace strategies based not only on prosocial networks centered on both the sacred and secular, but also emerging science.

Our work, and those of our companion networks, are really at the grass-roots of peace study and peacebuilding work and how this operates functionally across the world’s not-for-profit and non-governmental organizational communities, which we both serve not only in our official capacities in those networks but through service on numerous committees, particularly at the United Nations. Accordingly, we have prepared this commentary as a description of those worldwide activities, as they occur in day-to-day practice, and less as a scholarly article or literature review. We cite major sources and internet links but understand that these point only generally to a far wider array of technical literature, both in science and in practice, across all the arenas of engagement we discuss.

RECENT TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF PEACEBUILDING

Conventional science itself has made strides in the last decade to join with a more holistic view of reality more prone to the foundations of peace. After more than a century of parroting the mantra of “survival of the fittest” and “the selfish gene”, a new mainstream paradigm has emerged emphasizing altruism. In the first of Yale University and The Templeton Foundation’s “Series in the Foundational Questions of Science”, Dr. David Sloan Wilson (Wilson, 2015), summarizing work by himself and Dr. E. O. Wilson (the father of Sociobiology) in the *Quarterly Review of Biology*, lay out proofs that “group” and “multi-level” selection in nature select not for processes and structures that serve self-interest groups but those that serve the well-being of the whole.

This scientific revolution has spawned a surprising convergence between sacred and secular activists under a new rubric called “prosocial”. Prosocial combines secular activism motivated by the new science with the sacred activism visioned by “interspirituality” — or global, universal, world-centric, and “multiple belonging” spirituality— whose visioners (Teasdale, 1999). (Johnson & Ord, 2012) and (Johnson & Ord, 2013) proclaimed the following:

“We are at the dawn of a new consciousness, a radically fresh approach to our life as the human family in a fragile world. This journey is what spirituality is really about. We are not meant to remain just where we are. We cannot depend on our culture either to guide and support us in our quest. We must do the hard work of clarification together ourselves. This revolution will be the task of the Interspiritual Age. The necessary shifts in consciousness require a new approach to spirituality that transcends past religious cultures of fragmentation and isolation. We need to understand, to really grasp, at an elemental level, that the definitive revolution is the spiritual awakening of humankind” (Teasdale, 1999, p. 4).

This view is identified in the message of over fifty major historical spiritual figures from across the multiplicity of our world’s spiritual and faith traditions and includes these fundamental shifts in global awareness necessary for a successful global shift, many of which, as noted, are already happening.

- Appreciation of the interdependence of all realms of human life and the surrounding cosmos.
- Growing ecological awareness, with recognition of the interdependence of humankind and the biosphere, including the rights of all biological species.
- Embracing of the shared wisdom in all the world’s religious and spiritual traditions, past and present.
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