

## **Waxing Faith, Waning Trust: Ethics in Government, Religious Persecution and Declining Religious Support**

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### **Abstract**

Throughout the West in recent years there has been a decrease in religious enthusiasm for national government. To be sure, the so-called religious right in the United States has maintained a strong presence in national elections but even its prominence and power has diminished. Elsewhere, and especially in non-democratic nations there has also been a decrease in many, though not all nations, from their constituents. This phenomenon is not explained by any single cause, but rather, by a combination of individual and community beliefs, dissatisfaction with present administrations and policies, ethical behavior by elected government officials, and many cases, deliberate actions by governments to harass or suppress religious communities. This essay looks at several global and religious trends, especially religious persecution, affecting the ability of governments to maintain legitimacy internally and externally. When persecution occurs, both the state and persecuted group are at risk. Strong religious convictions and strong political convictions and support for an individual's nation need not conflict. However, the responsibility for sustaining such support is shared between the citizen and the state.

### **Introduction**

“Religion counts.”<sup>1</sup> This short declaration by former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright succinctly articulates the significant effect of religious values in today's national and international political environments. Why does it count? It does so, in part, because of the enormous influence that people of faith have on political processes including war, peace, conflict resolution, and humanitarian endeavors around the globe.

Whether Buddhist or Baptist, Muslim or Methodist, Hindu or Holiness, religious Zionist or Zoroastrian, or any one of scores of other faith perspectives embraced around the globe, faith matters in the public and private lives of individuals. It shapes worldviews, values, ethics, and politics. For many people, when their religion is at odds with other values competing in the marketplace of ideas, religion will be the standard by which all other expectations and experiences are judged.

### **The Good, Bad, and Ugly in Private and Public**

Values have consequences. Whether private or public, personal or corporate, values inevitably are manifested in the lives of individuals, the legislation of lawmakers, and the actions of governments—be they dictatorships or democracies. It has been said that not to be fortified with good ideas is to be victimized by bad ones.<sup>2</sup> This is true especially in the realm of ethics

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<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Albright, *The Mighty & the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 91.

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where it applies not only to individuals but also to institutions and governments. But there are some differences. The individual who is not fortified by good ideas and falls prey to bad ideas—whether in politics, philosophy, religion, economics, or science—will reap the consequences of those bad ideas in his or her personal life, professional life, business, or relationships. The government, legislature or leader that is not fortified by good ideas and falls prey to bad ones will actively or passively inflict the consequences of those bad ideas on its citizens. Ethically bad ideas in the lives of individuals brings personal calamity. Ethically bad ideas in government brings catastrophe for the masses—sometimes for minority groups, sometimes for the majority, and sometimes for everyone.

Throughout the West in recent years there has been a decrease in religious enthusiasm for national governments (while in other parts of the globe, circumstances have been just the opposite). To be sure, the so-called religious right in the United States has maintained a strong presence in national elections, but even its prominence, power, and political enthusiasm has diminished. Elsewhere, especially in some non-democratic nations, there has also been a decrease of support from citizens.

This phenomenon is not explained by any single cause but, rather, by a combination of individual and community beliefs, dissatisfaction with present administrations and policies, unethical behavior by elected government officials, and in many cases, deliberate actions by governments to harass or suppress religious communities.

Although there are several global and religious trends affecting the ability of governments to maintain legitimacy internally and externally, this presentation focuses on one—religious persecution. When religious persecution occurs, there is an ethical chasm created between the citizen and the state that can be bridged only with extensive effort and time. More often than not, the systemic effects of the persecution are long-lasting and may take decades to overcome, if they ever can be overcome.

Often when we think about ethics and government we focus primarily on the unethical behavior and acts and only secondarily consider the consequences of those actions for citizens under the authority of the offending government or leadership. Any government that functions within a culture of corruption will lose support from its constituents—especially those with strong religious beliefs and communities. Because unethical behavior also violates religious values, the unethical government or leader loses legitimacy both from its constituents as citizens

and from its constituents as people of faith. It loses political legitimacy and moral credibility. As ethical behavior erodes within a government, so too, does religious support for that government. This is especially true when the unethical activities of the government are directed at religious communities.

Unethical behavior in and by a government can encompass a spectrum of activity. On the low end it consists of socially unaccepted practices and increases on the high end to morally and legally prohibited actions. These in turn range from practices of omission to policies of commission that can, in the worst cases, result in the intentional violation of human rights for individuals and entire groups of people.

It is this worst-case scenario upon which this presentation focuses—and, more specifically, it is the harassment, suppression, or persecution of religious communities by their own governments that is the core of this presentation. This is significant because at the same time that there is recognition of the importance and intensity of religion around the globe, in some areas there is also an increase in human rights violations with regard to religious persecution. At a time when governments should be expanding religious accommodation, some are seeking to extinguish religious peoples and practices.

This is not about religious violence, religiously-motivated terrorism, or religious conflict. Rather, is it about the intentional persecution of individuals by their governments *because of* individual or group faith perspectives and religious views.

### **Religious Persecution**

Religion is increasingly in the local, national, and international headlines. Sadly, much of this news pertains to religious persecution. As more attention is being given to religion in contemporary life throughout the world there is also the unfortunate discovery that religious persecution around the globe is growing rather than diminishing. Regrettably, this persecution is often more brutal and more widespread than media have reported.

Whether in East Timor, Vietnam, North Korea, the Balkans, the Middle East, China, Latin America, India, Africa, or a dozen other places, people of faith are undergoing persecution because of their faith. This persecution takes many forms and in each instance there are both short-term and long-term individual and institutional consequences.

### **What is Religious Persecution?**

Religious persecution is the systematic persecution of individuals or groups *because of* their religious faith and practices. It is persecution or discrimination where religion is a significant and defining component of the injustice that is suffered. It can be promulgated by individuals or groups or be sponsored by governments. It can occur in secular states or religious states, and it has a direct connection to the ideas of religious pluralism, religious tolerance, freedom of religion, and the establishment and disestablishment of state religion (along with other key democratic values such as freedom of speech and the right of assembly).

At its core, religious persecution is a serious human rights violation. It is not just the persecution of religious people; for most people around the world have some faith perspective. When sponsored by a state, religious persecution is “any effort by government to repress major activities by a given religious group, commonly with the goal of eliminating that group in the long or short term, or at least reducing its significance to nothing.”<sup>3</sup>

In the West, ideological rejection of religious persecution can be traced to seventeenth-century England where the issue arose of how the civil magistrates were to respond to ecclesiastical dissent.<sup>4</sup> Historically, reasons for religious persecution include civil and ecclesiastical intolerance, heresy and blasphemy, and persecution for political reasons. Where there is more than one reason, the persecution may intensify and become more socially and politically complex.

### **Categories of Religious Persecution**

Religious persecution involves a spectrum of activity and human rights violations. Every year the United States Department of State produces The International Religious Freedom Report. This document is submitted to the U.S. Congress in compliance with the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, that was passed to promote religious freedom as a U.S. foreign policy and to advocate on behalf of individuals viewed as persecuted in foreign countries on account of their religion. The law established an office for monitoring religious freedom and created a U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom who oversees the Office of International Religious Freedom and the production of the report. The IRFA also

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<sup>3</sup>Philip Jenkins, “The Politics of Persecuted Religious Minorities” in *Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*, ed. Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 26.

<sup>4</sup> See W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England 1558-1660*. 4 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932-40.

created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a Congressionally-funded independent commission. This ten-member commission also produces an annual report and makes non-binding recommendations to the Secretary of State about the designation of “Countries of Particular Concern.” The Secretary of State, acting on behalf of the President, designates CPCs, and the Department of State produces annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The International Religious Freedom Report supplements the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and includes individual country chapters providing additional detailed information on the status of religious freedom.<sup>5</sup>

The report identifies five categories of abuses of religious freedom: 1) totalitarian or authoritarian actions to control religious belief or practice, 2) state hostility toward minority or non-approved religions, 3) state neglect of societal discrimination or abuses against religious groups, 4) denouncing certain religions by identifying them as dangerous "cults" or "sects," and 5) discriminatory legislation or policies prejudicial to certain religions.<sup>6</sup>

The U. S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has three categories of countries practicing religious persecution and designated “Countries of Particular Concern.” The categories are: named as a CPC, recommended for CPC designation, and on the Commission’s “Watch List.”<sup>7</sup>

Religious persecution can be active or passive. It can involve intentional acts of violence against citizens or nonintervention by the government as violence is directed at its citizens by other citizens. The methods may change, but the results do not. There are abundant examples throughout each report.

### **Religious Persecution as a Global and Democratic Concern**

Almost every region of the globe is experiencing ongoing religious persecution, and no form of government is exempt from instigating persecution—including democracies. For example, in both Israel and India there are ongoing reports of religious abuse.

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<sup>5</sup> For information on the history of the report see Tom Farr, “The Roots of the International Religious Freedom Report,” *Issues of Democracy: Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State* vol. 6, no. 2 (November 2001), 6-9, from <http://wsinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/110/ijde/idje1101.htm> accessed on 5 July 2007.

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Department of State, “Executive Summary” in *International Religious Freedom Report 2006* taken from the Internet <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71284.htm> accessed on 10 May 2007.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007,” Washington, D.C., 2007, 82.

The world's largest democracy, India, is very interesting. The rise of "Hindutva" or Hindu nationalism is especially problematic and what is being referred to as the "billion person question" and "the struggle for India's soul."<sup>8</sup> In the words of Hindu nationalist V. D. Savarkar (1883-1966), Hindutva is an attempt to "Hinduize all politics and militarize Hinduism."<sup>9</sup>

Although India is a secular democracy, it also is a country with long history of religious violence. In recent years the alleged motivation for much "communal violence" in the nation has been religious nationalism and has received covert and overt support from local authorities.<sup>10</sup>

Also worth watching is Russia, where Russian Orthodoxy has a preferred status among Christian expressions of faith and where there are rising and ongoing tensions with various expressions of Islam. Within the Russian Federation there are reports of attempts to challenge international human rights institutions and undermine domestic human rights advocacy, increasing harassment of Muslims, and restrictions on religious freedoms at the regional and local levels, as well as inadequate responses to xenophobia, intolerance, and hate crimes.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, Muslims are the fastest growing religious group in Russia.

Despite these activities the practice of religion in Russia today, particularly for individuals, is freer than during the former Soviet period, when atheism was the strictly enforced state policy and all religious expression was harshly repressed. Yet, advancements in religious freedom protections that emerged immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union are not as stable as in those first years.

In many of the cases of persecution, the actions are ongoing and often systematic. Persecution is frequently a matter of government practice and support. In the current global context, it is also worth noting that in many of these countries, Islam is not the dominant religion or the religion accused of oppressing the others. There are examples of such persecution, as in Sudan against Christians and in Iran against Baha'is, but the above examples show that religious persecution is not faith specific. Religious persecution knows no faith boundaries. Political and religious entities practicing religious persecution have the potential of being equal opportunity oppressors.

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<sup>8</sup> Mira Kamdar, "The Struggle for India's Soul," *World Policy Journal*, 19:3 (Fall 2002), 21, 25. See also Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in M. M. Ali, "India Undergoing an Ominous Slide Away from Secularism into Hindu Fascism," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, vol. XIX, 3 (April 30, 2000), 35.

<sup>10</sup> "Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007," 242.

<sup>11</sup> "Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007," 49-66.

## **The Importance of Religious Freedom and Human Rights**

Concern about religious persecution extends beyond the horrible acts of brutality by governments against the faithful of any religion. Persecution violates human rights and human dignity. Though manifested as a political problem, its roots go much deeper.

The fundamental concept of religious freedom found global acceptance in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration states that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world."<sup>12</sup> It is precisely this shared recognition of human dignity as the basis for religious freedom – and all human rights – that can provide the basis for practical collaboration among believers of various faiths or no faith, despite irreconcilable differences regarding the ultimate source of human dignity.

The Declaration continues in Article 18: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."<sup>13</sup>

Based upon various U.N. and other international declarations, specific components of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion include:

- Freedom to change one's religion or belief
- Freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice
- Freedom from coercion which would impair an individual's freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his or her choice
- Freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching
- Permissible limitations on the freedom to manifest religion or belief.<sup>14</sup>

Religious freedom is not a minor issue or right. Rather, it is one of the core strands woven through the fabric of daily life.

Part of the solution to religious oppression and religious violence is for governments and people of various faith perspectives to embrace this declaration and to tie religious oppression to

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<sup>12</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> accessed on 9 July 2007.

<sup>13</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> accessed on 9 July 2007.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 3 of "The Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom" May 2007, 274-76. The annual reports can be accessed at <http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/publications/currentreport/index.html>.

human rights. If religious persecution and oppression is seen as a human rights violation then it moves above and beyond a cultural clash or matter of religious differences. It is not then primarily a problem of East versus West or Christian versus Muslim or Hindu versus Muslim and Christian but rather, an issue of human rights and respect for the conscience and dignity of the individual.

### **“So What?”— Consequences of the Failure to Support Religious Freedom**

The goal in any nation with respect to its citizens should be to secure the maximum degree of religious freedom possible in the circumstances of a given society.<sup>15</sup> But what happens when a government and society fail to uphold religious freedom? Beyond the persecution of individuals and the immediate loss of faith in that government by the persecuted, there are other potential sociopolitical consequences for a society or nation that oppresses religious belief. The consequences of religious persecution can seriously affect national, regional, and global stability.

Some of the outcomes of religious persecution depend on the motives for the persecution, and motives are always mixed, blending religious and political dynamics. If permitted, a persecuted group may acquiesce with either nominal or real accommodation. A significant historical example of this is the conversion of Spanish Jews and Muslims to Christianity in the fifteenth century before the Spanish Inquisition. If the conversion to a new faith or abandonment of any faith tradition is nominal, then the persecuted trade allegiance for time in the hope of persevering until a more favorable political atmosphere arises. If the acquiescence is real, then it may entail abandonment of the faith perspective. If the goal of the persecution is eradication of the religious group for suppression of doctrines and beliefs considered aberrant or heretical, then the persecuted, if they do not choose martyrdom, will likely pursue one of several alternatives that directly and indirectly affect political stability.<sup>16</sup> In the short-term, if the persecuted do not acquiesce, they may stand and fight the persecution and government. In so doing they may align with other groups whose ideologies are the same or different in order to fight a common enemy. If this occurs, the persecuting government may find itself combating a broader group of common

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<sup>15</sup> Jenkins, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins, 27-34.

cause co-belligerents. In such cases the resistance efforts may span the entire spectrum of warfare, including insurrection and civil war using many means, including terrorism.

In the long-term there are other possibilities. While there may be overlap or redundancy among or between the possibilities, some distinctions are also possible. Five possibilities will be discussed.

First, persecuted religious groups may go underground. Persecuted individuals and communities are forced to operate in secret where in addition to practicing their faith, they learn traditions of conspiracy and secret organization. This can be done within either a framework of pacifism or violence and the more violence is accepted as a justifiable response, the more dangerous the group becomes to the state and the more difficult becomes the possibility of reconciliation.

The persecuted may not necessarily be “overtly radical or insurrectionary, but they can create a substantial and potentially dangerous framework that can be exploited by enemies of a state in the long term.”<sup>17</sup> For example, under Soviet oppression all forms of religion were persecuted and while Buddhist clergy in Mongolia were an easy target and virtually annihilated, Muslims in Central Asia proved much more difficult. This was especially true of the Sufis in Chechnya who had a strong underground network that continues to the present and has created a formidable challenge to authorities.<sup>18</sup> Jenkins notes:

Soviets found their deadliest enemies in the great Sufi brotherhoods that had done so much to spread Islam across Central Asia. . . . [Sufis] were savagely persecuted, but never uprooted, because of their powerful underground networks. These alone proved able to survive Soviet totalitarianism, and the Sufi orders were able to emerge with amazing success in the post-Soviet era. . . . The Sufi orders were and also are the core of the Chechen resistance in the Caucasus region, naturally enough since like many Muslims through Central and Western Asia, the Chechens were converted to Islam by the Sufi orders.”<sup>19</sup>

The phenomenon of underground religions has a long history in the East and the West dating to at least the first century of the Common Era. In addition to the potential for longevity, groups

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<sup>17</sup> Jenkins, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins, 27.

that go underground may also incorporate one or more of the other alternatives of persecuted faith.

Second, persecuted religious groups may become holy warriors or warrior saints. Persecuted religious groups often develop active and effective military traditions unless they find favorable refuge. Examples of such fighters include the Sikhs of India, the Hussites of Bohemia in late medieval Europe, the Covenanters who were radical Calvinists in seventeenth-century Scotland, and the Druze in Lebanon and Syria.<sup>20</sup> The rise of holy warriors can also indicate that the persecuted group is prepared for a long struggle.

Third, persecuted religious groups may become martyrs and strengthen the movements. Jenkins observes:

Groups that resist and survive persecution often develop or cultivate ideologies that make sense of their suffering, and that promise rewards for themselves, and punishment for persecutors. These ideologies can in turn provide justification for resistance, and in some cases, warfare. In practical terms, this means that persecuted groups are prone to apocalyptic ideas and to martyrdom.<sup>21</sup>

Martyrdom is certainly a prominent motif in some strands of Islam. It also has a strong history in Sikh theology and politics.<sup>22</sup> Christian church history from the first century to the present also has many instances of martyrdom (as do most religions).<sup>23</sup>

A fourth possibility is that persecuted religious groups may change the nature of their movement to strengthen it as a response to the persecution. There may be ideological and institutional restructuring. Persecution will affect a religious group, and may change the group's internal dynamics and leadership such that either new personalities or a new leadership structure arises. Persecution and loss may concentrate power, authority, and prestige in the hands of a few

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<sup>20</sup> See for example, Patwant Singh, *The Sikhs* (London: John Murray, 1999), 39-41; Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117:4 (Oct.-Dec. 1997), 623-42; Susanna K. Treesh, "The Waldensian Recourse to Violence" *Church History* 55:3 (Sept. 1986), 294-306; Elizabeth Hannan Hyman, "A Church Militant: Scotland, 1661-1690" *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1995), 49-74.

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, 29.

<sup>22</sup> See again, Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117:4 (Oct.-Dec. 1997), 623-42.

<sup>23</sup> See for example, Robert Kolb, "God's Gift of Martyrdom: The Early Reformation Understanding of Dying for the Faith" *Church History* 64:3 (Sept. 1995), 399-411. In recent history, one thinks also of the death of Óscar Romero, Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador, who was assassinated in 1980. See also, Paul Marshall (with Lela Gilbert), *Their Blood Cries Out: The Untold Story of Persecution Against Christians in the Modern World*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997.

leaders or clerical elite.<sup>24</sup> This in turn can strengthen both the politics and theology of the persecuted. Spiritually, the change can also lead to an emphasis on mysticism and martyrdom. Sometimes, the more the state seeks to control or curb these views through violence, the more credible mysticism and martyrdom become. Repression can lead to new strands of faith that generate further conflicts with the established order.

A fifth and final alternative is that a persecuted religious group may gain new alliances. Individual and group allegiance to the state will be diminished and alternative political allegiance and alliances beyond national borders may arise. This can be done while the group is within national boundaries or during and after migration from the persecuting authorities. Persecuted people may flee across national borders creating political instability in one or more nations, or they may flee to areas of harsh environmental conditions where living conditions are marginal. Such migrations are common during times of famine, drought, natural disaster, war, and political instability.

Migration due to religious persecution is common and many nations in the East and West have such incidents as part of their national history. In the history of the United States there have been many examples of religious migrations, both to and within its geographic boundaries. Elsewhere, the persecution of Tibetan Buddhists by China in the 1950s and the subsequent flight of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the reestablishment of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala, northern India is one more recent example.

With globalization, ever fewer religions are confined entirely within national boundaries. Religiously-persecuted people in one nation or region might be the dominant faith tradition in a neighboring nation or another part of the globe. In such instances there is a significant chance that friends, allies, and sympathizers will be sought in other nations and regions. Persecuted people will look beyond their borders for support and survival. For example, the persecuted Catholics of Tudor and Stuart England found natural allies in powerful Catholic regimes of Europe, especially Spain. Certainly with religions that have a significant global presence there are theological, sociological, and cultural affinities that make extra-national allegiance viable and appealing.

When this occurs, the persecuted not only gain support for survival, they also become potential political and military supporters of those to whom they look for help. “A persecuted

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<sup>24</sup> Jenkins, 31.

minority can thus become an ideal fifth column, which in the correct circumstances might support an invasion or an armed incursion.”<sup>25</sup> That which was viewed by the persecuting government as an internal issue may rapidly become an international issue.

## Conclusion

Acquiescence, co-belligerence, going underground, holy warriors, martyrdom, ideological and institutional restructuring, and international alliance and allegiance—any one or combination of these is possible when religious persecution occurs. What each of the above examples and scenarios shows is what *may* happen when religious persecution occurs is that, unless completely decimated and annihilated, the faithful become stronger in their faith. As government ethics decrease, religious fervor increases. As religious fervor due to persecution increases, so also may national and international instability. “Religious persecution can thus provide massive obstacles to nation-building, and to creating a stable, just, and secure international order. It also produces a vicious cycle, in which violence itself breeds theories and structures conducive to violence.”<sup>26</sup> Regrettably, religious persecution *can* succeed, but when it doesn’t, the consequences are equally catastrophic when it fails.

In the second century the early church leader, theologian and apologist Tertullian (155-230) asked the crucial political, theological, and philosophical question, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis*)<sup>27</sup> His question is as relevant today as it was eighteen hundred years ago. What has the sacred to do with the secular, the state with religion? Strong religious convictions and strong political convictions and support for an individual’s nation need not conflict. However, the responsibility for sustaining such support is shared between the citizen and the state. Trust is like a tightly wound spring mechanism. Once it is released or sprung, the trust is lost. It is possible to regain the trust, just as it is possible to rewind the spring, but that takes time, and in the world of politics, conflict, and globalization, time is something a government may not possess.

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<sup>25</sup> Jenkins, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Jenkins, 34. He also states (p. 26): “If anyone believes ‘you can’t kill an idea,’ I would ask that optimistic person to produce a living representative of traditions like the medieval French Cathars or Albigensians, annihilated in wars and successive persecutions during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.” Jenkins, 26.

<sup>27</sup> *De praescriptione haereticorum*. 7, 9. (N.B., the context is that importing secular ideas into Christ's teaching is like mixing chalk and cheese together.)

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Religious freedom is as relevant and important today as it was a half century ago when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written and signed. As noted at the beginning, values have consequences. The ethics of a government are not less important than the ethics of an individual. Individually and collectively, may we strive to embrace values, policies, and practices that support rather than deny religious freedom, liberty of conscience, and the dignity and value of every person.

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