

# The Future of Religion

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An Essay in Persian

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To paraphrase the *Psalms*, “The Almighty does not reveal Himself in His full being; rather, He reveals Himself according to each person’s strength and understanding.” Or as a Persian poet said, “If God’s light is in your heart, Love shall walk into your home.”

To understand who we are, we should see who we were; and to know who we’ll become, we should see what we’ve been doing. I wish to speak of “religion”, this double-edged sword, this millennia-long forbidding fence of tyranny made of haystack. No inciting words can be holy; **and no topic is too holy to be discussed.** Let’s put aside pointless self-censor, and let’s have a look through the tiny window of Freedom of Expression opened before us. Ere all eyes and tongues are closed in oblivion, let’s examine in simple terms, **What is the meaning of “religion”?** What does it stand for, and what is its purpose? What has humanity done to sustain or destroy it, and how will its future probably be like? Perhaps then we could leave behind a religion and culture more useful than it’s been so far, for the future generations, for our family and society. Because religion and society will truly succeed when the earlier generation has paved the way forward for the next, so that they could safely travel the road to a better future. Otherwise, we have not fulfilled our mission. For we won’t be able to identify our better and worse experiences influenced by religion, such as the causes of the cruelties carried out due to religious hostilities, in order to pass the lessons learned down to the next generation. If we succeed, however, they might benefit from our advice given their own merits and contemporary capacity; as it’s been said, **The past sheds light on the road to the future.** In any case, to remain indifferent and passive would be worse than death.

What would we say if we’re asked, “What have you done within your means to help eradicate global religious hostilities, and to thwart the risk of religious hatred in the future?”

We shouldn’t underestimate ourselves. Neither should we blame it all on a single religion. The problem is with *Religion* itself, whatever name or color it may have presumed. There are people who rely on their scriptures to claim that to do harm and cruelty to others is a “rewarded good deed!” We can’t expect such people to observe the voice of conscience. It’s said that one cold winter night, a stranger walks into a town and takes refuge at the local mosque. Badly starving, he gropes around in the darkness for something to eat. He seizes upon a greasy old book, and too hungry to resist, he eats it bit by bit. Come morning, the mosque’s caretaker finds out in dismay that the old Koran of the mosque is missing. He asks the stranger to “swear on the Book” that he hadn’t taken it. “What *book*,” asks the stranger. “The Koran,” answers the caretaker. “What’s *Koran*?” “The book that had been placed right on this shelf!” “Oh! But I ate that one already!” Certainly, you can’t expect such people to truly understand things; and we can’t remain indifferent in the face of such oblivion. We can’t shed responsibilities by evading them. We are responsible before the coming generations, so let’s not remain indifferent. As I

consider the significance of an individual's duty and his or her role in the larger scheme of the society, I'm reminded of a **Japanese Parable**:

***For Want of a Nail***

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.  
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.  
For want of a horse the rider was lost.  
For want of a rider the message was lost.  
For want of a message the battle was lost.  
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.  
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.<sup>1</sup>*

All that because one person had neglected to fulfill his duty, as little as hammering the nail on a horseshoe. That tiny oversight could be mine, yours, that of a father, mother, teacher, cleric, a friend, a book, etc., which could threaten and dramatically impact the security or even the life of an individual or the entire society.

My friends; **It's not only the religion but its followers, who may earn calmness and pride for their religion and society.** The worth of a religion or tradition depends on the value that its followers bestow upon it. The mindset of an adherent of a religion, especially a religious advocate, reflects a sample of the sophistication and understanding of the society at large. We need to consider the intelligence and perceptiveness of those who claim to be promoting the religion, instead of their titles or uniforms. Our society today continues to face **a serious problem, i.e. the spread of superstitions in the guise of religion.** This problem is only exacerbated by the increasing number of jobless promulgators of such nonsense, as well as the shortage or lack of reasonable preachers, press, and media. **Let's keep eyes on the future.** Where we came from: that's not enough. What matters is whereto we're headed. We should inform and educate our children. Sometimes it takes tears to wash their eyes, to see clearly, and to know the realities of the world and the bitter history of religious hostilities.

To understand life we must look behind and examine the past. **To continue to live we must be prepared for the future.** Enough fooling ourselves! Let's be realistic. The feeble credibility of the old and new religious superstitions has only undermined religion and has allowed societies to be violated. If the forces of regression are allowed to continue and spread superstitions, **we'll end up where we sure won't deserve to be.** I don't mean to judge for or against any particular individual or group. As I've said before, **peace for the nations is akin to the calmness of the ocean between storms.** Let's appreciate opportunities, rectify weaknesses, and drive away those who encourage them. We're not responsible ultimately for how others perceive us, but **we are all directly responsible for the deficiencies** that we and our scriptures place before fault-finding critics. This author aims to remove the shortcomings and superstitions of our society. The more nonsense, cruelty, or murder is done in the name of religion, the more evident becomes the need to remove inciting religious texts, and to reject those who preach them. Increasingly, humanity has realized that although the scripture may in some way be humankind's best friend, **to obey it blindly would be our worst enemy.**

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<sup>1</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For\\_Want\\_of\\_a\\_Nail](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_Want_of_a_Nail) .

The future is not a matter of inheritance: you and I *build* the future, and the culture. There's no shame in that we were born and raised in the "cocoon" of the ghetto; but it would be a shame to perpetuate the imposed culture of the ghettos, let alone to create voluntarily some new ones.

Self-deception is a key to misery; whereas the best and most trusted medium between us and God is our intellect. It's the conscientious and intelligent person that judges and decides to accept or reject a religious writing; and subsequently, prescribes to act by the rule of the conscience. Furthermore, we should learn from the experience of our elderly. We may better trust those who have traveled the road than those who've merely heard of it. As **Erich Fromm** (1900-1980) said, "The history of man is a graveyard of great cultures that came to catastrophic ends because of their incapacity for planned, rational, voluntary reaction to challenge." In our time, the failure and disintegration of Soviet Union's power and way of life provides an apt proof of this statement.

According to statistics by Harris Interactive, 52% of American Jews don't even believe in God; and only 19% of them visit a synagogue once or twice per month. Meanwhile, those who sincerely frequent the synagogues wish to bring "the fugitives" to the temples – on foot; and to inform and educate them on the Sabbath – without loud speakers! As a Persian proverb goes, "They search for the bridle and the rein, while the camel is lost altogether!" They better realize and soon that to imitate blindly and to make people dumb, through the spread and practice of such nonsense and superstition, that would only drive away many more people. We may value religious writings and traditions only to the extent that **they manifest the roles of logic and intellect**, instead of some pointless words and commentaries. We were not born to become mere observers and imitators. We ought to ponder, to identify and to rectify the causes of our failures, in order to know that we *are*.

Religion is a belief. Good for the believer who can understand the meaning of things; and pity the regressor who is deluded to think that to accept and spread superstitions is *the* way to preserve the rational principles of his religion.

**A claim is best proven when it is realized.** Let's see what religion means, and what dangerous cliffs lurk in its dark shadows. To know what religion has been, we need to see what it has done; and to know what it will become, we should see what religion is doing when it's deprived of an acting conscience. We need to ask if a religion filled with incitement and divisiveness could bring happiness to humankind, whether it could last, and what would be its weaknesses.

The common **Persian word for religion is "deen"**, of a Sanskrit root "de'ena" which in part means "conscience". The words "conscience" and "faith" have such enormous depth and potential that their meanings can be embodied whether or not one belongs to any particular tradition. It's "conscience" that distinguishes humankind from animals, not only a religion or tradition.

The *Dehkhoda Persian Dictionary* (P. 572; also online at [www.loghatnameh.org](http://www.loghatnameh.org)), takes "deen" to be an antonym of "heresy", and its Sanskrit root "de'ena", as also found in the Zoroastrian *Gathas*, to denote "conscience" and "one of the five inner senses of human being", among others. It further adds, in the words of **Ferdowsi** and **Ouhadi**:

*Your tradition must all be of the people!*

*Your religion must all be of generosity and truth!*

*Religion earns a good name through science.  
Religion without science would see its demise.*

The Hebrew word for religion is also “deen”, though of a Semitic etymology, meaning “the Law”; the same word in Arabic denotes “the law”, as well as “a path and way of life”, among others. The English word “religion”, however, comes from a Latin root which means “to bind”. Altogether, we may understand “religion” as the better way to live our individual and social lives, from which we may benefit anywhere, whatever name it may take, according to the rule of reason, even as we follow its original intent, that is, human conscience. We may consider the most conscientious of human beings as the most virtuous among us, irrespective of his or her religion, sect, or tradition. A conscientious person is not devoid of religion; whereas an unconscientious person is not a true human being, in the first place, to speak of his religious status or lack thereof. Anyone who practices a religion without conscience is more dangerous than any atheist. We may note that adherents of all religions have known cruel people as “those without conscience”, and those without conscience as “those without God”. When there’s no conscience, **as we may see in the world**, then religious observance deprived of conscience would lead to hatred, fighting, even fratricide among people. **A person can be religious and conscientious in direct proportion to his perceptiveness.** This author believes that regardless of our religion, conscience is that spark of God inside of a human being, which may be “seen” and understood from the deeds of honorable people, some of whom might have never heard of “religion” or “God”.

When understanding and an acting conscience are absent, religious laws would become akin to the story of an ice-salesman who was asked, **“Did you sell all your ice blocks today?”** To which he replied, **“No! No one bought them; so they’re gone!”** We may see how metaphorical “ices” are melting everywhere in our modern world.

**The type of religion is of no concern here.** A person cannot worship God unless he or she is led by his or her conscience. The laws of the state step in, as well, essentially when there be need to make up for a lack of collective conscience. In this context, that religion or tradition is preferred which can cultivate a better and more conscientious person. Hence, we may favorably judge and admire the precious value of the Ten Commandments of the *Torah*, as well as its famous edict, “Love for your neighbor as you would for yourself”. We should appreciate the *Holy Torah* as a symbol of wisdom and foresight, and not stagnation, decomposition, and unchangeability.

The Persian Poet **Saadi** wrote of the ungratefulness of those with a tainted conscience,

*Feed a bite to a dog, and he'd never forget it,  
Even if you stoned him hundred times afterwards.  
Treat well a low-life, instead, and  
He'd fight you still over a trifle.*

How people, preachers in particular, have contributed so far to the survival or demise of religion?

Sadly, the countless blood-stained pages of the history of religions indicate that human beings have often exploited religion as a means to promote hatred, create a vacuum of conscience, and rise against one another, anytime, anywhere, trampling humanity. This was in part a result of religious absolutism itself, though contrary to the original intent and true meaning

of religion. Let's consider **the past and the present of the world**. The Freedom of Worship is among a person's legitimate desires, as long as it's ruled over by a pure acting conscience. Dr. Jonas Salk was a Jewish American scientist and the discoverer of the life-saving polio vaccine. It's said that when he could not secure volunteers for the initial trials, this conscientious scientist welcomed the risks of the experiment and injected himself with the vaccine successfully. In doing so, he meant to serve humanity by saving the world from a deadly plague. In contrast, a scientist without a clear conscience invents a weapon of mass destruction. Similarly, a conscientious cleric raises conscientious followers, while a cleric who lacks a pure conscience trains people to do evil – even as they may both claim to be practicing an identical religion. As Rumi said,

*The apostate and the believer both speak of God,  
But there's a vast difference between the two.  
The apostate speaks of God for the sake of bread,  
While the righteous mentions Him for the sake of life.*

Alas, throughout history, religious advocates have told people of the pains, but never offered a common cure. Thus, everyone resorted to vacuous prayers, even though all the world's prayers couldn't replace a single antibiotic pill. Six million innocent people, and millions of others before them, prayed for their lives, to no avail. Do you think there was never a single Righteous person among them for their prayers to be answered?! Prayers are only good for the spirit of the one who prays.

According to statistics<sup>2</sup>, the number of centenarians in the United States, people aged 100 or above, increased from 32,194 in the year 1980, to 50,454 in the year 2000, and 53,364 in the year 2010. Was this impressive progress a result of science, or an outcome of the prayers offered by this or that person?! After all, prayers were already available when life expectancy was at about a maximum of 35 years! We ought to aim and discover the causes of the ills, and to promote science combined with conscience, instead of imitation and duping people. As **Ferdowsi** said,

*Deem a "demon" a ghastly person,  
Who feels no gratitude toward God.  
Who that left the path of humanity,  
Count him a demon, no more a human.*

What has humanity done to promote religion? Is it reasonable that in the name of promoting it, we make religion into a prohibiting wall on the way of our children to education and modern science, thus leading them to unemployment? To learn modern science would allow their talents to flourish, but also it would shed light on the inadequacies of our time. To raise the children in a cage called "religion" is no service but hostage-taking. No brilliant future can be awaiting these children. The Persian classic satirist poet, **Obeyd Zakani**, once warned his son, "I shall send you to the school of a Mullah, and you'll study and learn so much from him that you'll be in need for the remainder of your life!" Sit down for once and speak to, if not debate with, the graduates of religious seminaries, and you shall realize the root causes of regression. Let's recall that *Talmud* refers to **those who deliberately stay without a job as "moley olam", i.e. "destroyers the world."**

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<sup>2</sup> Meyer, Julie, "Centenarians 2010: 2010 Census Special Reports"; 2012, US Census Bureau. See p.1, Fig. 1 at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/reports/c2010sr-03.pdf>.

My friends; to overcome darkness, we should plan for candles before the sunset; otherwise, we can hardly find the light once the darkness has spread. Likewise, it's best to *prevent* our youngsters from walking down the path of corruption. Why should a larger number of unemployed imitators become burdens to the state and the people in the name of religion, and ensnare others in their traps, too? The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* once admonished the religious teachers, saying, and I paraphrase, "You are the greatest producers of poverty in Israel. The kind of poverty that you produce has no counterpart in the world. It's principled poverty, **poverty with prior intent**. You are responsible." Indeed, to produce poverty with prior intent. Many a young college student or an active businessman who suddenly left his education or job behind, under the influence of the advocates of so-called religion, according to the orders of his *mullah*! This would cost his family educational and financial poverty, as he became a *de facto* shut-in, tying his hopes to *ha-shem*, i.e. God. We had a clerk who could barely earn enough for his family of five. One day, I found him surprisingly happy. As he explained, "My brother's quite good at school. He's been employed by the university in their computers department. We're saved." A few days later, however, I saw him shedding tears. "That *wise* mullah of his!", he complained with bitter sarcasm, "he told my brother that a brain as good as his, which could absorb the Commandments so well, should better be dedicated to the study of the *Torah*. My brother left his job." Of course, not every religious person is like that, but sadly, **all such people are religious**. This is financial and scientific poverty under the "glorious leadership" of their *highness* the preachers! We ought to seriously question them.

Statistics indicate that only one Israeli university, Technion, accounts for 85% of the technical workforce in Israel, as it keeps up serving the country. Meanwhile, your many large and crowded religious schools continue to use up the state and people's budget and much needed resources. I ask, What's your share in the progress of the country, you, the 100% practitioners of vacuous prayers? There was a time when religious schools were necessary as much as secular schools today, when the majority of people were illiterate. But to continue and teach those very old books and ideas in our time, when an absolute majority are literate, it's to take our youth hostages in the guise of protecting our identity, and it's to live in the dark cocoons of time in the name of religion. What has been so far the outcome of their deeds, and the jobs and the future of hundreds of thousands of the students of religious schools? Burdens! As a poet said, **Once bad temper settled in a character, it wouldn't go away until the Resurrection!** That "bad temper" is the outcome of the teachings unfit to our modern understanding, which persist in the name of advocating the religion.

Altogether, no religion is responsible by itself. The blame is on the myopic preachers of religion. They need to heed that we cannot and should not expect the scripture as a whole to act as *the* criteria for thinking, what their children and themselves need today. Never. **Bigotry and a one-sided view of things are the termites of religion, and not the reasons for its survival.** Over the door of Al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad, probably the most accredited of the religious universities of its time, a warning appeared: ***Rational Sciences Are Forbidden to Enter.***

It's not acceptable today for such mottos to appear over the gates of religious schools. We should remove such signs and throw them away into the garbage bin of history. Alas, as long as we read such signs through the lens of bigotry, we can't follow logic and reason. We need to think free of such bias, and to understand that whereas a rational religion can be liberating, an imitative religion is a detriment to both intellect and religion.

It's said that "health is a golden crown on the head of the healthy, but it's only visible to the sick!" A golden crown, the bequest of our beloved ancestors, is placed on the heads of proud, reasonable and conscientious religious people; and sadly, those who lack in conscience, though in the name of religion, may only see it and suffer.

*Nice talk isn't enough for goodness, my dear;  
Act well, if you've got something nice to say.  
When the building calls for repairs, you'd bring in  
A good architect to put the material to use.*

This is a collective issue, and as such, it requires every one of us to help.

### **Conclusion:**

The world has become increasingly aware of the dark and unknown corners of religions, which may lure especially those without a conscience, whatever the guise, into doing the worse. They could go as far as committing crimes, all the while deluded that they're serving a worthy cause, i.e. preserving their religion. Tragically, one such person was Yigal Amir, the would-be assassin of Yitzchak Rabin, the late Prime Minister of Israel. As we see, their abominable work speaks of the nature of their deeds, even as they are the outcome of the encouragement they received from their regressive teachers and religious advocates. As it's been said,

*The words of those with immature thoughts  
Are not worthy of your attentive ears.*

What's the origin of these dark corners? They emerge from the inciting words of religious writings, **which tend to exaggerate everything**. Furthermore, **a look at the world** suggests that it's the same for any religion or society, albeit in a variety of colors. As late as May 2014, Vatican officially announced<sup>3</sup> that 848 priests – these holy fathers of the Catholic Church meant to teach and promote morals – had been defrocked on accusations of morally objectionable behavior. A famous Persian proverb says, **"We put salt on things so they wouldn't rot; crying out aloud when the salt turns rancid!"** What is the root of such recurrent "spoiling"? Why and how did these people become rancid? Answer: The wrongful remarks of religious books. Because their particular religion, against the rule of nature, has decreed that their priests cannot get married for life. This group, whose corruption has been revealed, no doubt alongside thousands of others whose corruption remains hidden, besides millions of other adherents of the irrational laws of religions, wish to abuse such long-expired laws that are much akin to poisonous drugs, under the pretext of "observing the demands of the religion." Alas, until the day that such anachronistic religious laws, which are not in agreement with our contemporary understanding and modern science, have not been updated and adapted to fit modern understanding, individual and mass "poisoning" will continue.

It's praiseworthy that 323 out of 613 commands of the Jewish Law were rendered obsolete by our religious bodies through centuries, a task which speaks of their ability to stay in sync with times; and as a pride of this religious tradition the process will continue according to the rule of time. If this process of eliminating the inciting elements of religious scriptures were to become impossible, you could expect humanity to return back to the ages of savagery. These writings

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/vatican-figures-disciplined-priests-sex-abuse> .

would be beneficial when instead of facing off each other, they could complete one another, and as long as they remained in step with the contemporary understanding and modern civilization.

What may constitute the inciting elements of the scripture? For instance, against the unequivocal Commandment of “Thou shalt not murder!”, we may find the book repeat elsewhere, “Kill!”, “Kill!” Or consider (cf. *Shofar of New York*, No. 399) the following verse from the *Gospel of John*, 15:6, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.” Thus, we may see where the Holocaust was conceived; and why a group raised and educated by the Church could coordinate and take part in that colossal catastrophe. Or why Pope Pius XII, who could have stopped the tragedy with a single gesture of defiance, did not prevent it from taking place. Or why earlier in that century, the Church had remained silent in the face of the genocide carried out against Armenians, for though Christian, they belonged to another sect! These are among the outcomes of ominous religious and sectarian hatred; and the result of religious books repeatedly asking their followers to “Kill!...” They have made the world unsafe; and as long as they exist, we won’t achieve global peace. To better understand the results of religious and sectarian hatred on the global scale, besides the aforementioned historical catastrophes (cf. the debate of July 11, 2014, CNN), consider that<sup>4</sup> during the 60 years after the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than 10 million Muslims have been killed – 90% of whom in the hands of other Muslims!

Can we imagine an end to the shameful catastrophe of religious hatred? Indeed. We may be confident that by the rule of time, some day though far, humanity will omit all hatred and incitement from religious writings. Fortunately, we may hear already the whispers of this transformation over the **Internet**, this potent “messenger” of our time, uncensored everywhere and in all languages. No doubt, the future generations will see such a beautiful day, if sadly after a long journey likely stained with many tragedies. Because as many preachers of hatred as are eliminated today, more of them are being trained at the religious schools which advocate such writings. Consequently, the first necessary step to effectively guarantee our security and the happiness of future generations is to prevent the growth of ominous seeds of incitement and sedition; to that end, we need to shut down the schools that advocate such teachings, and to control textbooks all around the world. Alas, it’s been as if to get rid of Malaria, governments were hunting the mosquitoes pointlessly with guns and canons, instead of containing their natural habitats – while the United Nations enjoyed a deep slumber! As long as the root causes of conflicts are not identified and rectified, history will repeat itself, as it did with the Crusades.

Also note that even as advanced technology has spread globally, so has religious hatred, which has become “globalized”! The evil people, thanks to the ignorance of the leadership, have become equipped with modern technology, while the root causes of these conflicts and deadly wars, namely the incisive and seditious writings of the facing parties, are still in place, and everyone is praising them, one way or another.

I have emphasized frequently that we ought to avoid repeating mistakes as far as possible. **We need to do our best to remove the causes of failures.** We shouldn’t get used to harms and ills, and we mustn’t tolerate faults under the illusive pretext of “preserving our religion”. People

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<sup>4</sup> “In a different perspective, some 11,000,000 Muslims have been violently killed since 1948, of which 35,000, or 0.3 percent, died during the sixty years of fighting Israel, or just 1 out of every 315 Muslim fatalities. In contrast, over 90 percent of the 11 million who perished were killed by fellow Muslims.” See: <http://www.danielpipes.org/4990/arab-israeli-fatalities-rank-49th>, October 8th, 2007.

die, but the books stay. Those anachronistic pages, those verses and commandments that are no more fit to our contemporary understanding, those orders to “Kill!...Kill!...” or to “Burn!...Burn!...”, they stay, and they’ll go on to exaggerate everything. It’s a pride of the modern State of Israel that early on in its formation, they agreed to practically abolish the death penalty in that country. This momentous decision was on par with abandoning the practice of the laws of slavery or animal sacrifice. It was not a cold shoulder to the very explicit laws of the Holy Book, but indeed it followed the Book in its true intent. (Cf. Deuteronomy, 17:8-10.<sup>5</sup>) And it was consistent with omitting 323 commands of the 613, a task in progress to elevate the status of the Jewish religion by maintaining it in sync with times. Just look at Europe! They murdered six million useful people, and they replaced them with six million others who were often harmful even to themselves. Now, they are being punished for the cruelty they carried out *in the garden*, paying for it *in the cages of their homes and cities* – even as they find their moral and religious future, and the future of the civilization which they make a claim upon, at serious risk.

We should abandon one-sided views of things. We should either omit or adapt and bring up to date those parts of our writings that do not agree with our times, those sections which are the main causes behind many of humankind’s failures. We should do so to bring peace and calmness to the future generations. And we better do so before we are slapped repeatedly by the cruel hands of time. Time did not freeze when religions writings were received; neither did human understanding. There’s no reason for these to remain unchanged, or for us to keep citing them based on some literal interpretation.

Whoever imagined that someday, women could be stoned in Iran? Yet it happened, because those who believed in the literal sense of the scripture found a chance to follow those orders verbatim. Such unexpected tragedies could surprise us at anytime based on the writings of virtually *any* religion. During the Inquisition, for instance, the priests burned alive Joan of the Arc (1412-1431), and countless other innocents, in part because she dressed like men. In Turkey, by the order of Talaat Pasha, about one and a half million Armenians were massacred in 1915. And what atrocities were not committed by followers of the Church in Europe. As of now, in Burma, Sudan, Nigeria, across the Middle East and Africa, horrendous crimes continue to take place, many by those who practice the instructions of their religious books. The day humanity awakens to the rule of time and human conscience; when we manage to omit the inciting sections of all religious books; then we may calm the world and bring about peace. Otherwise, such ills will persist like some hereditary chronic illnesses in the human family. That would be the day when we heed the words of Voltaire, and I paraphrase, “God’s only command to man can be this: **Be just and fair.**”

Let’s begin with ourselves. Let your religion be your conscience, and let your conscience be your religion.

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<sup>5</sup> “If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, even matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose. And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days; and thou shalt inquire; and they shall declare unto thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the tenor of the sentence, which they shall declare unto thee from that place which the Lord shall choose; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they shall teach thee.” – Deuteronomy, 17:8-10, New JPS Translation, accessible at: <http://www.uspoliticsonline.com/sacred/bib/jps/deu017.htm> .

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